Churches as Community Development Locus: addressing the challenges of the girl child in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe

By

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Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

The girl child in Zimbabwe encounters great suffering emanating from cultural, traditional and, at times, religious factors. These, in total, make the girl child's life challenges innumerable. While the churches in Zimbabwe are aware of the girl child challenges, they have not related to them effectively. Some of these challenges are related to spiritual beliefs. This study explores the causes of the girl child's suffering in Zimbabwe and the intersection between gender, culture and development. The reason for this exploration is to discover how these three areas interact with each other as determinants to the just place of women in the community. It also explores the relationship between religion, culture and gender. In this context, it looks at religious and church affiliation in a Zimbabwean context. Thereafter, the thesis explores the concepts of church and gender, the concept of female submission, and theological challenges within Southern Africa. These include the concept of God, the role and status of women in the image of God, a discussion of women in the texts and the concept of sin, salvation and wholeness. The thesis draws mainly on the works of African women theologians although not exclusively, when dealing with theological challenges. Furthermore, the thesis reports on qualitative interviews conducted with selected religious leaders in the Eastern highlands. It uses a qualitative method that seeks to describe and attach meaning to phenomena. This study concludes by providing recommendations as to how the church in Zimbabwe could act as a community development locus in addressing the challenges of a girl child in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

Opsomming

Meisie kinders in Zimbabwe ervaar groot lyding wat voortspruit uit kulturele, tradisionele en soms godsdienstige faktore. Hierdie faktore in totaal maak meisie kinders se lewensuitdagings ontelbaar. Terwyl die kerke in Zimbabwe bewus is van die uitdagings, het hulle nie effektief met die uitdagings verband gehou nie. Van hierdie uitdagings is verwant aan geestelike oortuigings. Hierdie studie ondersoek die oorsake van meisie kinders se lyding in Zimbabwe en die interseksie gevind tussen geslag, kultuur en ontwikkeling. Die rede vir hierdie ondersoek is om te ontdek hoe hierdie drie areas met mekaar in wisselwerking tree wat 'n bepalende invloed het op die posisie van vroue in die gemeenskap. Dit ondersoek ook die verhouding tussen godsdiens, kultuur en geslag. In hierdie konteks kyk die studie na godsdienstige en kerklike affiliasie in 'n Zimbabwiese konteks. Daarna ondersoek die tesis die konsepte van kerk en geslag, die konsep van vroulike voorlegging en teologiese uitdagings binne Suider-Afrika. Dit sluit in die konsep van God, die rol en status van vroue geskape in die beeld van God, 'n bespreking van vroue in die tekste en die konsep van sonde, verlossing en heelheid. Die tesis handel hoofsaaklik oor die werke van Afrika-vroue-teoloë, hoewel dit nie net uitsluitlik teologiese uitdagings hanteer nie. Verder lewer die tesis verslag oor kwalitatiewe onderhoude met geselekteerde godsdienstige leiers in die oostelike hooglande. Dit maak gebruik van 'n kwalitatiewe metode met die doel om 'n beskrywing te gee en waarde te heg aan fenomenen. Hierdie studie sluit af deur aanbevelings te verskaf oor hoe die kerk in Zimbabwe as 'n gemeenskapsontwikkelingslokus kan optree om die uitdagings van 'n meisiekind in die Oos-Hooglande van Zimbabwe aan te spreek.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my loving husband Rev Timothy Myambo Shingeni and to my dear parents Thomas and Laina Mahoso who are all promoted to eternal peace and glory with our Lord Jesus Christ.

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I would like to thank God for good health and provisions during my study period. I experienced peace and his presence daily. His faithfulness endures forever.

