



FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

**TOPIC: RETHINKING THE BAPTIST TRADITION ON WOMEN ORDINATION: A
CASE STUDY OF THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF ZIMBABWE**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Richard Chiombera (**R1710450T**), do hereby earnestly declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the acknowledgements, references, interviews and comments included in the body of the dissertation, and that it has not been submitted in part or full for another degree or any other university.

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DEDICATION

With gusto, I dedicate this academic research dissertation paper to the Catholic church throughout the globe, mainline churches in Zimbabwe, Baptist churches, Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe as well as the Baptist Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe so that we can continue reflecting and probing on the traditions that continuously deny women to enjoy their full liberty in Jesus Christ. The struggle towards justice and freedom is still on. For my denomination, the (BCZ), so much love and ***Hatimire Kupinda Baptist (HKB)***.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCZ	BAPTIST CONVENTION OF ZIMBABWE
BF&M	BAPTIST FAITH AND MESSAGE
BTSZ	BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF ZIMBABWE
CBS	CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY
HKB	HATIMIRE KUPINDA BAPTIST
IMB	INTERNATIONAL MISSION BOARD
MCSA	METHODIST CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
MSU	MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY
REV	REVEREND
SBC	SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION OF AMERICA
WMU	WOMEN'S MISSIONARY UNION

ABSTRACT

The whole thesis of this academic journey paper focuses on giving a second thought on the Baptist tradition within the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe by examining the following questions. Why the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe deny women ordination? What is the position of the church on women ordination? How do the Baptists generally view women in leadership positions? How has the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe made use of the scriptures in making a decision on women ordination? Is there any role of the local church in the ordination of women since the Baptists believe in the autonomy of the local church and priesthood of all believers? How then is the church seemingly contradicting itself in its beliefs which are liberative, women accommodating and believed to be enacted from the scripture, but in practicality denying women ordination? The contextual bible study method will then be employed to probe the church to proper bible exegesis in a bid to probe for the inclusion of women in the ordination arena. The researcher used the method of surveying the history of the debate in the denomination vis-à-vis historical documents, confessional statements of faith, scholarly articles and books. Also, the writer tried to critically analyse the statements of faith and practice of the convention vis-à-vis their belief and understanding of the scripture. Relevant scriptures used to arrive at their conclusion on women's ordination are also exegetically critiqued and evaluations are given. Major findings were; the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe as a church is against the ordination of women based on some scriptural texts which includes but not limited to some Pauline directives to the church in Ephesus and Corinth. However, the church has been called to task in this research to re-evaluate their stand on women on the pretext that their fundamental beliefs and practices in the priesthood of believers, autonomy of the local church are not affirmed and exercised when it comes to the issue before hand and their grave faulty interpretation of scripture which is at question.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL FORM	i
RELEASE FORM.....	ii
DECLARATION.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	v
LIST OF ACRONYMS.....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	viii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCING THE STUDY.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.....	2
1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....	8
1.4 AIM.....	8
1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	8
1.6 METHODOLOGY.....	9
1.6.1 Phenomenological Approach.....	10
1.6.2 Contextual Bible Study.....	11
1.6.3 Case Study.....	13
1.6.4 Data Collection.....	13
1.7 CONFIDENTIALITY.....	13
1.8 JUSTIFICATION.....	14
1.9 SCOPE.....	14
1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	15
1.10.1 Introduction	15
1.10.2 Theoretical Framework.....	15
1.11 CONCLUSION.....	22

CHAPTER 2: INTERROGATING BAPTIST BELIEFS AND TRADITION.....	23
2.0 INTRODUCTION.....	23
2.1 BAPTIST BEGINNINGS.....	23
2.1.1 The English Background.....	24
2.1.2 Two kinds of the Baptists.....	24
2.2 BAPTIST BELIEFS AND TRADITION.....	26
2.2.1 Biblical Authority.....	28
2.2.2 Autonomy of the local church.....	30
2.2.3 Priesthood of all believers.....	31
2.2.4 Two ordinances.....	32
2.2.5 Individual soul liberty.....	32
2.2.6 Believer's baptism.....	32
2.2.7 Two offices.....	33
2.2.8 Separation of state and church.....	33
2.3 CONCLUSION.....	34
CHAPTER 3: SCRIPTURAL BACKING OF THE BCZ'S POSITION ON THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM ORDINATION.....	35
3.0 INTRODUCTION.....	35
3.1 EXEGETICAL DYNAMICS.....	35
3.2 SCRIPTURAL INFERENCES.....	37
3.2.1 Leadership in the trinity.....	39
3.2.2 Leadership in the creation story.....	39
3.2.3 Women in Jesus' ministry.....	40
3.2.4 Women in the early church.....	42
3.2.5 Women in Pauline epistles.....	42
3.3 EVALUATION OF THE BCZ POSITION.....	44
3.4 CONCLUSION.....	48

CHAPTER 4: UTILIZING THE CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY METHOD TO INTERROGATE THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE BCZ.....	49
4.0 INTRODUCTION.....	49
4.1 OBSERVATION.....	49
4.1.1 Analysis	50
4.2 HERMENEUTICS.....	50
4.2.1 General principles of hermeneutics.....	51
4.3 EXEGESIS.....	51
4.4 INTERPRETATION.....	52
4.4.0 Approaches to interpretation.....	54
4.4.1 The historical-cultural analysis.....	54
4.4.2 The historical-grammatical method.....	56
4.5 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS.....	57
4.5.1 Re-reading Galatians 3:28, 1 Corinthians 14:3 & 1 Timothy 2:11-12.....	59
4.6 Application and appropriation.....	60
4.7 CONCLUSION.....	61
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....	62
5.0 INTRODUCTION.....	62
5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY.....	62
5.2 LESSONS LEARNT.....	63
5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	63
5.3.1 Re-interpretation of scripture.....	63
5.3.2 Use of passages of scripture.....	64
5.3.3 Engagement of male chauvinist.....	64
5.3.4 Continue speaking and campaign.....	64
5.3.5 Recruiting more women.....	64
5.3.6 Re-thinking theological training.....	64

5.4 CONCLUSION.....	64
6.0 REFERENCES.....	65
7.0 APPENDICES.....	73

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

1. INTRODUCTION

It is still a bone of contention as to whether the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe is upgrading or down-grading the status of women. Though the church has been known to be the voice of the voiceless in dealing with critical issues like the welfare of widows and orphans, disabled persons; leading to the name ‘Baptists people who care,’ one wonders what has happened to the issue of opening up opportunities for women to take up leadership positions. The burning question that one is left asking as regards the status of women is, “were they born to be followers of men?” The main aim of this research is to rethink the Baptist tradition on women ordination. From the researcher’s personal observation and being part of the Baptist community, women are put at the periphery irrespective of their so-called claim of being “people of the book” especially when it comes to ordination. As a result, the researcher has seen it worthy to apply the contextual bible study method to address the issue of women ordination. The researcher has chosen the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe in particular because although women’s voices have been crying to be heard so that they can be at par with their male counterparts especially regarding the issue of ordination, however the church has remained silent. Such a pertinent issue perpetuating the suppression of women has motivated the researcher to embark on an academic research to explore how this can be rectified. The researcher being a member of this community, it makes him a familiar researcher and hence it enriches the bond between the researcher and the informants. Also, from an insider’s perspective, the issue might be tackled better for the purpose of transformation. Unlike if a stranger would have come only in the name of research, the information gathered will be limited and sometimes will lack some enforcement to its implementation for the purposes of a total recognition of women to be also ordained as pastors from an inside out approach. Doctrine has produced distinctions that alienate women by defining life and determining relationships. Distinctions nurture attitudes of superiority against inferiority, hence, allowing domination and support of certain groups (Williams 1997:106).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

From a global perspective, the investigation on leadership has proved beyond reasonable doubt that there has been an imbalance on the pretext of being male or female. Gender inequalities have ravaged the entire globe, African continent, southern African region, Zimbabwe to be precise has also not been spared as well as the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe in particular. Gender inequalities have remained a contentious issue since time immemorial, it still remains a thorn in the flesh. Leadership positions have been reserved for males leading to the exclusion of women from occupying leadership positions. The discussion has been read from male lenses thereby denying women the opportunity to exhibit their abilities. Therefore, from a global perspective, large amounts of biases have been and they are still being observed when it comes to leadership in general and in particular the exclusion of women from ordination. Researchers have seen that women do not easily gain access to the top executive roles in society while it is easier for men to reach that level (Akhtar 2008).

Beneria and Permayer (2010), define gender inequality as the imbalance between genders. They further argue that it may be described as, but not limited to, the gender gap in the division of labour, education, access to resources, financial autonomy and bargaining power, as political leadership as well as religious power. Esmail et. al. (2011:564), described gender inequality as the “differences between men and women in receiving social and economic advantages which is often to the benefit of men at the expense of women”. Gender inequality becomes the opposite of gender equality which in this study, the researcher tries to achieve whereby when we say $2+2=4$, we mean that the value of $2+2$ and the value of 4 are the same with an interest in the same valuation of men and women and sameness of enjoyment of rights, power, opportunities, treatment and control of resources between males and females in the society (Esmail et. al. 2011). However, the idea of denoting the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men as well as opportunities to leadership positions have been limited to men creating a gap to be filled by this research.

According to Du Toit (2009), the issue of gender inequality is not only a theological one, but it is also a human rights issue, and it has not been solved yet. He further asserts that, the marginalization and oppression of so many women and children throughout the world demands our attention as people of faith (Du Toit, 2009). Men are the dominant gender irrespective of them being the minority whilst women comprise of the majority; however,

in their majority they still find it very difficult to establish a space for them to operate because of the issue of gender inequality.

According to Smith (2003), women appear to have been left out of the decision-making process of the church, irrespective of them being two-thirds majority of all the bible-believing community globally. Thus,

No issue in feminist theology is contentious as that of women's space in the church and their call to ministry...women comprise of 60%,70% or even more of a local congregation gathered to worship, God, empowered by the Spirit for ministry (Rakoczy 2004:198).

However, irrespective of their number being higher than their counterparts, they are excluded in leadership positions be it globally, continentally and even locally which permeated to local churches in Zimbabwe where the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe has not been spared.

Of paramount importance to the issue of gender inequality, particularly the exclusion of women from leadership in general is patriarchy. Patriarchal tendencies globally and within the African context have also widened the gap of women who have found themselves being located at the circumferences in leadership in every sphere of life be it politically, economically, socially and religiously.

By definition, Bazili (1991:9) defines patriarchy as an ideology of male supremacy that results from social construction of gender which in turn justifies the social, economic and political distinction between men and women. Walby in Smelser (1994:320), opines that, patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. To this end, patriarchal tendencies have been viewed as the universal, oldest and worst kind of oppression in the world that has fuelled the exclusion of women. It cuts across time, cultures, races, classes and ethnicities. Hence, it is a belief in society as a whole dominated and ruled by men though the men are a quarter within the whole number. Viewed as natural, universal, unchangeable and unquestionable, patriarchal tendencies have trickled into most churches within the globe, continent and Zimbabwe and thereby

infringing the liberty that Christ has brought through the message of Apostle Paul that, there is no longer male or female, Jew nor Gentile (Galatians 3:28).

To radicals like Kate Millet (2001), politics means power and men derive their power from the patriarchal system that supports and favours males and patriarchy as an ideology is sustained by early socialization in the family, secondary socialization in schools, churches and workplaces. It also rests upon the economic exploitation and use of threat and force (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004). Patriarchy benefits from the oppression of women. Women as a group have interests opposed to those of men. The interests unite them into sisterhood across classes and cultures.

Bennett (2006) has this to say, patriarchy implies male domination, masculine activity and male prejudice. He further envisages that, in modern English, the term can refer to the ecclesiastical power of men recognized as Christian leaders; particularly within the Greek Orthodox Tradition (the Archbishop of Constantinople is commonly known as the patriarch of the church- the 'head'). The definition therefore, implies that there is no room for the matriarchal leadership within the church. Henceforth, the issue of patriarchal tendencies has also nailed the exclusion of women from leadership positions and to be precise their cry for ordination remained a dream and water within the pipe.

From an African continent's point of departure back in the 1960s, during the epoch of defining and redefining African Christian Theology, African Women Theologians having been influenced by Womanist Theologians and Feminist Theologians; the desire to incorporate women has also been an issue. African Women Theologians such as Mercy Amba Oduyoye fought for recognition, incorporation and inclusion of women. The push resurfaced in the year 1989 when the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians (hereafter, 'the Circle') was launched in Ghana, in a bid to make women heard through their bi-annual meetings in order to preach some awareness, empowerments to women to rise up this ladder of patriarchy. The Circle advocates for the liberation of women from oppression and discrimination. Thus, Phiri (2008) reiterates that the Circle members were mandated to contribute their unique voice to the continental and global theological voice on issues of women. However, challenges have been noticed which are still being noticed today thereby becoming barriers towards the inclusion of women. So, the discussion of gender inequality

and patriarchy particularly towards the inclusion of women in ordination has remained a thorn in the flesh.

Be that as it may, some African churches started to advocate for the inclusion of women into leadership and also going as far as ordination. Churches ranging from Catholics, mainline churches or the protestant churches, Pentecostal churches and even some African Independent churches and or sects felt the heat of the movement towards a type of theology that sees the need for gender equality through the contextual bible study method as another avenue of theologizing. Thus, the issue of the accommodation of women into leadership through the ordination of women received mixed responses that resulted in a crisis of schism among many church traditions.

As a result, a number of traditions such as those from the Church of England, Anglican Churches of South Africa, Episcopal Church in the United States of America embraced women into leadership and women ordination (Torjesen 1993). However, contrary to the aforementioned type of churches or ecclesial; Christian communities such as the Catholics and other rigid adherents to conservatism refused to embrace the drive. Thus, Torjesen (1993) propounded that the Vatican's 1976 Declaration of the question of admitting women to priesthood justifies the church's exclusion of women from priesthood on the grounds that the female body does not resemble the male body of Christ. This was also further added by Hampson (1990), when he professes that, Jesus did not call any woman to become part of the twelve. And from these entire angles, one can deduce that there is a need to rethink certain doctrines and traditions because these perceptions on women's exclusion and inclusion into most churches in the world and African have also influenced how Zimbabwean churches and in particular the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe operate.

Churches such as Anglicans, the Dutch Reformed Church in Zimbabwe, Methodist, Church of Christ, Seventh Day Adventist Church etc., and Baptist Churches to include the National Baptist Convention, the African Baptist Convention, the United Baptist Convention, the Baptist Union of Zimbabwe and the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe from which some of the Baptist Convention came from have treated the issue with differences and thus the researcher has seen it fit to undertake this academic journey to try and interrogate for the purposes of rethinking our tradition as mainline church members and in particular as the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

According to Kumalo (2016), while in the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA), women have been ordained to the ministry of the word and sacrament since 1976, they remain a minority numerically and are still marginalized in leadership and as a result ordained women remain the most unrecognized and underutilized group. It is still believed that few women ministers have held leadership positions. A lot of statistics around the globe, African continent and Zimbabwean churches have proved that the progress towards gender equality is still a mirage hence the crux of the voyage of discovery movement from the known to the unknown particularly in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

As alluded to earlier on above, some Baptist Conventions have taken on board the liberation theology which is showcased through the inclusion of women into ministry and leadership as well as women ordination. For example, the National Baptist Convention and the African Baptist Convention do ordain women as pastors but the mother body which is the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe has remained still rigid and adherent to its tradition from which the researcher has found it worth to unearth some of its dominant passages of scripture from a contextual bible study method's point of departure.