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Finally, I also would like to thank my friends Sophie Mwero Kanda, Angela Mutakura and Rosie Mazuwa who are always there for me when I need their help.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACCZ	Apostolic churches council of Zimbabwe
ADF VI	The Sixth African Development Forum
AIC	African Initiated Churches
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
BEIN	Biblically-informed Eclectic Intervention Network
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
JMAC	Johane Marange Apostolic Church
MC	Mission Churches or Mainline Churches
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
WAD	Women and Development
WID	Women in Development
ZCC	Zimbabwe council of Churches

Geographical Map of Zimbabwe

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Focus of the Study

The life of a girl child in Zimbabwe has been interspersed with difficult encounters emanating from cultural, traditional and, at times, religious factors that make the life challenges of a girl child innumerable (Chirimuuta 2006). The term "girl child" has become a common name to depict female "biological offspring from birth to eighteen (18) years of age" while the word "child" in most dictionaries refers to a person between infancy and teen years (Offorma 2009:18). The designation "girl child" may have been intended to express the vulnerability of the girl and her need for protection from a parent(s) or guardians. Hence the term "girl child" technically refers to, in a particular sense, a girl in potentially challenging circumstances. The use of the singular designation "girl child" rather than "girl children" is deliberate with the intention of avoiding the generalization of individual girl child's repressive circumstances (Offorma 2009:18). Situations differ from one girl child to another even though the circumstances may be generally similar. For this reason, the particular singular designation "girl child" takes cognizance of the uniqueness of the individual experiences, responses and survival of the girl child.

The central theoretical argument of this study is that the church can serve as an agent of change in conscientisation and facilitation towards the mitigation of the repressive challenges faced by the girl child in rural Zimbabwe and this is best explained in the following statement:

Customary practices which include pledging a young girl to marriage with a partner not of her choice, forcing a widow to marry her late husband's brother, and offering a young girl as compensatory payment in inter-family disputes – are still rooted in the country. (Kanyenze, Kondo, Chitambara and Martens 2011:211).

In the same vein, Klein (1989:47) affirms this when he argues that:

Custom in Africa is stronger that domination, stronger than the law, stronger that religion. Over the years, customary practices have been incorporated into religion, and ultimately have come to be believed by their practitioners to be demanded by their adopted gods, whoever they may be.

Arguably, practical steps are needed if we are to bring these practices to an end. This explains why this research seeks to investigate the situation of the girl child in Zimbabwe, and explore the intersection between gender, culture, theology and development. It also seeks to explore the role of theology in re-enforcing practices that are oppressive to the girl child and make recommendations as to how the Zimbabwean church could conscientize and facilitate the mitigation of girl child repressive challenges.

1.2. Motivation

I grew up in the eastern highlands of Zimbabwe where culture and religion were major determinants in the destiny of the girl child. I was born in a family of twelve (eight girls and four boys) and we belonged to an African Initiated Church (AIC) where girls were not permitted to attain high school education. I cannot claim to have suffered the worst as a girl child since I have heard girl child stories of abuses worse than mine. These girl children would, undoubtedly, deserve better audience than me. However, they are nowhere to be found. What they encountered distanced them from having the opportunity to share as I have been privileged to do, and many of them now reside in remote areas without a basic education to communicate or tell their side of the story in writing. Others are trapped in polygamous marriages arranged by their parents and others are most likely dead as a result of life fatal circumstances. I have also worked as both a school chaplain and a guidance teacher and fought to liberate other girl children from oppression. In these roles, depressed girls living in such circumstances would pour their hearts in search of a respite. It is, therefore, my conviction that the church should employ community development initiatives integrated with pastoral engagement in order to address the challenges faced by the girl child in rural Zimbabwe.

It is hoped that this thesis will provide relatively new information on how gender discrimination as reinforced by culture and religion affects the girl child. Not much has been written concerning the suffering of the girl child and the possible rescue by the church. However, current literature emphasises the suffering of adult women rather than that of the girl child. It should also be noted that I write as an evangelical woman, who has been influenced by both the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians as well as by evangelical Egalitarian thought.