As part of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe adherents, there are mixed views and misconceptions on the issue being researched on. The researcher has therefore met with many women, who are grieved by these misconceptions and who are being shunned whenever they seek for ordination regardless of them having enrolled at the Baptist theological Seminary of Zimbabwe. Some women had this to say, *“tichabuda hedu toenda kunopinda kune mamwe ma church atinogamuchirwa, mosara henyu ne Baptist yenyu...”* ((We shall move out and go to other churches that accepts us and remain with your Baptist). It is the Seminary under the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe that provides an opportunity for studying theology from which at the end of a three-year period, one receives a diploma or certificate in theology, which is awarded to both males and females. As a result, upon being called by a church, only a male pastor is eligible for ordination by a local church which is a member church of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, for women after three solid years of studying theology at this seminary, they get to be told that we don't recognize women pastors in the Baptist Church. One will then wonder whether the Baptist tradition is liberation-centred in nature when it comes to the status of women. The following questions come to mind, will our tradition change for the best or worst if we have women

as leaders? Why doesn't the status of women change in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe when it comes to pastoral leadership positions especially for women who underwent the same pastoral training as men? Why are women allowed to sing, dance and lead praise and worship but only to be instructed to remain quiet when it comes to preaching and occupying leadership positions like pastoral posts or eldership in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe? Ironically, if women are having their own national conferences, they can either invite a male pastor or they can choose amongst themselves the same pastors' wives who have undergone the same training together with males to be their guests. Even at their local churches, there are times when the Women Missionary Union (WMU) is given the chance to preach and they are being allowed. One wonders and grapples with the so-called tradition. Henceforth, this has led the researcher to undertake an academic journey of rethinking the Baptist tradition which one believes is the main culprit on the ordination of women. In so doing, the researcher has made use of the contextual bible study method of interpretation. The status of women in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe has suffered from the conflict and charisma which women often display against the bureaucracy created by men (Poleme 1989:13).

The above background presented by the researcher shows that there is still a long way to go when it comes to addressing the issue of inequality within the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe community. Although the church is a very popular and vibrant community which has managed to convert many people, but its silence on the issues of women ordination has attracted the researcher to speak for the women who are the majority in the church but still being denied the opportunity by the minority through researching the reasons behind this silence.

As someone coming from the same community which is under study, the researcher has keenly followed the church doctrine and analyzed how and from which angle women are thrown at the back of the beyond when it comes to the ordination of women. The researcher is aware that he is an insider in this community and therefore, he is conflicted in some way, hence, to avoid being biased, the researcher has used the phenomenological approach during the study.

The researcher is aware that there has been a number of macro and micro feminist theories which have tried to advance different solutions from their standing podiums of reflection. However, these solutions from these different theories have posed some limitations

irrespective of their strong expositions and achievements. Thus, the writer has embarked on yet another alternative of the use of the contextual bible study method of interpretation.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women are the majority in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe but they are denied access to the leadership opportunities by the few or the minority who are the men. Therefore, there is need for women's ordination into ministry because of their number as they congregate and populate the whole church as compared to their male counterparts. Statistically, in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe Church, approximately 20% of the congregants are men while 80% are women. This then translates, that, of the whole population within the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe local churches; about one-third is men and two-thirds are women. Be that as it may, even though the percentage of women is higher than their counterparts, women are still not accorded the opportunity to be ordained. Therefore, in a nutshell, it is so fundamental to reiterate that it is not those women who are not ordained per se which stands as a problem; but it is the fact that, women are the majority but they are not given the opportunity to take up key leadership and decision-making positions. Hence, the researcher has found out that there is a need to rethink the tradition which again acts as the etymology of everything and then champion the need to incorporate the majority.

1.4 AIM

The aim of this research is to rethink the Baptist tradition on the ordination of women using the contextual bible interpretation method.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the beliefs and tradition of the Baptists.
2. To examine the exegetical bible interpretation used in the exclusion of women's ordination in the Baptist Church.
3. To analyze how the contextual bible study method can be used to address the position of women in the Baptist Church with particular reference to the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

In a bid to solve the problem raised above in the statement of the problem; research methods are crucial. By definition: According to Neuman (2006), methodology is the science of research. It is a way for systematically solving the research problem (Flass 2008). Flass (2008) further argues that methodology is the systematic theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study- it comprises of the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. However, Corbin (2008) defines methodology as a way of cogitating about and struggling with social reality, a set of procedures and techniques for gathering and analysing data. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. So, in order to come up with a research decision; an unbiased methodology is crucial as it helps the researcher to expose the research decision and evaluation comes after before implementation. Henceforth, it is of paramount importance to note that research methodology has many dimensions and research methods to constitute a part of the research methodology. To this end, the scope of research methods becomes wider than that of research methods which then translates that; when we talk of research methodology, we not only talk of the research methods but we also consider the logic behind the methods we use in the context of our research study and why we are using a particular method and why we are using others so that research results are capable of being evaluated either by the researcher or by others. According to Neuman (2006:2), "Methodology is broader than methods and it envelops methods...Methods are sets of specific techniques for selecting cases, measuring and observing aspects of social life, gathering and refining data, analysing the data and reporting on results. The two are closely linked and interdependent, but distinct."

Thus, this research is an empirical qualitative study which is based on interviews and reading of the church's available materials on Baptist distinctive, written materials or documentation and statement of faith. Henceforth to curb some biases, a phenomenological approach has been employed in carrying out this case study. The target population comprised of middle age women who have studied theology at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe, the executive of the Baptist convention of Zimbabwe, Pastors, elderly laymen leaders as well as the deacons who are still rigid adherents to the biased exegetical biblical interpretations on the issue of the ordination of women. The researcher chose the qualitative method to have a deeper understanding of the Baptist convention of Zimbabwe on the issue under study.

1.6.1 PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

This approach has been used in order to avoid bias during the research and to come up with the lived realities of the adherents of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

According to Edmund Husserl (1859-1934), the phenomenological approach is the study of a phenomenon. And the term phenomenology is a concept derived from the Greek word 'phainomai' which means "that which manifests itself or that which appears." It may be regarded as the study of appearances. And to this end, the researcher seeks to unpack what is contained in the Baptist tradition which is manifesting into the subjugation of women. A phenomenological study is used to describe the lived experiences of individuals in relation to a phenomenon. According to Byrne (2001:830), "phenomenologists examine experiences of humans to gain an understanding of the essential reality of the lived experience". Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, and Hendry (2011) explained the phenomenological design as a qualitative experiential research approach rooted in psychology for the purpose of making sense of personal experiences by focusing on participants' cognitive, linguistic, affective, and physical well-being. Merriam (2009:390) suggested, "Phenomenology can manifest what is hidden in ordinary, everyday experiences and help to describe and assimilate human experiences." Phenomenology is a means for understanding the phenomenon that affects the lives of individuals from their conscious perspectives (Giorgi, 2012). Applebaum (2012) described the phenomenological design as a psychological method that is a reflective engagement supporting a discovery process that is always implicitly inter-subjective.

In addition, Cox (1996) is of the view that, a phenomenological approach argues that, a non-believer can appreciate the meaning of the religion in the believer's own terms because it calls for the suspension of one's personal or academic presuppositions by temporarily placing them within the brackets (epoche). By doing so, thus permitting him or her to cultivate a feeling for the believer's own faith position (empathy). Therefore, the researcher has chosen this approach in order to avoid biases during the research and to come up with the lived realities of the adherents both the women who are denied the opportunity to be ordained as well as the church as a whole (BCZ).

By using the phenomenological approach, the researcher made use of the concept of "epoche" which means that the researcher has held back or suspended or refrained from

evaluating and bracketed off what he already knows about ordination of women in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe in order to create a fertile ground for the manifestation from the targeted groups so that the researcher gets to know the inner reasons why the BCZ is not ordaining women.

The researcher has also considered the concept of empathy in a bid to get into the shoes of the participants and the shunned women in the BCZ to know better from their lived experience. Thus, Smart (1992) argues that the researcher should enter inside the shoes of the believer for more information. The researcher henceforth has managed to put himself inside the shoes of these women and then probe for a change thereby becoming the voice of the voiceless.

Nevertheless, by using a phenomenological approach it doesn't necessarily mean that it is free from biases. Therefore, it must be taken into consideration that the approach is not perfect; it has its own loopholes. Cox (1992), argues that, bracketing out or off one's preconceived ideas or previously held beliefs and knowledge is very difficult for human beings. Also, it is difficult to maintain a free position especially where it involves or concerns human beings. Henceforth, the need for employing other methods as well as critically analysing the results as they manifest from different methods.

1.6.2 CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY

Riches (2010) defines the Contextual Bible Study method as the analysis of a portion of scripture within its given context. He further elucidates that; the method encourages to read the bible together so as to understand the burning issues of the day. Thus, the CBS is a way of reading both established Christians and those new to the bible find it to be insightful, empowering, even life changing. Henceforth, according to West (1999), the CBS method focuses on liberation hermeneutics. Riches (2005) eats in the same plate of ideas with West (1999), when he envisages that, for many, the CBS empowers people who have lost confidence in their ability to talk, preach and preach about their faith in order to discover that the stories, images and ideas of the bible can help to illuminate their concerns and experience. It is therefore against the bedrock or background where one has chosen to employ this methodology so as to re-think the Baptist tradition for the purposes of taking into consideration the steps and procedures that are important when interpreting scriptures

so that no one is excluded in the empowerment mantra and challenge a revolutionary change of the Baptist tradition to accommodate women. This research calls for a change in the way BCZ articulates its tradition in line with the scripture. According to West (1993), when reading the bible using the CBS, it helps one to have a lot of exposure to scripture hence, a great way to really dig into what is going on in the passage. Cornwall and Nixon (2011), are of the opinion that the use of the CBS method in reading the bible has the power in its own right to speak justice into situations of injustice. Thus, the researcher has decided to use the method as an awakening call to re-read those exegetical verses used by the Baptist community especially the BCZ in their verdict of excluding women from ordination mantra. The CBS helps to give space to hear from those who may not usually be recognized within mainstream biblical interpretations and to this end, the researcher found it suitable to employ this same method as it was used in South Africa during the colonial and apartheid era, in order to endorse the legitimacy of difficult ideas, and to value all the voices in the BCZ community of believers who are underprivileged. In a nutshell, it is the purpose of the use of this method in this research to enhance holistic development and empowerment of women in the Baptist community as well as making this BCZ mother body to re-think their tradition from this method of bible interpretation. Empowering in such a way that calls for a process of action in a bid to translate and transform a perennial situation in the BCZ into achieving gender equality and justice among men and women in the Baptist church. Henceforth, the need for repositioning the contextual biblical hermeneutics in Africa towards holistic empowerment (Nadar, 2010). Realities of struggle against colonialism and apartheid called for a specific contextual bible study reading of the bible together, yearning to hear a prophetic word from God. This organic process driven by the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, within which the bible was a vital, but ambivalent, resource. It was from this liberation praxis that a particular form of community-based bible study emerged, identified with the Ujamaa Centre (West 2011). To this end, women in the BCZ yearn for a prophetic voice or word from God against their predicament. Hence, the researcher has decided to become the prophetic figure in raising the flag in this academic research paper using the CBS.

1.6.3 CASE STUDY

A case study is an in-depth study of a single organization, institution, programme, event, decision, policy or group which serves as the case being investigated and is aimed at establishing a clear understanding of what is being studied. It is usually used when there is a new phenomenon about which not much is known or in cases where there are very rare events in which few subjects can be found. A case study provides both descriptive and explanatory information (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995). According to Yin (2009), a case study is defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life contexts, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Woodside (2010) further asserts that a case study research is a process which involves prediction, description and comprehension. Therefore; the researcher also found it worth to consider this empirical study to investigate the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe's set of pre-specified procedures as one narrows the research to a particular people to reflect on.

1.6.4 DATA COLLECTION

This research is qualitative in nature; as such, primary data has been collected and used to a greater extent although secondary data from books, journals, statements of faith also have been utilised to support the primary findings. The data has been gathered through conducting interviews with the target group from the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe as well as reading the available material on the Baptist church for example; the Southern Baptist Convention of America. Proposed dates, times and places of interviews were discussed and agreed upon by the researcher and the informants. Data collected from the participants was thematically analyzed and scrutinized exegetically. The focus of the study is not number based but it is based on the quality of the data gathered in line with scripture. The interviews were conducted in English and vernacular language. The target population was chosen for a particular reason and their contribution became of paramount importance on the issue of women ordination.

1.7 CONFIDENTIALITY

Before proceeding to conduct the field work; the researcher contacted the targeted population and explained the aim of the study and its expectations. Permission was also sought and granted from the church leaders before the research took place. The names of

the informants have been withheld for confidentiality hence the use of pseudo names and for ethical considerations; group codes have been used to refer to the participants. The participants undertook the research freely without being forced during the interaction process.

1.8 JUSTIFICATION

Some researchers have written about ordination in general but little has been written on the ordination of women with a specific focus on the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe. Hence, basing on what has been written by other scholars, the researcher decided to fill the identified gap. The main reason for carrying out this research is to problematize the status quo which denies women the right to be ordained in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe. I found it worthwhile to undertake this academic research in order to establish the reason why the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe is silent on this particular issue. The Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe as a church in an African set up which is influenced by patriarchy has managed to address other issues within the church but it has tended to neglect the grievances of women on the issue of ordination to the pastoral ministry. This study aims at benefiting the church at large as it seeks to establish a bridge between the Baptist tradition on the issue of ordination and the contextual bible interpretation method which seeks to incorporate everyone regardless of gender on issues of ordination of women. One might ask why the researcher would be interested in the issue of rethinking the Baptist tradition on the ordination of women considering the fact that he is a male pastor. The reason is that I am an academic who is not patriarchal centred and I am seeking to redress all the injustices that are taking place within my community and beyond, hence, I feel that it is important for me to conduct this research from an insider and outsider approach. Also, since the church is silent about it, I thought it is the right time for someone to embark on an academic journey and address this crucial contemporary issue and probe for a change in the convention.

1.9 SCOPE

The research is focused on the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe community so as to have factual data on issues of ordination. I have chosen this group because I am familiar with this church and it is much easier for me to convince the participants to contribute and provide as much information as possible to a researcher whom they are familiar with rather than a complete outsider who just comes in the name of research.