1.3. Literature Review

"Gender" has been defined in various ways with some definitions arguing for an essentialist origin of roles and responsibilities between men and women while others highlight the constructed nature of gender. Reeves and Baden (2000, ADF VI) define gender as "socially

determined differences between females and males" and gender equity as "the process of being fair to both men and women". Crawley and O'Meare (2002:32) have argued that gender equality is achieved through an active (an ongoing process to prevent the situation) rather than a re-active (hastily reacting to a situation) approach.

The United Nations observed the discrimination against girls in schools and women in all walks of life and prioritised this in their 8th Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and all levels of education no later than 2015" (UN 2013:18).[1] However, many countries did not achieve this goal, and by the year 2012, near the close of the MDGs, several countries were far from achieving most of them (Nayyer 2012:21).

Just as in other countries, the most common challenges in Zimbabwe have been sexual abuse, cultural and religious issues, poverty and early marriage (Oduyoye1995:80; cf. Chadzuka 2008:39). Cultural practices such as *chiramu* promote sexual abuse of the girl child. Chakawa (2010:41)   defines *chiramu* as "[a] practice in which a brother in law can indecently assault his young and unmarried sister in law under the guise of culture". Kanchense (2007:21) refers to *chiramu* as a "set of rights characteristically bestowed upon uncles and brothers-in-law". Kanchense (2007) further indicates that these uncles and brothers-in-law are permitted to caress and even have sexual intercourse with younger girls in the family". Many girl children have been sexually abused, as a result, but most of these offences have gone unreported. Both Jenje-Makwenda (2010:4, 5) and Chakawa (2010:41) state that many of these stories are not reported for the protection of families and relationships. Virginity testing is yet another cultural practice that oppresses girls. Aschwanden (1982:93) and Mutsvairo *et al*. (1996:57) affirm the fact that in Zimbabwean culture girls are prized for their virginity. In the same vein, Hanzi (2006:37) reports that, as a result, some traditional leaders in Zimbabwe issued decrees in their villages to reinforce virginity testing of girls in public ceremonies. This is confirmed in the following statement:

In 2002, about five thousand girls attended a virginity testing ceremony at Osborne dam in the Makoni area, under Chief Makoni and in 2004 at least four thousand young girls were tested at the same place (Hanzi 2006). The girls who passed these tests were given official documents

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[1] The 8 millennium Development goals expired in 2015 the year by which they were meant to be fulfilled and were replaced by the 17 Sustainable Development Goals which are to be fulfilled in 2030. The SDGs like the MDG deal with issues of gender equality (SDG 5).
Source: www.mdgs.un.org/unsd/mgd/default.aspx

as proof of their virginity. This in fact puts the virgins at risk as some believe that having sexual act with a virgin cures AIDs (Hanzi 2006:37). Other cultural practices include the painful adornment of tattoos on the face and breasts of the girl child as well as the stretching of nipples and lengthening of labia minora (Aschwanden 1982:77; Gelfand 1965:28; cf. Bagnol & Mariano 2012:46). Such practices are there to benefit the girl child's parents through the bride price paid by a prospective husband but are oppressive to the girl child.

Marriage customs may also be oppressive. There are several Shona[2] variations of marriage, where the girl child is afforded no choice. These are *kuzvarira* (pledging a daughter to be a wife before she is born), *kuputsa* (pledging a daughter into marriage exchange for food or money) , *bondwe* or *chimutsamapfiwa* (to continue on with the deceased sister's husband), *chitsaramvi (*one who picks out grey hair) and *mutengatore* (swapping sister for marriage) (Hanzi 2006:33; Bourdillon 1976:50; My Zimbabwe 2012; Gelfand 1977:104). Ansell (2001:3) argues that payment of *roora* (bride price) gives a husband authority over his wife because he paid for her. His authority may even be used to beat her since wife beating is not culturally offensive (Hindin 2003:502). Some girls are given into marriage to appease avenging spirits. This is because the Shona people believe that the only way to recompense an avenging spirit is to give a girl child to the offended family (Myambo 2010:36). Shoko (in Dube, Shoko and Hayes 2011:33) argues that, in addition to a girl, a herd of cattle is also demanded.

Kanyenze et al. (2011:209-32) state how the government and humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have intervened in order to abate the plight of Zimbabwean women and address gender imbalances. The government has already enacted some laws in order to address these imbalances in the form of programmes such as BEAM (Basic Education Assistance Module) for primary and secondary schools. The BEAM programme was community driven and prioritized girls. This programme, however, struggled to eradicate the problem due to inflation and shortage of funds. In 2002, a women only University was established to offer degree programmes and other courses for women ready to take up tertiary education at all levels up to 60 years. This was somehow helpful but was not completely successful due to the fact that most women were not at the educational level required to attend university. As it were, the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) was launched in 1993 to offer assistance for girls of school-going age at both primary and secondary levels in the rural areas (Kanyenze et

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[2] Shona is the main language and culture of Zimbabwe

al 2011:216). Nevertheless, some girls refused to go back to school as they did not see its importance (Kanyenze et al 2011:209-32).

Religion in general is often viewed as reinforcing gender inequalities and gender-based violence (Chirimuuta 2006). Chakawa (2010:37) explains how the girl child is exploited in the name of religion in the Johane Marange Apostolic Church. He points out how self-styled "prophets" claim special spiritual behests to receive oracles from God about the girl child's marriage. Girls are matched with very old men in marriage although they already have other wives. It is reported that Johane Marange himself left 16 widows as it was easy to obtain wives in this manner (Daneel 1971:332). There was an instance when parents complained to a "prophet" about their daughter's behaviour and he indicated that he wanted to take the girl away from parents for counselling and spiritual discipline. He raped her, instead (Makoni 2011). In such cases it is rare for the case to be reported as it is simply arranged that the girl gets married to the rapist.

In view of the value of virginity, in this context, it is interpreted through the use of Deuteronomy 22:28-29 that if a man raped a girl, he is obliged to marry her. Females do not have space in such churches. Dube et al (2011:51) confirm that women do not hold office in the formal hierarchy in AICs. This is because, in the Shona culture, it is believed that the major role of a woman is to give birth, take care of children, and be a home maker. Women only become significant if they claim to be possessed by the Holy Spirit and become prophetesses, healers and midwives. In traditional religions women who are possessed by spirit mediums are authoritative (Dube 2011:149). The girl child was, therefore, forced into perpetual virginity as parents dedicate their virgin daughters to the service of God in the Matopos (Aschwanden 1982:93).

Nussbaum (2000:214) highlights freedom of religion as another fact that oppresses children. Since there is freedom of religion, the government does not judge religious issues yet there is a very thin line between religion and culture. However, in many cases the church has been blamed for not being at the forefront in engaging the challenges women experience (Kambarami 2006; Chirimuuta 2006). Women in general have made efforts to liberate themselves. Dube et al (2011:54) highlight that women formed their own groups where they could worship and encourage each other. This fellowship of women is called *Ruwadzano*. Dube goes on to give an example of Agnes Majecha who founded her own church but could not be independent as she invited her husband to co-lead (2011:77).

The leadership is predominantly male and she is the only female in the leadership. *Guta ra Jehovah* (GRJ) is another church founded by a woman but there are no women in the leadership since the death of the founder. Mompati and Prinsen (in Eade 2002:73) assert that oppressed people accept their destiny and lose confidence in leaders from among them. They prefer to be led by the rich oppressor than a poor person of their own. It is interesting to note that Oduro, Pretorius and Nussbaum (2008:144) state that women are liberated through the exercise of their gifts in African Initiated Churches. Those who are gifted in healing, prophesying, seeing vision and singing are allowed to exercise their gifts freely regardless of gender. These women discover their value as both men and women come to them for assistance.