1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.10.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher explored on how much of the researched area has already been covered by other researchers and identified gaps in scope, knowledge as well as weaknesses in previous studies. The researcher therefore; engaged in extensive reading of whatever has been published that appeared relevant to the research topic (Bless, and Higson-Smith, 1995; Blink, 1999). It should be reiterated that the subject of gender inequality, particularly the exclusion of women in leadership in general, has caused a lot of ink to spill. Looking closely at the leadership positions be it in politics, workplaces, education, churches and many more; women have not been awarded equal opportunities if compared to their male counterparts. As if that is not enough, irrespective of their majority in number in all spheres of life, still women's cry has not been heard and the exclusion of women from ordination has aggravated the situation. Since the researcher is aware that this subject has been explored by other researchers; a critical evaluation of other researchers' work has been considered in a bid to fill in the gap left. Henceforth at this juncture, it is the intention of the researcher to review how these works speak to my topic under research. Various sources of literature ranging from sociology, psychology, theology, gender and religion has been published which become sources of the research under study.

1.10.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory can be defined as an organized body of concepts and principles that are intended to explain a particular situation or phenomenon and which, like hypotheses, are tentative explanations that new data either support or do not support (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Some would go for the word conceptual framework instead of theoretical framework or review. The researcher synthesized various theoretical perspectives to come up with a totally new theoretical framework, to deal with the problem at hand. Thus, conceptual framework becomes both original and peculiar to a particular study (Olayinka, Taiwo, Raji-Oyelade and Farai, 2006).

According to Meena (1992), the macro-theories of gender inequalities ranging from: liberal- feminist theory, Marxist-feminist theory, radical theory, socialist feminist theory, post modernism to the micro-theories of gender inequalities such as black feminism, cultural feminism and multicultural feminism to mention but a few are crucial for the

researcher for the purposes of defining and redefining gender issues, particularly the exclusion of women from leadership in general.

The liberal theory as it is purported to be the first documented form of feminism is of paramount importance to reflect on. According to Gaidzanwa in Meena (1992), liberal feminism dates back to 18th century Britain. The proponent, Mary Wollstone Crafter questioned views about women which were damaging and discriminatory. Therefore, this theory is very much useful as it seeks to give women rights, opportunities to jobs, empowerment of women through education. However, Bryson (1992), critiqued the theory for failing to address underlying causes of women's oppression. Henceforth, a gap that needs to be filled in.

Karl Marx; with his Marxist theory states that the Marxist feminist theory is hinged on the economic determinism in explaining the oppression of women. Drawn from Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels' writings, for example: "The origin of the family, private property and state" (O'Donnell 1992). Gender inequalities are rooted in capitalism and ownership of private property (Bryson1992). Women do not own the means of production hence a subordinate class that is oppressed, exploited just like the proletariats. Women's position in a capitalist society is economically determined (Bryson 1992). This again is of paramount importance as it helps one to see different types of oppression that subjugate women but however, in order to speak to the topic at hand there is a need to understand that this theory ignored the issue of patriarchy and male control of women which is the key in the research under study. Economic factors are not enough to explain gender inequalities; other sources of inequalities are ignored.

In reference to the Radical feminist theory, proponents have explained gender inequalities on the basis of patriarchy, gender socialization and biology. Thus, Marcus and Ducklin, (1998) argued that the subordination of women has origins in biology. The core of power and female domination is male control of females in reproduction and child bearing (Firestone in O'Donnell 1992). Women become dependent on men for material necessities of life and protection especially in nuclear families. Be that as it may, the researcher appreciates this literature but still there are some grey areas where the researcher seeks to address that is its failure to explain the origins of patriarchy and its power and it seems to

treat women as passive when they are the majority in the church to the extent that if things were to go by voting they would dictate the pace.

Furthermore, women in the third world countries are also subordinated and exploited as women by males. In patriarchal societies where males dominate, ownership of property, movable and immovable is largely in the hands of males. Studies conducted by the Women and Law in Zimbabwe (2000) reveal that women have access to the resources but do not have control over them. Most African cultures legitimize this male dominance.

Almost all religions in the world subordinate women. Acker (1997) points out that in the Islamic religion, a devout Muslim man would stop praying when a strange woman or a donkey appears. A prayer by a devout Jewish read; “I thank God that I am a Jew and not a Gentile, a man and not a woman.” Through the contextual bible study method of interpretation, one will then reveal these biases in interpretation.

Scholars who have written on women ordination around the globe, continent and Zimbabwe are also not spared to feed in the researcher as I zero-in-on the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe. The Vatican’s 1976 Declaration on the question of admitting women to priesthood that justified the church’s exclusion of women from priesthood becomes fundamental to the researcher as he shall interrogate the same issue from a Baptist point of view which seems to give different reasons from the ones provided by the Catholics in denying women’s ordination.

The research also focuses on the debate within the context of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) from the United States of America which forms the base of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe under scrutiny. Thus, the methodologies used by Damilola Abraham when he was researching about women ordination in the (SBC) to include: the history of the debate in the denomination via historical documents and accounts, conventional statements, policy statements, scholarly articles and the books, statement of faith and practices of the convention vis-à-vis their beliefs and their understanding of scripture used in arriving at the conclusion on women ordination becomes of great importance. However, the gap is still there that needs a different approach to the one to be employed by the researcher using the contextual bible study method.

The book by Kasomo (2010), “The Role of Women in the church in Africa” is another literature equally important as it helps the researcher to reflect on this article which tries to place women on the receiving end when they are the majority in the church. Thus, Kasomo (2010) argues that Africa's traditional society was not as fair to women. Women used to be handled like personal property of men, oppressed and degraded.

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians has also discussed the subject of women oppression which is key to try and liberate women. Oduyoye (2006) addressed some of the unjustifiable acts of men against women. In her writing entitled “Gender and Theology in Africa Today” Oduyoye discussed the cultural movement and setting and lamented strongly about the marginalization of women in society, religious setting as well as the socio-economic programmes. So, there is rich information that does address the issues of gender inequalities which result in the oppression of women.

Oduyoye (1990), in her book “women Tradition and the Church in Africa,” she pointed out that ... gender socialization is the norm, the strategy has distorted the quality of human relations and it continues to deny the parity between women and men or to accept female and male as equivalent expressions of human being hence making chauvinism a problem in Africa. Therefore, women’s role has been reduced. Thus, the researcher found this literature important to reflect on for the purposes of addressing the gender gap in the BCZ.

Maina (1995), propounds that the role of women in the church is a very crucial section. Thus, their role in the church is more clearly stipulated than in the secular and this will be unearthed in greater detail.

According to Darko (2015), being an ordained member of the church is publicly affirmed as being called into service of Christ and usually such a person viable any leadership position. Therefore, this view has attracted the researcher to review in a bid to challenge the Baptist church tradition. Oduyoye (1995) henceforth queried those who argue against the ordination of women by stating that women serve at the table at home despite their condition but they are hindered from serving at the table in the church. With this in mind, her writing has therefore become of importance in that it challenges the treatment of women equally as they are treated at home. Thus, in essence, Oduyoye argues that if women can serve anywhere else, why not in the church? It is therefore unjust in the BCZ to treat female

pastors indifferently simply because of their gender and to this end this literature has become of use and reviewed to support the cause at hand in the Baptist church set up.

Also, the works of Muringa and Makaudze (2014 and 2015) contend that, African Culture particularly the Shona culture, is not restrictive to women. From this literature as well, it has pushed the researcher to consider this information for literature review arguing to say if the traditional culture of the Shona people does consider the issue of gender equality, what of the church? Thus, the research has consulted the literature so as to find out the reasons behind the restrictions of women in the Baptist convention of Zimbabwe as compared to African culture. Thus, Mupangwa and Chirongoma (2020) reiterate that, several examples from Muringa and Makaudze illustrate that the African culture is flexible enough to allow women to be in leadership.

Furthermore, Mupangwa and Chirongoma (2020) profess that there has been scholarly debate in the academic fraternity over the question of whether women should be ordained or not. Equally important this literature has also proved to be useful to review on the research underway, henceforth, Darko (2015) further asserts that it is apparent that there is no agreement within the church concerning the issue of ordination which has become necessary for the researcher to consider these works as important to review in a bid to see how it can be used to drive a change in the Baptist community.

Hierarchical structures within the church by Clifford (2001), has not been spared as well in the review of this paper under study. These hierarchies need to be gotten rid of, though some feminists do not believe that the ordination of women will remove these structures. From this loophole, one therefore would use this literature to advocate for the re-reading of the bible using the contextual method which would see the complete overhaul of the system. Rakoczy (2004) and Phiri (1997) both advocate for leadership positions in the church. This again shall be of use in the paper because the death of Christ brought equality between men and women (Oduyoye 2001). To this end, there should be no discussion on whether or not women should be ordained at all. Hence, the writer has consulted the literature and made use of Oduyoye's writings to compile this academic paper in order to advance the need for a rethinking of the Baptist tradition on the pretext that, the death of Christ brought freedom to all humanity to be all they want to be, including being ordained ministers (Oduyoye 2001).

Apart from the aforementioned, based on the principles from African Women's Theology by Sprong (2011) and Kanyoro (2001), one has also noted the importance of their works which sought for equality and justice between men and women. The writings of Sprong (2011) on the reason why worldwide women have been treated as outsiders in the church have also become fundamental in comparison with why the BCZ has chosen to take the same route of denying women ordination. The BCZ is failing to take on board the views of Oduyoye (2001) that African women's theology is a theology of relations replacing hierarchies with mutuality. Henceforth, the unequivocally advocating for women to be included in the church becomes important to the writer in the context of women ordination in the Baptist church.

One would say, there is a need to re-interpret our bible verses which supports the exclusion of women ordination vis a vis the contextual bible study. Dube (2001) and Gabaitse (2012) have assisted the researcher with re-reading the scripture from a perspective that empowers women. Thus, the researcher has noted with great appreciation a hermeneutic that challenges the traditional theology which defines a person from a patriarchal male experience (Oduyoye 2000). One must not give a blind eye that the dominant theme in the bible is justice which should be extracted and then be used to eradicate the marginalization and victimization of women in the church (Kanyoro 2004). So, the researcher has also seen it worth taking into consideration the works of Kanyoro since she seems to have used the contextual bible study method to deal with the injustices around women ordination in the BCZ, thus the researcher saw it fit to reflect on the literature in order to critically read the bible paying attention to context.

The writing by Phiri (1997): "Doing Theology in Community: The case of African women theologians in the 1990s" is also of great importance as it seeks to research women's experiences in Africa. To this end, the researcher has found this literature crucial. As an area of academic study by the institute of African women in religion and culture, inaugurated by the Circle of Concerned African women (hereafter the circle) in Accra Ghana in 1989. Upon discovery that there was limited literature written by African women about themselves, this has prompted the researcher to then become the voice of the voiceless women in the Baptist convention of Zimbabwe. And the researcher has seen it worthwhile to provide this literature in the BCZ in a bid to address the issue since their voice and views have been misrepresented and ignored.

Studies in the Third World Feminist Theology combined with African American Womanist Theology with African Women's Theology have been traced and found to be of use. However, while African American Women Theologians may share the same skin colour, their contexts within which they do theology are very different and by the same token, the researcher has seen a gap and a different theology in the BCZ where women in this community have been denied access to ordination.

Apart from the above, literature or writings of Rakoczy (2004); religion and violence, on the suffering of women again has been found useful to review to rethink the Baptist tradition. Effects of violence and Christianity on women have been seen through the prevalence of domestic violence because of its effects on women's dignity and place in society (Rakoczy 2004). Rakoczy (2004) further notes that Christianity as a patriarchal religion causes violence to women through its preponderant use of male language for God, its traditional teaching on women's inferiority, the household codes in the New Testament which mandate the subordination of women and its hierarchical structure. Therefore, the writer sought to the reconstruction of these exclusive images of the church and challenges the Baptist church to break the silence through this research paper in order to speak out against the exclusion of women from ordination so that hope and future is witnessed in the name of the reversal or rethinking of the Baptist tradition using the CBS method.

The visibility of women in matters to do with property rights ownership, economics as envisaged by Makaudze (2014) has been revised as well and the researcher has found it worth to include women in the BCZ to own certain privileges in the church. The organizational leadership, women and development in the Apostolic Faith Mission in Zimbabwe; a patriarchal theology by Kwaramba (2019) also has been reviewed.

Last but not least Chitando and Chirongoma (2013) argue that, justice is not silence. Therefore, for change to be witnessed, the researcher seeks to challenge the church (BCZ)'s practice and tradition which is troublesome in the exclusion of women when it comes to ordination. This has also been discovered by Chitando and Chirongoma (2013) as they sought to explain churches facing sexual and gender-based violence, as defiling the Christian understanding of human dignity. Thus, the tradition of our denomination as BCZ must be rethought.

1.11 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the chapter has presented the background of the study and gave an explanation of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe's beliefs on ordination. The statement of the problem highlighted what exactly the question is all about. The objectives have been outlined as well as proving the aim of the whole research. The methodological issues which are the key elements of the research have been also articulated for the purposes of defining the authenticity of the study. This section is of paramount importance as it refers to the use of particular strategies and tools for data gathering and analysis. And finally, the literature review showed clearly what has been done by other scholars and what has not been done; thereby creating the space for this research.

CHAPTER 2

INTEROGATING BAPTIST BELIEFS AND TRADITION

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This section shall zero-in-on the brief introduction of who the Baptists are, their beliefs and what does the Baptist tradition say concerning the Baptists? A critical summary of the Baptist history, core beliefs and what actually defines the Baptist (tradition) in general and in particular the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe will also be dealt with.

2.1 BAPTIST BEGINNINGS

According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015) beginnings are important because they set directions and give shape to journeys. The birth of the Baptist story and its life in England is covered by a number of theories which Baptist themselves disputed and denied. The first theory is the Jerusalem Jordan John theory, which traces Baptist Beginnings to John the Baptist (McBeth 1979). It is a successionist theory which tries to link Baptist churches to John the Baptist who was baptizing in the river Jordan (McBeth 1979). Baptists denied this theory on the basis that John the Baptist's baptism was a baptism in preparation for the Messiah to come while the Baptist's baptism is a New Testament baptism which resembles the death, burial with Christ in sins and the resurrection with Christ in the newness of life anticipating the second coming of Christ (Romans 6:1-6 NIV). According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015), the other theory is that of viewing Baptists as Anabaptists. The word Ana means re, and the word anabaptist means rebaptizing. However, Baptists rejected this on the fact that, what they practiced is not a rebaptizing but a believer's baptism, BF & Message statement of faith (2000), which is different from what the anabaptist practiced. Anabaptists' baptism was a baptism done to members who had backslide during the first century Christianity due to persecution. So those who were to be accepted into the church were to be rebaptized and rebaptizing is different from the believer's baptism (McBeth 1979).

2.1.1 THE ENGLISH BACKGROUND

According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015), by the 16th century, the Church of England which is the Anglican Church had already declared herself independent from the Church of Rome, but her independence was only in terms of governance while retaining all the practices of the Church of Rome. As a result, this caused multitudes of English Christians to demand reforms in their church since the church had become corrupt and selfish and that it had largely left the simple message of the bible. According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015), several English rulers in the 16th century sought to reform the Church of England to a certain extent, however, their efforts never went far enough to satisfy the spirits of those who wanted to return to the simple teachings and practices of the bible.