The mission church[3] has also been viewed as being oppressive. Oduyoye (1995:174) holds that the African church uses the Hebrew Bible and St Paul's letters to buttress traditional religion and culture. This has become the concern for women and led to the rise of feminism. Dube (2003:68) asserts that women need to be liberated from both imperialism and patriarchy. Oduyoye (2004:90) argues that though women are welcome as members of the church, it is often nevertheless the case that their views or ideas are not accepted and they are not incorporated in decision-making. She goes on to say that the Bible denounces oppression but the same text may be used to promote women oppression if read literally (2004:92). African women theologians such as Oduyeyo (2004:93) and Phiri (2002:250) note that indigenous terms should be used and contextualize our interpretation of the Bible to suit our context. At the same time we should responsibly engage with culture (Niebuhr in Adenay 1987:95).

Gender oppression is a result of broken relationships and it is often the case that the network of relationships works against the well-being of the girl child. Human relationships that are oppressive and exploitative often render the victims powerless and may be regarded evil and "fallen" as Myers (1999:13) argues. According to Myers (1999:13), the causes of oppression are both social and spiritual and it is, therefore, important that the gospel be recognised as holistic and addresses both the spiritual and physical world. Ver Beek argues in (Eade 2002:59) that spirituality is central to development for it influences people's choice of who treats their children when they are sick, how they plant and harvest their crops. In some indigenous churches everyday life is lived through the advice from the spiritual world. Eade (2002:60)

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[3] Mission churches are those that were brought by missionaries from overseas as compared to the African Indigenous churches that have their origins in Africa.

asserts that empowerment from a religious perspective encompasses personal dignity, self-worth and satisfaction that comes from within.

The church's stance in confronting the gender related issues faced by women is more effective. The church is known to have teachings that sometimes oppress women; and if it preaches against oppression, it will benefit more people. The church, within its ecological network, is both sacred and social (Hendricks 2004:70). As Hendricks further explains, the church is inexplicably linked to Christ as his body and yet it is a "unit of society." Its membership relates the same, in one way of the other, as those outside the church where people share the same or similar experience and needs. The church is on a mission to change the world for better through the knowledge of the liberating love of God (Eade 2002:48). The church's facilitation as a change agent is central since it shares the same difficulties and resources with the community, often maintains a credible testimony and understands the cultural environment. Cooper and White (1994:30-35) highlight four models of intervention in the lives of young people who are facing challenging circumstances which are: the treatment, reform, advocacy and empowerment models.

1.4. Research Question and Objectives

In light of the previous discussion, this thesis seeks to pose the following research question:

How best can Zimbabwean churches conscientize and facilitate in the alleviation of the repressive challenges of the girl child?[4]

The following research objectives were formulated in order to answer the above question:

- To investigate the situation of the girl child in Zimbabwe

- To explore the intersection between gender, culture and development

- To explore the intersection of theology, culture and gender

- To investigate the role of theology in re-enforcing practices that are oppressive to the girl child through an empirical study

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[4] I am fully aware that girl child challenges are embedded and interconnected as well as intertwined with the socio-cultural and religious fabric of society within the communities of Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe, and "alleviation of repressive challenges" does not refer to every girl child but to the few who manage to get help. Thus reducing the number of suffering girls and bringing total transformation and alleviation of repressive challenges to those who get help.

- To make recommendations as to how the Zimbabwean church could conscientize and facilitate in the mitigation of girl child repressive challenges.

1.5. Methodology

1.5.1. Practical Theological Methodology

This study employs a practical theological approach. In this study the "Four Tasks of Practical Theological interpretation" as provided by Osmer (2008) will be utilized. The four core tasks of a practical theological approach comprise the following: a descriptive- empirical task, an interpretive task, a normative task and a pragmatic task (Osmer 2008:11). These four core tasks will be followed in this study. The descriptive- empirical task will be used to describe the challenges of the girl child in Zimbabwe using literature and internet sources. Interpretive task will be carried out using interviews and participant observation to find out why the girl child suffers in Zimbabwe. The normative task deals with the ideal situation, what should be the situation of a girl child in Zimbabwe? The pragmatic task will provide suggestions on how churches should work together with the government to abate the challenges of a girl child.