In this regard, there arose a group of puritans who insisted upon more purity of doctrine and practice in the church. The Puritan separatists were frustrated and had given up hope of seeing a reformed church since much of their efforts were falling on deaf ears. According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015), the 16th century mostly around 1625 witnessed the mushrooming of these separatists' groups who happen to hold a variety of views in terms of keeping purity and the true teachings of the bible. These groups comprised of diverse churches such as the Quackers, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and assorted independent and non-conformists. In their study of the bible, some of these separatists adopted the believer's baptism and they became known as the Baptists. One of the reasons why the Baptist churches has no founder is because it was a movement that was started by a group of people not an individual (Spain 1967).

2.1.2 TWO KINDS OF THE BAPTISTS

Basically, some scholars are of the view that there were three kinds of Baptists namely; the general Baptists, the particular Baptists and the seventh day Baptists (Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015). The Sabbatarian or the seventh day Baptists in the late 17th century were never numerous which left the two groups of the general and the particular Baptists who built the tradition that stands to the present. According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015), General Baptists got their name because they believed in the general atonement which categorically state that, Christ died for all people generally and that whoever would believe in Christ could

be saved. On the other hand, the particular Baptists who came later into existence than general Baptists believed in the view of particular atonement (William, 1993). The group had the view that Christ died only for a particular group which is the elect and were deeply influenced by the teachings of John Calvin (ibid).

Nevertheless, the Baptists were part and parcel of the cutting edge of radical changes in Protestant faith and practice of the seventh century (Shaw 2008). They are generally known as people of the book (bible) as they acknowledge the bible as God's written revelation of Himself to mankind (Kelley and Mohler 2007). Both the general Baptists which is the biggest group or movement until now where even the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe subscribe to and the particular Baptists hold to certain biblical Baptist distinctives which makes them Baptists despite their different practices in conducting church services.

Under the two main groups comes different types of Baptist conventions or associations for example the Southern Baptist Convention of America from which they are the orthodox Baptists, radical and dissenters (Shaw 2008), and even more as a group that tends towards fundamentalism (Weber 2007) and many other bodies. However, it must be reiterated that from the Southern Baptist Convention, that is where the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe under study finds roots from. There are also other Baptist conventions including the Cooperative Baptist Convention, Alliance of Baptist Convention, National Baptist Convention and the Seventh Day Baptist to mention but just a few. Henceforth, all the mentioned above conventions birthed quite a number conventions in Zimbabwe to include the Baptist Union of Zimbabwe, National Baptist Convention, United Baptist Convention, as well as the recent one, the African Baptist Convention.

Therefore, with all the aforementioned Baptist Conventions, the Baptist history is sometimes complicated, given the fact that there are many bodies that are bracketed as Baptists which in turn influenced the researcher to narrow down this research to a case study of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe which was formed in 1963, the Baptist Theological Seminary Prospectus (2002), but with its root from the Southern Baptist Convention of America (SBC) having been championed by the Foreign Mission Board which is now called the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Baptists. A board that was set out for the evangelization of the

whole world. Hence, the board that gave birth to the BCZ being spearheaded by Clyde Dotson a missionary having been sent by the board of the Foreign Mission Board (IMB) from the Southern Baptist Convention of America.

One might be grappling with the question to say why BCZ? It is very fundamental to strongly emphasize that Baptists do believe that theology is always contextual, it is not transportable. Thus, it should be contextual to where it is and that is why in Zambia there is the Baptist Convention of Zambia, in South Africa, Botswana, Malawi etc. the same. The belief is that, every Baptist Church should minister contextually or in their locality or in the context where they live. This having been said, translates to the fact that it is not absurd to see differences in what the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe and many other conventions differing from each other. Some, henceforth accept the ordination of women but to others this will be a mirage. Thus, the researcher thought of taking this academic journey in order to probe for a rethinking of the tradition within the BCZ.

2.2 BAPTIST BELIEFS AND TRADITION

According to Z.C, interviewed on the 21st of May 2021, the Baptist beliefs and tradition cannot be separated because it is the beliefs that had built the tradition and, on the other hand, it is the tradition that perpetuates those beliefs and practices. Despite the diversity of Baptist Conventions around the world, Baptists in general and even the BCZ in particular share a vast number of beliefs and traditions with other different Baptist bodies and conventions. These beliefs and traditions are called biblical Baptist distinctives because they arrived at those distinctives through a careful study of the bible, (Z.C, interviewed on the 21st of May 2021). Individual Baptist churches have constantly and independently held to them as fundamentals not because some group of Baptist leaders composed the list and then imposed the distinctives on the local churches, (ibid). In this regard, it is a coming together of people with the same beliefs and traditions who managed to rope together and find each other in their spiritual journey to seek a life of purity.

According to McGrath (2011), the word “tradition” comes from the Latin term tradition which means ‘handing over’, ‘handing down’ or ‘handing on’. The idea is found in the New Testament especially from Paul when he informs his readers (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) that he is

handing on to them those core teachings of the Christian faith that he has received from other people. McGrath (2011) further posits that the term tradition can refer both to the action of passing teachings on to others, something that Paul insists must be done by the church. Thus, tradition can be understood as a process as well as a body of teaching (McGrath 2011). However, critically analyzing the above views, it should be noted that there can be certain notions of tradition in a negative sense, something like human ideas and practices which are not divinely authorized that can be passed on and thereby manipulative in nature having been inserted by those leaders before us and from this background, there comes the need for a critical contextual bible study method of interpretation in order to emancipate those who will be found oppressed on the pretext of tradition just as envisaged by Matthew 15: 1-6; Mark 7: 13 when Jesus was openly critical of certain human traditions within Judaism which He regarded as undermining proper piety. A replay of the second century episodes reveals that if anything served to emphasize the importance of tradition, it was the Gnostics' debates and this called for a scrutiny. According to Irenaeus (c. 130-c.200), the Gnostics had chosen to misrepresent the bible by interpreting it according to their own taste. What has been handed down was not merely the Biblical texts but a certain way of reading and understanding those texts. To this end, it is the intention of this research to rethink the Baptist tradition within the area of women's ordination. A method of contextual bible study method has been seen worth to redress the tradition for the purpose of accommodating the ones who outnumber the men. Be that as it may, when we talk of the Baptist tradition, we mean to say the passing on of the Christian faith which has been handed over from one generation to the other within the Baptist circle. However, when one looks closely at that which was handed over, there are certain sign posts which can be believed and cannot be compromised but there are also certain things which need to be given a second thought hence rethinking elements come into play. Baptists' stress on the use of bible as the authority of scripture has been affirmed greatly and passed on, BF & Message (2000), thus, 'people of the book'. Because the scripture says, thus what is supreme and should be followed, (ibid).

The core or central beliefs of the Baptists are enshrined in their confessional statement termed the Baptist Faith and Message (BF & M, 2000). Any Baptist Convention or church can draw up its confessional statement of faith any time. This means that Baptists have no creeds, nor bishops to dictate policies to the local congregation and no conference to impose its will on the autonomous local church. McBeth (1979) is correct when he observes that Baptists have often used confessions not to proclaim Baptist Distinctives but instead to show how similar Baptists

were to other orthodox Christians. Thus, this research also challenges the BCZ to craft its own confessional statement that is contextual in its nature and application using the contextual bible study method rather than using the SBC from America so that it addresses issues such as the one under study. It is worth noting that, there have been revisions of these faith and from time to time in order to speak to the contemporary issues of the day which then translate the fact that there is a need to relook our beliefs. Probably, and hopefully this paper seeks to probe the BCZ to rethink its tradition and beliefs, since beliefs advance the tradition, thereby calling for another reflection of the issue under study from a contextual bible study method of interpretation.

2.2.1 BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Baptists are known as people of the book (Bible). Sanders (1998), argues that the word Bible comes from the Greek word *biblos* meaning book and the Baptists acknowledge the Bible as God's written revelation of Himself to mankind (Kelley and Mohler, 2007). According to the Baptist Faith & Message edition (2000), "The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation, for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried." All scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation (Kelley and Mohler, 2007). Critically looking at this quotation stated above, Baptists especially the BCZ uphold the doctrine of full inspiration of the Bible, inerrancy and full authority (Dockery, 1988). Kelley and Mohler, (2007), argues that, other theories of inspiration such as dynamic and dictation are seen as false theories of inspiration and rejected altogether. The high ground of biblical authority is what underpins all the BCZ activities, their organs, departments and their theological institutions.

According to BF & Message (2000), the Bible is the final authority in all matters of belief and practice because the Bible is inspired by God and bears the absolute authority of God Himself. Whatever the Bible affirms, Baptists accept as true (fundamentalistic view of interpretation).

No human opinion or decree of any church group can override the Bible. Even creeds and confessions of faith, which attempt to articulate the theology of Scripture, do not carry Scripture's inherent authority (2 Timothy 3:15–17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

The BCZ having been influenced by the SBC, believes in the supremacy of scripture that excludes women from ordination. Therefore, because of the fact that the BCZ upholds the bible when it comes to women ordination there comes the supremacy of the scriptures forbidding women to be ordained. When they argue on the supremacy of the scripture, they will be trying to conserve or preserve as the tradition entails or they had received from the SBC who happens to be conservative and fundamental in nature with an understanding that the bible does not need any interpretation. There is no need for any interpretation of the bible hence, scripture interprets scripture; there is no need of interpreting the scripture because as the scripture says, thus settles it, which is very dangerous and an injustice to exegesis. *Sola Scriptura* (only scripture), *Sola Fide* (only faith) and *Sola Gratia* (by grace alone). If what one says is found in the bible, it is correct and has to be followed. Thus, the act of conservatism. It is also worth noting that, the BCZ tradition having inherited from the SBC subscribe to the conclusion of verbal plenary theory of inspiration that the bible as a whole is the word of God, so in every part of scripture, there is both infallible truth and divine authority (Kelley and Mohler 2007). According to one senior pastor of the BCZ in an interview conducted by the researcher on the 23rd of January 2021, “As the BCZ, we do not retreat from the high ground of biblical authority.” He further argues, “even if we trace during the time of Jesus among his apostles, he never chose women, so the same tradition is what we follow. ‘Yes’, they can do other ministries but not to be pastors.” So, when talking of the conservatives in the Baptist, the BCZ becomes part as they follow the dictates of the SBC confessional statements hence, they want to preserve the teachings of the church as they are, as stated in the bible arguing on the supremacy of the scripture. However, among the Baptist biblical interpreters, there are also the open-minded interpretivists who buy from the notion that there is a need to revisit the world of history. And from this school of thought, that is where the researcher is coming from to advocate for a rethinking gesture of the BCZ tradition. It is also important to note that the open-minded interpreters are very difficult to come by and those who might want to come on board might be afraid of ex-communication even though realizing the gap that needs to be filled in order to attain religious freedom and freedom of theologizing and to interpretation. It is against this bedrock that the researcher decided to become a prophetic figure of the day in the BCZ to challenge this

church to reflect on their conservatism and fundamentalism tendencies that sees the imprisonment of women and their exclusion in the ordination of women as pastors.

2.2.2 AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH/CONGREGATIONAL POLITY

By definition, according to Garret (2005), a local church autonomy is the idea that every church is free to determine its agenda apart from any external ecclesiastical coercion. A local church autonomy is a hallmark of the wider free Baptist tradition and has been championed by the seventh century Baptists since the inception of their movement. Therefore, Baptists believe that this idea of a local church's autonomy reflects the biblical pattern. This is supported by Norman (2005), who posits that, the bible makes no reference to any entity exerting authority above or beyond the local church. Churches have the freedom to follow the Lord's leading in their worship and witness. In other words, local church autonomy means that every church is independent of other churches. Local churches are primary but they can then come together to form associations, regions on the understanding that, two or more can accomplish more for the kingdom when they work together than when they go alone. Thus, the second London confession says, "to each of these churches, thus gathered, according to Christ's mind declared in his word, he had given all that power and authority, which is in any way needful for their carrying on that order in worship and discipline, which he had instituted for them to observe; with commands and rules for the due and right executing of that power." This is the freedom of the local churches to determine their own spiritual agendas. With this brief explanation of a local church autonomy, the idea is quite interesting on two levels. Firstly, if the idea is taken from the scripture, it means that it must be affirmed as it is. Secondly, if it is not being affirmed; why not? On practicality, this Baptist tradition and belief is not being exercised when it comes to the ordination of women. It has seen other things being relaxed but certain things have been held by the mother body in this case the BCZ has allowed other things to be exercised by the local church as autonomous but the issue of the ordination of women has remained a thorn in the flesh. The church is silent about the idea because there is no one woman who has been widely accepted as a pastor at local, association, regional and national level. The researcher met with three women who argued that, they were ordained but further deliberations with them revealed that when the ceremonies or process was conducted; there were few senior pastors present who believe in women ordination as individuals not as a church (BCZ). Hence, due to the fact that the issue is not generally accepted by the mother body which is the BCZ it fails to be accepted thus it remains an issue that requires the BCZ to rethink its tradition and then clearly spell out its stance. It is from this context where one also comes in to challenge the

church to uphold its tradition of local church autonomy wholesomely so that when the church understands the contextual bible study method of bible interpretation and then accepts the ordination of women it has to be allowed to do so since it will be autonomous and thus removing the idea of others to come to witness because some will be fearing of being excommunicated. Thus, Garret (2005), professes that a congregational polity means; human authority rests with the local or particular congregation in decision making. Henceforth, local Baptist churches have the prerogative to decide whether they want to ordain women or not (Stancil 1988).

Garret (2005), further postulates that a local church is an independent body accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church. All human authority for governing the local church resides within the local church itself. Thus, the church is autonomous, or self-governing. No religious hierarchy outside the local church may dictate a church's beliefs or practices. This entails that the BCZ as it is formed by these local churches have no prerogative power to suppress this idea but to allow churches to exercise what they believe. Autonomy does not mean isolation. Nevertheless, a Baptist church may fellowship with other churches around mutual interests and in an associational tie, but a Baptist church cannot be a "member" of any other body (Garret 2005; Colossians 1:18; 2 and Corinthians 8:1–5, 19, 23). In a nutshell, Baptists believe in congregational church government. That is, each church can govern itself with absolute autonomy which means a local church can decide to ordain women as pastors and must not be regarded as rebels to so called tradition which is not quite understood.

2.2.3 PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

According to the Webster Dictionary, the term "Priest" is defined as "one authorized to perform the sacred rites of a religion, especially as a mediatory agent between humans and God." Every believer today is a priest of God and may enter into His presence in prayer directly through our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12). No other mediator is needed between God and people. As priests, we can study God's Word, pray for others, and offer spiritual worship to God. We all have equal access to God—whether we are a preacher or not (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 5:9, 10). Baptists believe that everyone, regardless of gender-men and women, ordained or lay, is responsible before God for his/her own understanding of God's word and

what it means to them. They believe that God created every individual as competent, with the skills to be a priest for themselves and others. This means that in Baptist churches which appoint a minister, he or she is an equal member in the church meeting but with special responsibilities as outlined by the congregation. One wonders why in practical women's ordination becomes a mammoth task today. The researcher argues to say, if the church believes truly in the supremacy of scripture and its beliefs and tradition, why excluding women's ordination under the priesthood of all believers? The interpretation of scripture is at fault.