(i) Descriptive empirical task

The **descriptive empirical** task puts together information that helps to "discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations or contexts" (Osmer 2008:4) about the challenges of the girl child in Zimbabwe. This task seeks to answer the question, "what is going on" with the girl child in Zimbabwe? (cf. Osmer 2008:4). In order to respond to this question, there is need to trace the Shona traditional, cultural and contemporary perception of the girl child. In this regard, two approaches will be utilized under this area of study namely: literature study and fieldwork.

In the literature study I will interact with literature such as books, journals and electronic information from the internet in investigating the challenges of the girl child, examining the causes of these challenges, describing the desired situation and in exploring ways to achieve the desired situation. This task will also be covered in the empirical part of the study that seeks to ascertain church views with regard to women. This research will start by exploring the challenges of a girl child, then the intersection between gender, culture and development. It will also explore the relationship between theology, culture and gender and interviews will be done to hear the church leaders' voices with regard to their views about the girl child

challenges. Finally, chapter 6 will summarise and conclude by suggesting way forward and a suitable model that would be used with regards to alleviate the challenges of a girl child.

(ii) The Interpretive Task

The interpretive task is not divorced from the findings of the descriptive empirical task. It also carries on with the empirical analysis as it seeks to answer the question "why is this going on?" (Osmer, 2008:4)? Why is the girl child suffering? The interpretive task draws on the theories of the arts and sciences in order to better understand the reasons "patterns and dynamics that are occurring" (Osmer 2008:4) with girl child challenges in Zimbabwe. I will also explore development, missiological and anthropological literature on gender, culture and development.

(iii) The Normative Task

The normative task uses "theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from good 'practices'" (Osmer, 2008:4). The level of analysis seeks to respond to the question, "What ought to be going on?" Since the girl challenges are influenced by several factors such as the culture, economy and religion and patriarchy the normative source therefore intervenes in providing guideline on what the desirable situation of the girl child should be. Literature from the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians and evangelical women theologians who have interpreted the Bible to use as the basis for the normative task will be utilised.

(iv) The Pragmatic Task

The pragmatic task is about "determining strategies for action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the 'talk back' emerging when they are enacted" (Osmer 2008:4). With a curved interaction of the descriptive, interpretive and normative task areas that require improvement among the Zimbabwean perceptions of the girl child are considered with a view to develop a transformative model. In addition, recommendations are proposed.

1.5.2. Research Methodology

I used the qualitative method which seeks to describe and attach meaning to phenomena using a purposive sampling method (Fouche & De Vos1998:125). I have, therefore, chosen the interviewees based on enculturation, current involvement and adequate time as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2003:21). I have interviewed church leaders from three African initiated

churches namely; Jekenisheni, Johane Marange and Zion, and two mission churches namely United Methodist and United Baptist to identify if there are any differences in opinion between the AICs and mission churches. The interviews with leaders from each church were done because they are custodians of their doctrines and are the most prominent in this context. Since most of the things are communicated orally by elderly people according to their gender, I have interviewed 3 elderly women who are in charge of the girls in the African Initiated Churches in order to understand their perception of a well-mannered girl child.

This is done, because it may be argued that the teaching the girl child receives from women informs her worldview. This will also help to determine whether it contributes to the present situation of the girl child. Apart from the church leaders to be interviewed, I have also interviewed the police and one NGO that deals with children in an attempt to discover whether the suffering of the girl child is also observed in the country outside the church as evidenced by cases reported to the police and cases dealt with by NGOs. The findings were classified according to themes (thematic analysis) and letters and numbers are used to represent each theme. For example, MT is used to mean Masters in Theology while different numbers are used as codes for various themes.