2.2.4 TWO ORDINANCES

According to the BF & Message of (2000), the local church should practice two ordinances: (1) baptism of believers by immersion in water, identifying the individual with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and (2) the Lord's Supper, or communion, commemorating His death for our sins (Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–32).

2.2.5 INDIVIDUAL SOUL LIBERTY

According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015), every individual, whether a believer or an unbeliever, has the liberty to choose what he believes is right in the religious realm. No one should be forced to assent to any belief against his will. Baptists have always opposed religious persecution. However, this liberty does not exempt one from responsibility to the Word of God or from accountability to God Himself (Romans 14:5, 12; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:9).

2.2.6 BAPTIZED CHURCH MEMBERSHIP/BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Kelley and Mohler (2007) propound that local church membership is restricted to individuals who give a believable testimony of personal faith in Christ and have publicly identified themselves with Him in the believer's baptism. When the members of a local church are believers, a oneness in Christ exists, and the members can endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Acts 2:41–47; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 4:3). This is perhaps the most obvious difference between Baptists and other denominations. Baptists reject infant baptism, thinking instead that baptism is for believers only - those who can personally declare Jesus as Lord (BF & Message 2000). Some churches will re-baptize those who were baptized as infants in another Christian tradition, others respect the fact that various denominations do things differently. According to Chute, Finn and Haykin (2015), the baptism is carried out by full immersion coming from the Greek word *baptizo* which means to dip fully under. Most Baptist churches have a baptistery, which is more or less a pool (about

4m by 3m) in the church. During a baptismal service, the minister and the person being baptized enter the water. The minister, holding the person, will lie them back in the water so they are totally immersed, and then bring them back up again. Baptists believe that this practice is in line with the New Testament practice of baptism, (BF & Message, 2000), as carried out by John the Baptist though the link to John has been debatable.

2.2.7 TWO OFFICES

According to Kelley and Mohler (2007), the Bible mandates only two offices in the church—pastor and deacon. The three terms “pastor,” “elder,” and “bishop,” or “overseer”—all refer to the same office. The two offices of pastor and deacon exist within the local church, not as a hierarchy outside or over the local church, (Chute, Finn and Haykin 2015). This is also supported by the scriptures; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Acts 20:17–38; Philippians 1:1.

2.2.8 SEPARATION OF STATE AND CHURCH

According to the BF & Message (2000), the church must be separate from the state. God established both the church and the civil government, and He gave each its own distinct sphere of operation. The government’s purposes are outlined in Romans 13:1–7 and the church’s purposes in Matthew 28:19 and 20. Neither should control the other, nor should there be an alliance between the two. Christians in a free society can properly influence the government toward righteousness, which is not the same as a denomination or group of churches controlling the government (Matthew 22:15–22; Acts 5:17–29). As each Baptist church is autonomous, there can be no outside interference in decision making. This applies to any secular power, such as the state, being involved in church matters. Therefore, Baptists reject the idea of an established or state church.

2.3 CONCLUSION

The scope and focus of this chapter managed to explore on the Baptist beliefs and tradition. And in an attempt to explore on these two aspects, the researcher discovered that the Baptist beliefs and tradition are hinged on the search for purity by the separatists who later on were nicknamed the Baptists. However, this search for purity from the mixture of the church and the state, also emphasized on freedom of worship, expression, theologizing and association to mention but only a few. Again, this search for freedom of worship also cemented on the free will in biblical interpretation in order to liberate the access of reading and interpreting the bible from the hands of the few. This means that, according to the Baptists, there is no one single person who holds ‘the’ interpretation. Meanwhile, looking closely at what is transpiring nowadays in the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe where, only ‘men’ are regarded as the priest or ‘pastors’ being allowed to minister as pastors at local churches this has then pushed the researcher to raise the flag through probing the church to rethink their tradition once again using modern methods of contextual bible interpretation methods in order to keep the church back into track; because it seems the church has forgotten its beliefs and tradition which are quite inclusive and does not actually sideline others especially women to be ordained and even to become pastors per se.

CHAPTER 3

SCRIPTURAL BACKING OF THE BCZ'S POSITION ON THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN FROM ORDINATION

3.0 INTRODUCTION

It is the crux of this chapter to examine critically the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe church's position on why they deny women access to ordination. The researcher shall delve more in their exegetical bible interpretation of scripture that supports them to bar women from ordination. A careful study of the term exegesis shall be looked at as well as a critical analysis of the verses they use to support their position and the chapter shall conclude with an evaluation of their supporting verses vis-à-vis their beliefs and traditions.

3.1 EXEGETICAL DYNAMICS / STRANDS OF THEOLOGICAL PERSUASION

Dockery (1988) gives a synopsis of the theological life of the Southern Baptists in America. From the theological background that Dockery presents, we are able to understand what influenced a fundamentalist approach to other scriptural understanding in the BCZ. Dockery (1988), makes comments on the representative views in the Southern Baptist Convention which has a bearing into the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

According to Dockery (1988), there are basically four brands of biblical convictions that have characterized the Southern Baptists Convention of America and as a result infringing into determining the way the BCZ has interpreted scripture. The first group is Fundamentalism, which is unlike the other bodies of American fundamentalism that is generally militant and separatist in nature. Fundamentalism in the SBC appears in two major groupings. Firstly, as mystical-pietistic body that emphasizes evangelism and missions, and secondly it is a more scholastic theological group that often stresses the importance of dispensation theology (Dockery, 1988). The two groups are similar in theory and their doctrine of scripture. Their doctrine of scripture emphasises the God –ward side of inspiration, and sometimes ignoring its humanness. They affirm the full inerrancy of scripture and its precise accuracy (Dockery, 1988). Thus, truth is presented in propositional statements and the historical-critical method in the interpretation of the Bible is completely rejected (ibid).

The second group identified by Dockery (1988) are the Evangelicals. He argues that this group developed as conservative Protestantism in Europe and America and is distinct from

Fundamentalism. Within the Southern Baptist Convention family, there are those who identify with the Evangelicals and affirm its basic theological convictions while operating in the Baptist context. They believe in the inerrant word of God, the deity of Christ and the necessity of faith in the person and atoning work of Christ for the salvation of men and women. There is also a belief in the divine-human authorship of the scriptures. Thus, the literary interpretative tools and historical criticism are employed with precision and faith-oriented presuppositions (Dockery, 1988).

The third group are the moderates. In the SBC, this includes representatives from different theological strands entailing neo-evangelicalism, neo-orthodoxy and neo-liberalism as well as the new aesthetic and narrative theologies (Dockery, 1988). Some of these moderates are flexible in non-commitment to biblical inerrancy. They prefer the word infallible than inerrancy because of their acknowledgement to the divine-human authorship of the Bible. For the moderates, scripture is characteristically understood in light of the central message of salvation.

The fourth group identified by Dockery are the Liberals. He says that while there is much talk about “liberalism” in the SBC; there is little that identifies with the group in the twenty-first century. What seems to be considered here is the more radical theologies of the twenty-first century: existentialism, process theology, liberation theologies and feminist theologies just to mention a few (Dockery, 1988). Thus, characterising a view of how scripture is used among these diverse groups is nearly impossible. Inspiration in this regard is viewed as the workings of the Holy Spirit to raise insights in human beings to write religious material in eloquent language understood by people in context. Thus, a subjective reading of the Bible is encouraged and an objective, all totalling a reader-oriented approach is disallowed.

Among the four groups mentioned by Dockery, the SBC is composed of evangelicals and moderates. Thus, those who are more conservative are found among the evangelicals and fundamentalists. The moderates would include the moderates and liberals. The SBC liberals are not as radical as most American liberalists and the SBC fundamentalists are not as extreme as the separatists found in American fundamentalism.

Therefore, from the synopsis of theological orientation given by Dockery; one can deduce how the SBC was instrumental in influencing the BCZ to adopt an exclusivist view about other religious traditions they purport to belief in resulting in the exclusion of women from ordination. The background of the BCZ and its relationship to the SBC sets a precondition and an obstacle to initiatives towards the treatment of scripture in the BCZ.

It is so sad to say that the BCZ churches have inherited a legacy that has not liberated them to freely theologise. Most of the black Baptist pastors who trained under the tutelage of Baptist missionaries have failed to come to terms with new developments of the contextual bible study method to interpret scripture. Henceforth, the position of the BCZ is interwoven with that of the Southern Baptist Convention in denying women access to ordination. More below.

3.2 SCRIPTURAL INFERENCES, ALLUSIONS AND BACKING FOR THE BCZ CHURCH'S POSITION

The rejection of women's ordination by the BCZ church is hinged on the scriptures. Many senior Reverends within the Baptist circle affirm that the issue of women being involved in Christian ministry has been controversial for centuries. Various positions have been advanced with very much convictions based on varying premises, ranging from theological, cultural, biological or sociological. When one tries to ascertain what the Bible says, it is fundamental to be blind to all biases of any kind and then present the arguments as they are with a balanced view and after all has been said and done; be it the consideration of all backgrounds, the supremacy of scripture and the mind or view of God must stand. Does God show partiality? Certainly not. However, let's hear from their inferences. Some scriptures allow women to hold any position in the church, while others seem to sing a different song altogether (Rev P. D, Interviewed, 20 June 2020). Senior church deacons strongly insist that at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe which happens to be a higher and tertiary seminary for the BCZ that trains and equip men and women; those women studying should be specific on their intentions and they should be informed that they are studying only to equip themselves and not necessarily to be thereof recognised as pastors. Rev P. D, interviewed, 24 July (2020), had this to say,

Men and women were both created in the image of God. They are equal in status but different in function. This is true in the biological makeup of the two sexes, but is it true of their spiritual participation in the kingdom of God? When one analyses the status of men and women in the world today, we see diversity in the interpretation of status and the idea of equality. Historically and traditionally, certain roles have been assigned to men as masculine roles while others have been assigned to women as feminine roles (Rev P. D. interviewed, 24 July 2020).

During the interview the research asked the following question, “Who assigns those roles to men and women respectively?” In his response, he said:

Experience formulates perceptions, which in turn give rise to the establishment of values and standards along with varying degrees of appreciation and perhaps depreciation as well (Rev P. D interviewed, 24 July, 2020).

According to one senior Reverend (name withheld), seemed to eat in the same plate of ideas that, “the story in Genesis chapter 3 may seem to indicate that Eve was more vulnerable than Adam.” Stancil (1988), posits that, “man was created first in creation and the woman was first in the Edenic fall. But it is clear that Adam was not deceived into sin but he did sin wilfully. This does not however mean that women are more vulnerable to sin than men.” Rev Q, interviewed, 24 May (2021) argues that it does show, however, that Adam was irresponsible and partook of the fruit knowing that he was committing sin. Nevertheless, it should be reiterated that, men have ascribed roles to women, which they think are menial and inferior and have ascribed to themselves roles that are supposedly superior. This division of labour is the result of social standards prescribed by man because of his view of women. Women have been side lined and given secondary status by their chauvinistic counterparts (Rev P.D., Interviewed, 25 May 2021).

One wonders whether women are therefore inferior to men and play substandard roles? As Baptists, we recognize that each individual has personal worth before God and has a valuable part to play in God’s economy (Rev GX, Interviewed, 20 May 2021). Men and women are different in their physical makeup but they are equally important before God. Nothing makes one inferior or superior to the other and when roles are played responsibly, God’s purposes are fulfilled and each person finds fulfilment and meaning to life thus, the woman, in Genesis 2, is said to be a “helper” to the man. The word “helper” in Hebrew *ezer kenegdo* which is translated to mean one who complements, assists and comes alongside the other, Freedman (1983). Accepting to God’s order for the functions of men and women brings peace of mind to both genders alike (Rev P. D, Interviewed, 25 May 2021).

3.2.1 LEADERSHIP IN THE TRINITY

There is only one God, yet there are three persons. This is a mystery that will never be understood by the human mind, argues P. D, in an Interview (12 April 2021). It has been the cause of major heresies. We understand rightly that the Holy Spirit and Jesus come from the Father. Jesus, who was total man and deity in one person forever, acknowledged the leadership of the Father. The Holy Spirit was sent from the Father. Yet, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not inferior to the Father. Their roles are different. Scripture articulates that God is the head of Christ. This is a foreordained leadership structure in the way the three persons of the Godhead relate; argues Rev P.D, (interviewed 24 May, 2021).

3.2.2 LEADERSHIP IN THE CREATION STORY

The issue of a woman's subservience to man does not appear in the concept of Eve being Adam's helper. Rather, she works with him to accomplish God's plan. Adam was created first, then Eve. This suggests an order in God's purpose for the function of both males and females. If Adam and Eve were equal in everything, there would be no need for one of them. But as we can see, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, yet they had different functions physically and spiritually. Duncan (2004), eats in the same plate of ideas with the assertion above; God has created men and women equally in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the home and in the church. Where there are two human beings, there is need for leadership and leadership implies the existence of authority and authority implies order and rank (Pastor GT, interviewed, 16 July, 2020). The fact that Adam named the creatures on his own implies the exercise of authority. The Old Testament reveals the consequences of the sin of man on relational dynamics. Male dominance became an accepted order for society but in God's plan, it was male leadership. There is a significant difference between dominance and leadership. We must differentiate between God's original plan and the consequences of man's fall. Just as divorce was not God's original plan, male dominance is also not part of his original purpose for man-woman relationships. While both man and woman were created in God's image, they were not made with the identical functions.

Reverend P.D, interviewed 24 May 2021 had this to say, when Paul argues that women should not usurp the authority of man by teaching in the church, he appeals to the order of creation rather than culture. Some have said that if we follow the “order of creation” argument, then we must also say that because the animals were created before man, man must therefore submit to the animals. This argument defies the very Scriptures, which tell us that man (both male and female) was given dominion over the animals, birds and fish (Genesis 1:26). The consequence of the fall in Genesis 3:16 cannot be overlooked. Scripture specifically says the husband shall rule the wife. Some argue that this is in reference to the fallen state of man but the new order is the church where men and women have equal authority and equal opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts as the Holy Spirit sees fit.

Matthews (1996), argues that chapter 1.27 indicates a distinction in the making of both genders that cannot be possibly overlooked. The distinction seems foundational that appears to be the hub of role differentiation. Thus, the male (Adam), is to lead and the woman (Eve) is to cooperate with him in the discharge of his role. Based on this argument, some have inferred that “the bible teaches that the male headship role and the female supporting role were instituted at creation (Koranteng-Pipim, 2005). Piper and Grudem (1991:81) postulate that, “the sequence established Adam as the ‘firstborn’ in the human family, a person that gave him the special responsibility of leadership in the family”. According to Ratsara and Bediako (2013), the divine intent of God is to create woman for man. Parker (1991) feels that women should be confined to the roles of pastoral assistants’ ministers of music, youth directors, educational. The features have the effects of supplementing and supporting the male pastor and none of these require women as a presbyter.