1.6. Ethical Considerations

I have obtained ethical clearance from the University of Stellenbosch as the empirical research is conducted through interviews[5]. There was respect of participants' dignity, fairness and confidentiality whenever it is required. Besides, the identities of those interviewed were also protected. It should also be indicated that this research has been categorised as low to medium risk since the girls themselves were not going to be interviewed.

1.7. Limitations

My choice of interviewees was largely limited due to ethical considerations. I wanted to interview my colleagues who are in arranged marriages due to church traditions. Because of the risks involved, however, and due to their association with me (who is considered a defector having left the AICs), the information I received is limited. Interviewing girls in African Initiated Churches would have provided the best information in this regard but because they are children, the ethical risks are high. In this way, the information may have some biases since the people interviewed have not known other ways of worship and are comfortable with their

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[5] Ethics clearance code: Proposal #: SU-HSD-001869

present status. Also, the translation of some Shona words and customs may not be perfect since they have no equivalent English terms. Most of the rural elderly people are not educated and the Shona language is used for the interviews. Some Shona cultural aspects are not common and may not be understood by people from other cultures. It is important to note that I was not able to voice record the interviews as the interviewees would not agree due to religious beliefs which restrict them from doing so, which was another limiting experience. Another limitation of this study is that it is firmly placed within the development framework rather than the youth work framework – although it essentially deals with youth. This is so because girls are more associated with women than with boys of their age. They are sometimes left out in youth programmes. The land reform programmes and youth empowerment in Zimbabwe that targeted the youth benefited boys rather than girls (Phiri, Haddad & Masenya 2003:77). In other words, it could be argued that the word youth is almost used to mean boys. Lack of written documents concerning AIC church doctrines and practices gives a variety of answers and may not be accurate since it is communicated orally from generation to generation within a changing culture.

1.8. The significance of the study

It is envisioned that this study will help to highlight the need for the church's participation in addressing the challenges of the girl child in Zimbabwe. The church's engagement with these challenges is likely to be more comprehensive than the endeavours. However noble may these endeavours be, the engagement is likely to be more comprehensive in the sense that it takes into account the spiritual dimension by the social activist groups from which both African culture and religious movements derive justification for the exploitation of the girl child. It is hoped that attitude of the community towards the girl child may change for the better. Although some have written about the girl child in Zimbabwe, not much has been written from a theological perspective. So, this thesis is one of a kind because of its peculiarity in scholarship.

1.9. Definition of key terms

Advocacy: The advocacy approach deals with the marginalised young people who are either ill-informed about their rights or have realised that they are being deprived or abused (Cooper & White 1994:30-35). It entails the legal aspect in promoting or supporting the weak.

Concientisation: Building confidence and assurance in the poor people that they can do things and get out of poverty. Helping them to realize that they are important and do not need

development workers or strangers to develop them. They need to be empowered to develop themselves (Burkey1998:53).

Church: It may be variously identified as: a community of believers, local congregation, denomination and ecumenical body (August 2005:27-29). Mwaura (1997:4) defines the church as, "The people of God, the assembly of believers regardless of denominational affiliation". In terms of religion, Zimbabwe is considered a Christian nation although it has many nominal Christians. A demographic survey conducted in 2010-2011 places Christianity at 85% of the population.[6]   In this thesis the term "church" is used in the way Mwaura defines it.

Gender: Gender is understood as what the community believes and agrees about the difference between men and women in their roles and responsibilities. It is put in place by the people in a given community to distinguish women from men and informs the ways in which women and men relate with each other. It is, therefore, socially constructed. "Gender is culturally ascribed set of characteristics that defines what it is to be a man or a woman in a given cultural context at a given time" Reeves and Baden (2000, ADF VI). It tells us the difference between mean an women and what women and men should do. It explains how they behave and how they should relate to each other. Gender is constructed specifically for a particular context. There are taboos put in place in each culture about what women and men can or cannot do in one society when compared to each other. Most societies differentiate the roles of men and women in regards to their access to resources and their participation in decision making. Women are mostly at the periphery of these interactions and are visible around the home (Crawley & O'Meare 2002:5).