3.2.3 WOMEN IN JESUS’ MINISTRY

According to the Jewish culture, the Jews regard women as inferior and in subjection to men. However, Jesus elevated women to positions of worth and value, argues Pastor P interviewed (22 April 2021). He affirmed women as valuable and dignified before God. Male chauvinism prevailed in Jewish society, yet they were God’s people. It must be remembered however that they were still in God’s plan but they were spiritually and morally depraved because they had gone astray from God. For 400 years, God had not raised any prophets to proclaim His word

to Israel. The message of the Major and Minor Prophets revealed the waywardness of Israel. Jesus came to restore order to the nation of Israel by proclaiming the kingdom of God. This was a new order, which had God's purpose as its goal and objective. Jesus called men and women to repentance, yet with regards to His chosen twelve, He chose men and not women. This was in keeping with Jewish tradition but also in line with His Father's plan for the establishment of the new order. The initial twelve were men, but the wider circle of disciples included women. That selection of twelve men indicates that the original plan of God was being restored whereby men were in positions of authority. This order was in relation to Israel, since the number 12 was signifying the 12 tribes of Israel.

Jesus was not only restoring the new order for Israel but also for the church. As He ministered among the people of Israel, He showed them the will of the Father. The dignity of women needed to be restored to its original state. Women, therefore, played a prominent role in the ministry of Jesus. He reached out to the men and women who were rejected in society. Despite the Jewish laws restricting women from public recognition, Jesus placed women in the forefront and gave them their rightful place e.g., the woman with an issue of blood, the woman who anointed His feet, the woman at the well and the woman caught in adultery. Jesus taught Mary of Bethany, revealed His Messiahship to a Samaritan woman and had many women travelling with Him. While we know seventeen of His male disciples by name, we also know eight of His female disciples by name. This was Jesus' way of affirming women and their right to participate in ministry alongside men. Jesus was in effect saying that both men and women were significant before God. When He allowed women to be active in ministry, He was giving women their privilege to serve God in a capacity that was God-given. For what it is worth, women stayed close to Jesus even when He was arrested, tried and crucified. The men were scattered and afraid to be seen anywhere near the Master. Women were also the first to witness the resurrection and they in turn told their male counterparts. When Jesus rose from the dead and revealed Himself to the disciples, women were part of the group to whom He appeared but not as leaders per se.

3.2.4 WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH

The book of Acts shows that women were in the upper room as part of the 120 disciples who waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Acts 5:14 says women and men were added to the church as it experienced growth. Women are mentioned throughout the books of Acts as having played important roles in the establishment of the church e.g., Acts chapters 1, 2, 8, 16, 18 and 22.

3.2.5 WOMEN IN PAULINE EPISTLES

Because Paul had so many women working alongside him in his ministry, he affirmed them as co-workers and co-labourers in the ministry of the gospel. The argument from Galatians 3:28 for equality of men and women in the church has to be viewed in context. In this chapter, Paul is addressing the matter of faith in Christ and access to the Father. As far as faith in Christ is concerned, says Paul, we all stand before God with equal opportunity and free access to the Father. There is no favouritism on racial, social or gender grounds. Hence, the final sentence in verse 28 says “.... for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. The essence of our relationship with God through Christ, no matter what class you belong to, is faith in Christ. Therefore, because we all (male and female) come into a right relationship with God through faith in Christ, no one is barred from taking an active role in the church, neither is anyone barred from having access to the presence of God.

Paul's letters mention twelve women by name that were his co-workers in the ministry and this implies that these women participated in ministry. However, the Scriptures do not affirm that these women were leaders per se as some would like to claim. The Scriptures quoted need to be checked thoroughly applying exegetical procedures. Such references are 1Corinthians 1:11; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2 and Acts 16:14, 15. Women such as those named in Romans 16:6, 12 are known to have played a prominent role in the gospel ministry. While some women may have held leadership positions in the ministry, they did not precede their male partners. To argue that Romans 16:3-4 mentions Priscilla and Aquila and therefore the order of their names implies Priscilla's pre-eminence over Aquila is to argue without exegetical basis. To build a case to argue for women in leadership from the mention of Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3 by using the phrase “contended at side in the cause of the gospel” also lacks strong

exegetical support. Likewise, to argue that Phoebe was a leader, teacher and preacher in the church at Cenchrea because Paul calls her “a servant of the church in Cenchrea” lacks exegetical support from the context. Nevertheless, the involvement of these women in the ministry is significant enough to affirm women’s participation in the Lord’s work.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul sets out an authority structure and says God is the head of Christ; Christ is the head of the man; the man is the head of the woman. God is the permanent head of Christ; Christ is the permanent head of the man; man is the permanent head of the woman. This structure cannot be changed or altered for any reason. In Ephesians 5:23, Paul asserts the headship of the man over the wife and urges women to be subject to their own husbands in everything. Does this leave out the church environment? In fact, the context of Paul’s comments is the church and the home. There is no way Paul would advocate male leadership at home and female leadership at church. A woman is under the authority of the man in both spheres. The roles cannot be reversed. This, however, does not imply the inferiority of women in the church, nor does it mean that women cannot be used of God in the church. Spiritual gifts are divided severally as the Holy Spirit sees fit for the church and He divides these to both men and women. The pattern of spiritual leadership in the New Testament seems to be male leadership with women acting under the authority of the men. Headship is not to be understood to mean lording it over the women in an oppressive manner but as the provision of protection, guidance and direction in matters of life and spirituality. Chauvinism and dictatorship are often read into the headship message but these are foreign to the Biblical concept of headship.

Men in the church have often abused their role as leaders by absenteeism, ineffectiveness and arrogance, which are signs of ignorance of the will of God. Leaders are supposed to be creative and take the initiative to facilitate for the growth of the church in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and provide opportunities for people to exercise their God-given abilities. Women have tremendous potential to produce excellent work for the Lord. They are not lesser beings or incapable of being effective in ministry. Given various situations, men can be more effective than women and in other circumstances, women can prove to be more efficient than men. This is not due to gender but to certain variables like resources, health, intellectual development, spirituality etc.

When we develop a problem with male leadership, we violate the Biblical principle of God's divine design for human relationships. If Christ is the head of the church and men are to love their wives as Christ loved the church, then the responsibility lies with the male figure to provide leadership through protecting, guiding and directing his wife in all spheres of life. If Christ is the standard for leadership, man has no room to manipulate those under his leadership. To say that women cannot actively participate in the life of the church is to deny women a God-given right to be beneficiaries of the grace of God. It is interesting that when the church loves Christ, it is in response to His love for the church. The same principle applies when the husband is commanded to love his wife "as Christ loved the church". The husband initiates love toward his wife and she responds to that love. This is based on the principle that the man is the initiator and the woman is the responder. This is God's divine design. It does not undermine the woman's femininity at all. In fact, it underscores her femininity.

3.3 EVALUATION OF THE BCZ'S POSTION

From the above study, it has been seen that the BCZ uses quite a number of scriptural inferences and allusions in barring women from ordination. Be that as it may, it is imperative to also strike a balance of analysis on the BCZ's exegetical bible interpretation which at the same time throws sand on some of their beliefs and tradition in as much as the above analysis has expounded much on their position. A critical exegesis is required if we are to be just in our application of scripture. The researcher still feels that much is still desired from this church. I presuppose that the church is missing a mark on the application of this disciple called exegesis. If taken wholesomely the issue of context, it is rather an anathema to then purport the title; 'people of the book'. Complex decisions and underlying reasons can be levelled against their interpretation leaving a lot to desired when it comes to their inferences.

Outsiders such as feminists, have posed a grave question. According to Blomberg (2004), feminists of all persuasion acknowledge the patriarchal nature of the bible and that the bible in some parts bar women from certain roles in the family and in the church for example Ephesians 5: 22-33; 1 Timothy 2: 11-15 etc. Wacker (2006) posits that in the history of Christianity, women have always suffered from particular gender specific limitations, discriminations based upon Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe must take a leaf and

admit that the patriarchal structures and cultural aspects of the bible cannot be denied. One can then contend that the actual elephant in the room is traditional history that they are not ready to give up or to give a second thought towards the advocacy of this paper and not the text which they purport to hide behind. A proper application of and interpretation of scripture taking into consideration its context and historical times emancipate women in these hands of subjugation and peripheral place of women. It is crystal clear that the BCZ follows the misogyny of Paul's tendencies than the text itself. Contemporary readers of the scripture were not original recipients of the scripture henceforth, the need for first and foremost to establish the intended audiences and what prompted the writer to pen such information before embarking on the application of it to the contemporary context. Critically looking at the scriptural backing given so far, the BCZ is guilt charged on its ignorance to the issue of historical context and situational undertones of these scriptures. 1 Timothy 2: 12 is taken out of context and violates the contextual bible study method as well as the historical hermeneutical principle.

According to Towner (1994), Paul gave instructions because of the unusual situations of the Ephesians. From the background of usurping, misappropriating and dominating the men, Paul had to rebut the developments and these may or may not be found in the contemporary churches and so should not be used as a yardstick to deny women their freedom in Christ Jesus of being a priest. Also, taking 1 Corinthians 14: 33-36 as an example, Paul was resolving a specific problem bedevilling the Corinthian Church (Robert, 2009). Hence, in taking the same scripture as a ban to all women in the contemporary churches would be rather unjust and limiting others to enjoy the liberty through Christ. So, one can argue on the authenticity of these texts as non-Pauline interpolation and through these sentiments remains speculations.

One can also view the exclusion of women from ordination as an error of proof-texting because the BCZ base their rejection on isolated scriptural texts. In the Old Testament times, women occupied variety of spiritual roles. From the amazing stories of Deborah to the stories of Ruth, Esther, Tamar and Rahab, we see God drawing women into leadership. Drawing them out of the brokenness of patriarchy and using them as leaders in his greater redemption. Therefore, the fact that women attained prominent, powerful positions in Israel militates strongly against the BCZ's sceptic accusation that the biblical view of women is sexism. A closer look at the

narrative of Deborah clearly shows that she was a mother in Israel before she became a judge. This could be a reference to her own offspring or impression of her spiritual motherhood towards every son and daughter of Israel. Thus, in spiritual patched Israel characterised by rejection of God and by determination for each to do things her own way (Judges, 17:6;21:25). She displayed leadership first as a counsellor, discussing and suggesting solutions to the people with problems near her home. The civic court system was inept, the military was too weak to defend national borders, the priesthood of what had been a theocracy important and effective normal life was no longer possible and from the bedrock of all these Deborah rose to become a judge and eventually a deliverer of her people in times of war.

Therefore, using the above information, it is crystal clear that the story of Deborah manifests an exalted view of women. Huldah, a prophetess, who changed the nation in the monarchical era, the priest Hilkiah and many others in the Old Testament nullifies the reasons suggested by the BCZ which tries to bar women from ordination based on the scripture where one is also deducing the vast usage of women to change the Israelite nation. In reality, biblical examples of how the God of the bible views women is more than sufficient to call for a rethinking of the BCZ tradition on women ordination. An unbiased exegesis free from the bondage of tradition reveals that all ministries were and are open to women. Grenz and Kjesbo (1995:71), opines that, “the authority of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and others in the Old Testament demonstrate the seeds of egalitarian strands and unparalleled society”.

The ministry of Jesus in the gospels clarified decisively the value and essential equality of women. Jesus had so many female disciples who ministered to his needs (Luke 8:2-3). According to Luke 8:3 and 24:1, a woman was the first to witness and testify of his resurrection. Jews countered the culture of his day by treating women as equal to men. Henceforth, critically looking at Paul’s teachings under a microscopic eye of a theologian, one can deduce that Paul was rather not against women if we are to consider carefully the BCZ’s back up scripture in depriving women of the right to be ordained. It is the BCZ’s tradition that needs to be rethought, reasons being that Paul had many female ministry companions and he referred to some of them as co-workers (Romans 16:2) and Paul called on believers to submit to such co-workers (1 Corinthians 16:6), thus both male and female believers were to honour these women as leaders and submit to their authority (Grenz and Kjesbo 1995).

According to Keener (1993), Phoebe was a servant ‘*diakonos*’ and a helper ‘*prostatis*’ in the Cenchrene church. Keener (1993) further elaborates on the term *prostatis* referring to a number of women who were patrons in the New Testament who opened their homes for the meeting of the churches. Apparently, Grenz and Kjesbo (1995) argue that those who served as patrons also functioned pastorally with administrative responsibilities, (Keener, 1993), and that the pastoral and patron role were inseparable, (Grenz and Kjesbo, 1995). Therefore, according to Grenz and Kjesbo (1995), the restrictions on women by Paul is due to their own lack of knowledge or education, when their knowledge matures, then they are free to teach as men do. Again, Paul commends Prisca (known as Priscilla) first before her husband Aquila in Romans 16:3 which is a taboo in the Jewish culture and even in the Roman culture to consider women first before men. This may translate to the fact that she had a high social status which made her being mentioned first. Also, Paul describes Andronicus and his wife Junia as prominent among the apostles in Romans 16:7, some such as Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis in Romans 16:6, 12 and Eodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:2-3.

Additionally, Paul in Galatians 3:28 argues that in Christ there is no male nor female, slave nor free. Henceforth, clear and sound biblical hermeneutics sees no exclusion of women. If therefore, a proper exegesis, hermeneutics and contextual bible study method is taken on board to the last letter, a rethinking of the BCZ’s tradition is called for.

3.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter has focused much on the hermeneutics of scripture on the debate of women ordination from the point of view of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe as a church. The church is strongly against the ordination of women based on the pretext of the supremacy of scripture based on their exegetical interpretation and allusions of scriptural texts. Much of their scriptural backing has been found particularly from the Pauline directives from the church in Corinth and Ephesus. However, evaluations from the Old Testament literature on leadership in the creation, where some women have been seen occupying the priestly posts throws some challenges to what the church holds on and guilt charged on their interpretation which is more of proof-texting than a wholesome consideration of the scriptural teachings on the issue. Be that as it may, the researcher is of the view that the BCZ has to rethink its tradition so that women are given more opportunities to make use of their gifts in the service of the Lord but thus proposing a contextual bible study method of interpretation to liberate women from the hands of the few.

CHAPTER 4

UTILIZING THE CONTEXTUAL BIBLE STUDY METHOD TO INTERROGATE THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE BCZ

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bible has played a very pivotal role in people's lives throughout the past epochs and it has been read, interpreted and understood in different ways. While the message might have been clear to the original recipients, it is not as clear to us today, in part on the pretext that, we are separated from the world of the Bible by a vast of factors such as time, language and culture. Henceforth, the need for a clear-cut methodology to study is a necessity so that no one is subjugated. This chapter tries to help us to read and understand our biblical interpretation correctly. To this end, there are principles that are key to work as a guide in our study as well as specific methods that aim at unearthing the message the biblical authors wanted to communicate which include but not limited to the contextual bible study method. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the methods of proper bible interpretation that do justice to the scriptures and also addresses the current challenges humanity face in terms of religion and religious texts and to be specific in the Christian circles. The writer of this research is going to address the contextual bible study method as the route that can be taken to address the position of women. Observation, interpretation and application of the scriptures are the hallmark of the contextual bible study method to be elaborated. It is against this bedrock that one tries to address the position of women especially within the Baptist circles with special reference to the BCZ where this method can be employed in a bid to emancipate women who are denied access to ordination.

4.1 OBSERVATION

According to Traina (1952), observation is the act of taking notice, fixing the mind upon, and beholding with attention with the goal of discovering what the text says. It is the attempt to discover what the text says. Kuist (2000) defines observation as the art of seeing things as they really are. The Webster Dictionary defines observation as the act of observing, taking a patient look. Good interpretation precedes good observation, (ibid), thus paying attention to the text that is being alert and very observant of the text is the foundation of interpretation. Kuist (2000), goes on to add that, observation entails seeing "impartially, intensely and fearlessly." Traina (1952), rightly concludes that the goal of observation "is to enable one to become saturated with (Ed: filled completely with so that it permeates or pervades one's entire

being) the particulars of a passage so that one is thoroughly conscious of the (object being observed) (Methodical Bible Study, 2002).

4.1.1 ANALYSIS

Therefore, before one jumps into conclusion of denying others into what God has opened the door for everyone, there is a need to firstly observe carefully all the scriptural inferences affirmed by the BCZ as their stand point reasons to deny women ordination. As the first step towards the contextual bible study method, the researcher challenges the church to take careful study and observe everything contained in the scripture before jumping into interpretation and application because the lack of a critical observation leads to a wrong interpretation and application eventually.

4.2 HERMENEUTICS

First and foremost, we need to understand hermeneutics, which is the art of, and science of interpreting the Bible (Virkler, 1981). Hermeneutics involves both theory and practice, and like any art or science, it requires the use of certain methods or techniques to produce reliable results, (ibid). According to Virkler (1981), hermeneutics is derived from the Greek word Hermes, the Greek god who served as messenger for the gods, transmitting and interpreting their communications to their fortunate, or often unfortunate, recipients. It means herald. Hermes was the herald of the gods in the Greece society. In other words, he was a messenger of the gods or interpreter of the message from the gods. The goal of the contextual bible study method is to attempt to read and understand the scripture correctly (Kyomya, 2010). In order to achieve this, the church must embrace and utilize the principles that will guide in the study as well as having specific methods that aim at uncovering the message the author of a text wanted to communicate. Therefore, in all its totality, the discovering of the meaning the author wanted to communicate is the handiwork of a field known as hermeneutics. According to Mburu (2019), hermeneutics involves both theory and practice and it requires the use of certain methods or techniques to produce reliable results. Henceforth, hermeneutics is the study of interpretation which is key after a careful observation of the scripture, reflecting on what makes interpretation sound or unsound. In other words, it is about what the author meant (Virkler, 1981). In a broader perspective, the term hermeneutics refers to the science and art of interpretation of a given text, speech, or symbolic expression (Dockery, 1992). Thus, all the scriptural inferences by the BCZ as a church must be interpreted accordingly and following all

the steps necessary because in the field of hermeneutics and contextual bible study, the great discovery is about finding the meaning of the author, his or her intentions first before bringing the meaning closer home, (Kyomya 2010). Kyomya (2010), further expounds that, the processes of finding the intended meaning of the author of a text is very paramount in hermeneutics towards the broader picture of the contextual bible study method. Once this has been done, the interpreter of the text would have done justice to the text through the process called exegesis. The interpreter must then apply the text to the present reality and thus, the verification level of the hermeneutical process (Stronstad 1995).

4.2.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS

People sometimes speak of Hermeneutics as if it has principles that are cast in stone. But is hermeneutics static, or is it dynamic in the sense that it can change as methods of interpretation are adapted to different cultural contexts? (Kyomya, 2010). To answer that question, we need to look more closely at what hermeneutics does. Hermeneutics is necessary because we cannot hope to experience genuine transformation, whether of self or of others, if we lack the knowledge and skills to effectively interpret the Bible. Such interpretations will always involve both theory and practice, for the methods we use must have a theoretical foundation as well as a practical application (Virkler, 1981). If one thinks about it, one will see that this statement implies that hermeneutics must be linked to a particular place. If our Hermeneutics models are all from the West, how can we derive practical applications in an African context? If we lack an understanding of the African worldview as well as the biblical one, how can we understand what the Bible has to say about daily life in Africa?

4.3 EXEGESIS

According to the Anchor Bible Dictionary (1992), the term exegesis refers to “a process of a careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretation of those passages. Ideally, exegesis involves the analysis of the biblical text in the language of its original or earliest available form.” Abraham (1961), defines exegesis as the basic discipline, not only of the New Testament Studies, but of theology, that seeks to establish the original meaning of a literal text by the use of philological and historical tools. According to Virkler (1981), exegesis is the application of the principles of hermeneutics to arrive at a correct understanding of the text. He further gives the etymology of the term as follows; “the prefix ‘ex’ (‘out of,’ or ‘from’), refers to the idea that the interpreter is attempting

to derive his understanding from the text, rather than reading his or her meaning into the text (eisegesis). The term therefore is critical in the Baptist Church as it is their point of departure in analysing the scripture (Rev U, Interviewed, 23 August 2020). Rev D, Interviewed, 2 February (2021), argues that, as Baptists we believe in “exercising the process of exegesis as a method that allows the scripture to speak on its own” and because Baptists believe in the supremacy of the scripture it leaves no room unless to follow the scripture. However, exegetical dynamics within the Baptists has caused the denial of women access to ordination and thus the researcher calls for a proper biblical interpretation that considers the context as the point of departure.

Exegesis means bringing out the meaning from the text (Virkler,1981). Given this fact, interpretation might not be about what it means to me because people sometimes focus only on the world that happens to catch their attention (Kyomya 2010). This led to one tendency of reading our minds into the Bible, we use the Bible to justify what we want and this process is called ‘eisegesis’ which means reading into. Exegesis is the historical-grammatical analysis of the text. Explication is the literary analysis of the text. In both exegesis and explication, the primacy of authorial intent should be upheld, and the importance of a text’s genre should be appreciated (Fee 1991, 43). According to Virkler (1981), exegesis passed through important exegetical presuppositions and principles found in each period of biblical interpretation are crucial. Major trends in the historical development of hermeneutics from the Ancient Jewish Exegesis, New Testament use of the Old Testament, Patristic Exegesis, Medieval Exegesis, Reformation Exegesis, Post-Reformation Exegesis and Modern Hermeneutics helps us to have a balanced perspective and to have a more meaningful dialogue with those who believe differently thereby overcoming the temptation to believe that our system of interpretation is the only system that has ever existed.

4.4 INTERPRETATION

According to Kyomya (2010), the bible is a divine work, it is very important to understand its message so that we can apply it properly. Kyomya further asserts that, there is a need to interpret the scripture and its unity and the need to apply scripture, so that we do not miss what the bible offers us. According to Virkler (1981), the primary presupposition of the contextual bible study method is to get the meaning of the text- the author’s intended meaning, rather than the meaning we may wish to ascribe to his words. Hence, there is a need to read the bible with an eye that questions scripture in a bid to find its message and not creating our own message.

There is a need for interpretation of scripture because there is a gap in language and time and words need to be interpreted. Assuming that words have general meaning and familiar is problematic. Denying women access to ordination has been necessitated by flawed interpretations of the bible which is widespread within the church especially the Baptist church with specific reference to the BCZ. Thus, Matthew (22: 29-32), states that, “You are in error because you do not know the scriptures...” Therefore, it is important to learn the skill of interpretation so that ‘we no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every mind of teaching’ (Ephesians 4:14). Thus, Kyomya (2010), argues that, living is a fundamentally interpretive activity and there is no way to get by without constantly interpreting the world around you, its signs and inhabitants. The second step of the contextual bible study method is interpretation. The observation step will provide the basic content out of which the interpreter can interpret the meaning of the text (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1991). Interpretation is basically asking “What does the text mean?” Before embarking on the process of interpretation, the interpreter must consider the barriers that must be crossed in order to arrive at the correct biblical interpretation and avoid a wrong interpretation (Hendricks and Hendricks, 1991). Barriers such as language, cultural, literary, geographic, and communication must be crossed to arrive at a correct interpretation (Fee and Stuart, 2013). The aim of any good interpretation is to get to the author’s intended meaning (Fee and Stuart, 2013). Asking what the passage meant to the author will aid in discovering the author's intended meaning. In order to do the step of interpretation correctly, there are many elements that will need to be accomplished. There are three important steps to the process of interpretation: context, correlation, and consultation (Fuhr and Köstenberger, 2003). Examining context is one of the most important principles of interpretation because context determines the meaning of the passage (Duval and Hays, 2011). It is imperative when considering the various contexts to begin looking for differences between the situation of the biblical audience and the interpreter’s situation today (Duval and Hays, 2011). Practicing this will help in bridging the gaps between interpretation, application, and appropriation. This means that whatever the passage meant to the original audience is still the meaning of the passage today, and whatever the passage could not have meant back then, it cannot mean today (Witherington 111, 2008). The historical-cultural context functions on two distinct levels. First, there is the context of the events reflected in Scripture and second, there is the context of the text itself (Fuhr and Köstenberger, 2013). The historical-cultural context will differ from book to book, according to the time and culture of the author and his audience (Fee and Stuart, 2013). This would include facts about the writer, the recipients, the date, and the culture of the audience which would include the economic,

political, behavioural, and religious practices (Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, 2010). For the interpretation of the passage to be valid, it must be consistent with the historical-cultural context of the biblical text (Duval and Hays, 2011).

4.4.0 APPROACHES TO INTERPRETATION

4.4.1 THE HISTORICAL-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

According to Virkler (1981:77), “the meaning of a text cannot be interpreted with any degree of certainty without historical-cultural and contextual analysis.” It considers the historical-cultural milieu in which an author wrote, in order to understand his or her allusions, references, and purpose. Kyomya (2010), argues that the method asks two questions; but Virkler (1981), is of the view that, there are three secondary questions that are important in determining the historical-cultural analysis. First and foremost, what is the general historical situation facing the author and his audience? What were the political, economic and social situations? What was the main source of livelihood? What were the major threats and concerns? Therefore;

Knowledge of the historical-cultural context is crucial for answering basic questions about a text, such as why did the author bar women to preach, teach in front of men in the Corinthians church? (Virkler, 1981:78)

Secondly, the knowledge of what customs will clarify the meaning of given actions. And thirdly, what was the level of spiritual commitment of the audience? All these must be understood before one comes to the conclusion of any text. Thus, the meaning of the text cannot be understood properly if divorced from the knowledge of the whole passage. He further alludes that, good exegetical commentaries, study bibles and several resources books often supply such information (Virkler, 1981). It is also crucial to note that within the historical-cultural method, there is also a need to determine the writer and recipients (believers or unbelievers) as well as the writer’s purpose that is the intention of writing that particular book, gospel or letter. This therefore means that the reader will be in a better position to judge (Kyomya 2010).

Open minded Baptists argue that the bible ought to be interpreted like any other book. Thus, the researcher advocates for an interpretation of the scripture using the contextual bible study method. The interpreter serves as the judge of the text. For an example, when reading Galatians 3:28 “there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”. This is a very typical

example of the Historical-Cultural Method. Another example of the historical-cultural method from the interpreter's Bible. In 1 Timothy 2:11-12 the Bible says "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." Now this is what the interpreter's Bible says about these verses:

According to Kyomya (2010), the above passage would represent a later and more conservative position with regard to women in church than that of Paul... In part, this may have been caused by extravagances resulting from the primitive Christian "emancipation" of women, in part by a natural masculine reluctance to yield historic prerogatives to women. The interpreter judges that Paul did not write these verses. He argues that they were written after Paul's time by Christians who merely reflect the prejudices of their conservative camp. Consequently, the interpreter says, this passage does not speak with any authority (Kyomya, 2010).

According to Kyomya (2010), in the Historical-Cultural Method, the interpreter is a judge of the text and in any way all the confusion and the conflicting and the so many misplaced interpretations we have today in the Baptist church with special reference to the BCZ lies in the method used. A method is like a multi-purpose screwdriver that helps where our weak and fragile and fingernails cannot (Kyomya, 2010). It extends our abilities and helps others to see how we have managed to reach a certain conclusion. So, it is all in the method. We see the same dismal of biblical texts in the raging debate about homosexuality and sin. One will wonder and ask whether those who say homosexuality is not sin read the Bible. The Bible clearly condemns homosexuality in Sodom and Gomorrah "Genesis 19: 5-8. They called to Lot, where are the men who came to you tonight? "Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them". Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, "No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you and you can do whatever you like with them." Again, look at Romans 1: 26-27. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error (Kyomya, 2010).

According to Kyomya (2010), a number of interpretations have been given in line with the verses that tried to solve a contextual issue and later made a universal one which has bred a

challenge that sees the manipulation of others at the expense of the fundamentalists who tended to argue that there is no need to interpret scripture. It all rests in the method.

4.4.2 THE HISTORICAL-GRAMMATICAL METHOD

According to Kyomya (2010), this method seeks the plain and normal meaning of a passage in its context, while taking into account the rules of grammar and figures of speech. This is the method that evangelicals generally subscribe to. It is very important to point out that the historical-grammatical method is similar to the historical-critical method in that both consider the context, the rules of grammar, figures of speech and historical background. The important difference is that the historical-critical method is naturalistic and anti-supernatural and sits in judgement of the text. It does not take the text at face value but judges it and decides whether to accept what it is that the text says or not.

The historical- grammatical method believes in the supernatural and that scripture is inspired by God. It takes Scripture at face value- it accepts what the text says and does not explain it away (Kyomya ,2010). The Historical-Grammatical approach to interpretation of the Scriptures is the most balanced way to accuracy and sound doctrine. One must take the scriptures within context and see them in the light in which they were first understood, then apply the principle taught. We can be balanced in our thinking and interpretation if we look at the whole Biblical story and follow how God's will unfolds. The Scriptures are our final authority in matters of faith and practice as Baptists.

Also, of importance in interpretation is the issue of the worldview. A worldview according to Immanuel Kant is a people's way of looking at reality. In other words, it is a way of perceiving reality and it provides a deeper way of assumption. According to anthropologists, often people in different cultures live in a different worldview. Worldviews help people of a certain culture and society to make sense of their world or reality. Worldviews are the model through which people interpret new situations. This entails that none of us has a neutral perspective on life or the bible. We operate on the basis of certain assumptions that we can refer to as our worldview. A Worldview can be defined as a set of beliefs and values that guide one's thinking about all of life (Mburu, 2019).

According to Mburu (2019), a worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart that can be expressed in a story or in a set of assumptions (which may be true, partially

true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being. Worldviews drive us to another aspect of interpretation which is contextualization.

4.5 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

According to Kyomya (2010), the term context is the set of facts or circumstances that surround a situation or event. It is a discourse that surrounds a language unit and helps to determine its interpretation. According to Virkler (1981:76), “contextual analysis considers the relationship of a given passage to the whole body of an author’s writing, for better understanding results from a knowledge of the overall thought.” Kuist (2004) argues that, context means that which goes with the text. It is the setting in which a passage occurs. The English word "context" is derived from two words, *con* = with and *texo* = to weave. Thus, even the derivation gives us a picture of the value of context in accurate interpretation. The context "weaves" the text together in an orderly, logical flow, a flow inspired by God intended to convey His message. Context is the setting in which a passage occurs or simply what precedes and what follows the text you are studying. Thus, context includes those verses immediately before and after the passage, then the paragraph and book in which the passage appears, then other books by this author, as well as the overall message of the entire Bible. Picture a set of concentric circles with the text you are observing in the centre and surrounded by the next circle which is the paragraph or subdivision in which that text "lives." Next, you encounter the "circle" of the book in which that text is found and finally the "circle" of the entire Bible. Never observe a passage without looking at the "circles", especially the immediate paragraph, which means you need to not rush, but be willing to take a moment and do some more reading. Establishing the context forces the reader to examine the biblical writer's overall flow of thought. The meaning of any passage is nearly always determined, controlled, or limited by what appears immediately beforehand and afterward in the text. Context is "king" in interpretation. Since context always "rules" in interpretation and Scripture must always be interpreted in light of its context, the first step in the study of any book of the Bible is to get an overview of the book you are studying. Why? Because when you get an overview of the entire book, it will help you to discover the context. The process of establishing the context and this background will aid and guide your interpretation of the difficult, unclear or obscure passages.

The context of the text is extremely important to interpretation. Authorial intent, literary genre, grammatical usage, historical-cultural background, and redactional issues must all be examined thoroughly in order to ascertain the meaning of the text in the context in which it was written (Arthur 1994; Fee 1991). Scripture must be compared with Scripture in order to develop a holistic analytical/synthetic framework upon which to build one's faith (Stronstad 1995, 29).

Contextualization follows certain bridges as we interact with the world of the Bible. It is also very important to note that when we talk about contextualization, we must avoid the pitfall of syncretism. Context helps us to build bridges of communication taking into cognisance the concept of culture first. Culture is defined by several scholars as the beliefs, behaviours, objects and other characteristics common to the members of a particular group or society. In order to understand the concept of contextualization in hermeneutics, let's look at the example of Paul in 1 Timothy (2:11-12) which demonstrate his great skill in building bridges of context.

First bridge; "I do not permit women...". One can argue to say why women? Historians say at Ephesus there were many alters inscribed; to the gods of Asia, Europe and Africa then to the unknown god. There are theories that are forwarded to explain why Paul asked women to keep quiet in this region and not in other places of that time or in other areas where Paul established churches. This then translates to the fact that what had caused Paul to silence the women at Ephesus was never to be taken to apply to other churches- it all leads to the issue of the context that matters.

Context is very important when interpreting the Bible. Sometimes our mistake is not that we ignore the context, but that we don't look for context hard enough. The consequences can be serious both for our interpretation and for our theology.

According to Kyomya (2010), context determines the referent. In this part, the goal of interpretation is to go beyond the dictionary meaning of the word or expression to identify the referent and a referent is a thing or person specifically referred to. It is critical to establish the referents in a scripture as it will help to know the people who were referred to before applying the scripture to the contemporary people. It is the context that determines the referent. One must also strive to get the full conversation in order to get the full context.

4.5.1 RE-READING GALATIANS 3:28; 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34 AND 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-12

The call by Paul to the Galatians, to Timothy, Corinthians must be understood in terms of locality and not universality. The fact that he prohibited women's public role at Corinth and Ephesus does not apply to Galatia and other churches he established. Paul's view that, "to the Greeks I became Greek and to the Jews I became like a Jew in order to win them all to Christ" is a clear testimony that Paul was not against women to take leadership positions that may stretch to being ordained as ministers of the word of God (Pastor). His view was further laid bare in Galatians 3:28 when he professes that, "there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". This verse compels the writer to make the same call to the BCZ to return to their belief in priesthood of all believers and allow women to also uphold the posts of being ordained as pastors. In the eyes of God, women are also important irrespective of their gender.

The context of the biblical text of Galatians 3:28 clearly supports the equality between males and females and hence can be understood as one who was much concerned by taking into consideration the issue of context. The scripture supports the positive role and status of women against BCZ women's predicament in terms of their exclusion from ordination. Thus, the researcher argues that, the position of women in the BCZ church needs an eye so that they can be considered equal to their male counterparts and avoid uprooting verses without a careful consideration of the context from which they were written as well as the message they convey. The text seeks to emancipate women ahead of time advocating for an end to sexism and discrimination based on gender lines. 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 are also specifically contextual and they must also be locally applied as Paul was dealing with circumstances of a particular community of that time at a particular place. The text has no general or universal bearing on all the past and present communities (Kling, 2004).

It is therefore, unfair to just uproot a text and apply it in a different modern contextual world because these contexts have different situations and their contexts differ as well. Also, it is worth reiterating that, cultures affect the way biblical texts are engaged. Culture may create an identity and this may manipulate other people. Taking for example the Shona culture or African culture is exploitative in some sense and by the same token these subjugating tendencies may trickle into the church and find supporting scripture to cement the cultural oppressive system which is patriarchal as if God looks in that way.

4.6 APPLICATION AND APPROPRIATION

Virkler (1981:77), argues that, “application is the important step of translating the meaning a biblical text had for its original hearer into the meaning it has for believers in a different time and culture.” According to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard (1993), there are useful four-step methodology for the application of biblical texts that is: determine the original application, figure out how specific the original application was, identify any cultural issues, and determine what contemporary applications go along with the broader principles presented in the text. The step of application is asking “How might this text relate to us as the people of God?” Traina and Bauer (1985) observe that the Bible emphasizes the ordering of the life of God’s people with the intention that through corporate life, God’s people might render acceptable worship to God and mediate the saving relationship of God to the world. According to Traina (1985), the goal of all biblical application is to walk in step with God and be the people He wants Christians to be. Thompson (1994) observes that Scripture itself is aimed at the transformation of communities and individuals as members of those communities. Thompson (1994) further adds that the application of any passage of Scripture should be based on the historical meaning of the text in its original context, and on the broader testimony of Scripture concerning the nature and purpose of God and the application of the text must have relevance to today’s audience, contain legitimate parallels to today’s audience, and produce clear and concise teaching points that summarize what God’s Word is teaching at any particular point in scripture to today’s audience. According to Fuhr and Köstenberger (2016), the main point in determining legitimacy in application is that there must be sensible parallels between what the text originally meant and what it means today. Duval and Hays (2012), suggest that, there is a need to observe how the principles in the text address the original situation, then for the interpreter to discover parallel situations in their context, and to make application to the church by creating real-world scenarios. Duval and Hays (2012) further postulate that the principles will connect with the passage and will be identical to the principles that were directed to the original audience.

Appropriation is another step of the project’s intervention within the contextual bible study method. The point of a contextual bible study is not solely to gain more knowledge, but also to appropriate it into the life of the individual in this case the BCZ church and for it to be fused within the local church body so that the scripture speaks to the contemporary situation without bias and thus if proper exegesis has been done, the position of women can be addressed. Arthur (2010), urges the readers to stop for a moment and meditate on what God is showing the

interpreter in the text that is being studied. According to Arthur (2010), appropriating the text is asking, “What does this text mean today for a follower of Christ?” Appropriation is key to the church today because it helps in the transfer of what could have been learnt through the process of the contextual bible study method and then embody in the life of a believer.

4.7 CONCLUSION

The chapter has explored on the methodology that the researcher saw it fit for the BCZ to take on board in a bid to address the position of women in the church. The writer explained that, in order to address the position of women in the BCZ, the scriptures used by the church must be interrogated using the contextual bible study method. The chapter went on to articulate the steps that are considered in doing a proper bible interpretation to mention; observation, interpretation, application and appropriation. Of paramount importance was the issue that the church must go back to the context of their scriptural inferences and allusion as well as upholding their belief in the priesthood of all believers and then liberate women from being denied access to ordination because the Hebraic culture is different from Christian culture and it is also different from the contemporary African culture.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter brings to a close the challenge discovered among the BCZ church which was under investigation. It is also premised at submitting some projections of recommendations for the church to rethink its tradition if it is to be fully the people of the book as they purport. The chapter also presents the summary, observations or lessons and a wrap up of the entire academic journey traversed. It goes without saying; indeed, there were some stumbling blocks experienced on the way which can be some other windows of prospective research and suggestions to undergo it. It was my submission from the first chapter that the centre of this academic journey of study was hinged on the exclusion of women from ordination irrespective of their being the majority among the church members and then the writer is baffled and taken aback by the well-knitted beliefs of the BCZ but not being held on to the iota hence the investigation of the tradition to be rethought.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Rethinking the Baptist Tradition on women ordination was the hallmark of this research paper. The researcher tried to take us through different chapters with different subheadings coherently enough to expose the church first before calling it to rethink its tradition. The point of departure of the research was from a global village as a whole pulling the strings of the exclusion of women from leadership in general until one came closer home to the BCZ as a church.

It was an endeavour of the second chapter to take us through the history of the church; interrogating its beliefs and traditions in an attempt to penetrate from what they believe and call for a second thought and challenging the church to go back to its beliefs and allow its adherents to practice what they believe fully without others being side-lined. Chapter two ushered in chapter three carrying some scriptural inferences that are used by the church to exclude women from the ordained ministry. Beyond reasonable doubt, the church is found offside in their exegetical interpretation of these scriptures. Irrespective of them being people of the book, the researcher noticed that the church contradicts itself on the pretext that they select the application of scripture to suit their tradition of denying women ordination but believing in the priesthood of all believers, autonomy of the local church as well as individual soul liberty. The researcher discovered that the church is actually shooting themselves in their

foot. Be that as it may, chapter four tried to rescue the church by calling it to uphold proper biblical interpretation in a bid to address the position of women through the contextual bible study method.

5.2 OBSERVATIONS/LESSONS

As the study was unfolding, the researcher drew quite a number of lessons or observations which may or may not be helpful in the future for the church as a whole and even the BCZ to be precise as well as the Zimbabwean community if let's say they are attended.

- Like Immanuel Kant said; a worldview is a people's way of looking at reality, a way of perceiving reality which then provides a deeper way of assumption.
- Because we live in different cultures; one culture mustn't be transported to another culture. Theology is not transportable but contextual. Thus, often people in different cultures live in a different worldview. Hence, those people can make sense of their reality. Cultures needs to be interpreted.
- Most of the church (BCZ) members do not know that the Baptist church is one of the churches that believe in freedom in Christ Jesus. They are not fully enjoying their liberty in Jesus Christ.
- The autonomy of the local church. Priesthood of all believers to mention but a few of the Baptist beliefs carries a lot but it is not being exercised to the iota.
- The church can anytime soon start to allow women ordination if they are taught fully about who they are and the power vested in them.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.3.1 RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES THAT HAVE BEEN USED TO EXCLUDE WOMEN

It is the desire of the researcher to go back to scripture. Baptists are known as people of the book but the researcher recommends that the church must actually go back and take the lost belief. If the scripture is well articulated and examined following the proper biblical interpretations, I believe the church will include women in the movement.

5.3.2 USE OF PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE TO PROMOTE WOMEN

- The researcher recommends the use of the scripture to encourage and promote women who are under oppression. Having studied theology, some of them are denied access to execute the pastoral leadership.

5.3.3 ENGAGEMENT WITH MALE CHAUVINIST TENDENCIES

- Seminars are required that involve males and allow free talk and open-minded interpretation of scripture.

5.3.4 CONTINUE SPEAKING AND CAMPAIGNING FOR WOMEN'S RECOGNITION

- The church must continue probing for the inclusion of women in leadership positions. Breaking of new grounds in starting to campaign for women president, first vice president and second vice president is a possibility.
- Allow those women who have trained at theological seminaries to start pastoring churches when called by local churches.

5.3.5 RECRUITING MORE WOMEN IN THE SEMINARIES FOR THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS PARTICIPATION

- More women to be allowed to come and train not to be lay leaders but pastors.
- Upon training or while they are still on the training, they are not supposed to be considered separate from their male counterparts.

5.3.6 RETHINKING THEOLOGICAL TRAINING

Theology and Gender Studies are a necessity to bring on board the inclusion of women in theology.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter managed to discuss the summary of the whole study and the conclusions of this paper. The observations or lessons have been learnt from the research as a whole and the writer found it worth to put on the table some recommendations and suggestions that he has seen fundamental to research on in the future.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

My name is Richard Chiombera, and I am a student at Midlands State University, registration number R1710450T. As a bona fide member of the Baptist Church affiliated under the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe, I am currently undertaking a research on the topic entitled, “Rethinking the Baptist Tradition on women ordination: A case study of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.” As a researcher, I believe in continual development as new and better information becomes available. Therefore, I am appealing to you to help me to contribute to my research to the best of your knowledge.

It takes approximately 5 minutes at most to complete. Thank you in advance for your contribution.

- You may need data to access the form on the internet.
- I will close responses on Friday the 8th of April 2021 @0900hrs.
- Please do not write your name.
- I can share with you the results if you want, all you have to do is to ask.

NB. Be rest assured, the information you provide is going to be kept under strict confidentiality because your information is going to be used only for academic purposes.

Thank you for your time and contribution,

Richard Chiombera.

Appendix B
Questionnaire to women who studied theology
@ Baptist Theological Seminary of Zimbabwe

1. What is ordination?

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2. Were you ordained? Yes, or no? Explain your answer.

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3. Why does the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe deny women ordination?

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4. What is the position of the church on women's ordination?

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5. What is your take on women's ordination?

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Appendix C
Questionnaire to Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe Church Pastors

1. What is ordination?

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2. Why does the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe deny women ordination?

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3. Since the Baptists believe in the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of all believers, what is the role of the local church in the ordination of women?

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4. What is the position of the church on women's ordination?

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5. What is your take on women ordination?

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6. How do the Baptists generally view women in leadership positions?

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7. How does the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe make use of the scriptures in making a decision on women ordination?

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8. Is there any way in which you feel that the church is contradicting itself in their beliefs which they believe are enacted from the scripture?

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Appendix D
Questionnaire to Baptist Church Members at Large

1. What is your take on women empowerment drive in Zimbabwe?

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2. How do the Baptists generally view women in leadership positions?

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3. What is the position of the church on women ordination?

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4. What is your take on women ordination?

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5. Why does the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe deny women ordination?

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Appendix E
Questionnaire to Deacons and Deaconesses

1. What is ordination?

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2. Does your church ordain women as Deaconess? Yes, or no? Explain.

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3. Does your church ordain women as Pastors? Yes, or no? Explain.

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4. Why does the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe deny women ordination?

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5. What is the position of the church on women ordination?

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Appendix F
Questionnaire to Baptist International Mission Board Representatives
from Southern Baptist Convention of America

1. Why does the Southern Baptist Convention of America deny women ordination?

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2. Since the Baptists believe in the autonomy of the local church and priesthood of all believers, what is the role of the local church in the ordination of women?

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3. How do the Baptists generally view women in leadership positions?

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4. How does the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe make use of the scriptures in making a decision on women ordination?

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5. Is there any way in which the church is contradicting itself in their beliefs which they believe are enacted from the scripture?

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