Africa Initiated Churches (AIC): In a broader sense, it refers to all churches which have their origin in Africa as compared to those brought by the missionaries. These churches have different subgroups; there are evangelical Pentecostal churches and 'Spirit churches'. Spirit churches are those who believe that they should do all that was done in Judaism and do not separate the way they interpret the Old Testament and the New Testament. Their salvation is by the works of the law. They do not abandon cultural practices that seem to be unchristian but they Christianize them. For example, instead of participating together with unbelievers in the rain making ceremony, they go and pray for rain in the presence of the chief. They do not use the Bible as the final authority but believe they have recent and more updated revelation from God daily through prophets and priests. Rather than seek the traditional healer or hospital for their health, they believe God brings healing through the prophets. They use natural places for

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[6] See editor@relzim.org

worship and do not build any structures. Their worship is done under trees, and on mountains. They remove their shoes during the time of worship and sit on the ground without furniture. Buildings and furniture are viewed as worldly as far as worshiping God is concerned. They believe that Jesus died for committed before one became a Christian and after that there is daily confession of sin or else one is not saved. AICs will be used to mean spirit churches in this work (Myambo 2007:80).

Gender equity: Is a process of being fair to men and women. There must be equal opportunities to both in terms of how resources are shared in the community or in the country. This should include education opportunities, land ownership and everything that adds to livelihood. Women should also participate in the same way with men as far as community issues are concerned. Their views should also be considered in decision making. Leadership positions must be given due to merit and not according to gender roles. The result of this process is gender equality which is fairness given to both men and women to allow them to reach their fullest potentials (ADF VI 2008: V).

*Ngozi***:** It is the spirit of the deceased that comes back to seek vengeance on the offender and his family. According to the Shona worldview if a person is murdered his spirit would not join the ancestors until justice is put in place. It is believed that his or her spirit would cause trouble to the offender and his family until restitution is paid. The offender and his family may experience misfortunes which they could not explain and sometimes the misfortunes include even deaths in the family. According to the Shona people the spirits of the dead are with them in the village. Both good and bad spirits are soaring on trees, houses, forests, mountains and over water bodies. The offender and his family appease the avenging spirit by giving a virgin girl to the offended family as a wife. She is given to one of the male members of the family and bear children in the name of the deceased. After appeasement then the spirit becomes good and joins the ancestors in protecting and providing for their village and families (Myambo 2007:42-43).

*Kuzvarira***:** Giving birth for someone else's benefit. If a couple is in dire need and there is a rich family whom they know, they would ask for goods and promise to give the family a wife if they would give birth to a girl. If a girl child is not born to that couple, the promise is carried to the second generation. They would wait for the boys who are born to grow and have their own families so that they may give birth to girl to fulfill that promise. There is an understanding that the family to whom the girl is promised has saved them in times of need and the promise

should be fulfilled. Kuzvarira means pledging a daughter into marriage before she is born, in exchange for money or goods. A nuance of this type of marriage is *kuputsa* which means to break. This word is used when a father pledges a daughter in marriage in exchange for goods or money. The difference between the former and the later is that this daughter is born (Hanzi 2006:33).

Chimutsamapfiva: This word is made up of two Shona words *mutsa* and *mapfiwa. Mutsa* has three different meanings. It means wake up or resurrect or or mercy. Mapfiwa is the name given to the three stones that are used to balance a pot on the fire when cooking. The two words are combined and a prefix is added to make *chimutsamapfiwa*. From its formation the word then means the merciful one has resurrected to raise up the balancing stones. The word is used to refer to a girl who is given in marriage to the deceased sister's or partenal aunt's husband to continue cooking food and bearing children for him. They do not consider this girl as another wife since she is of the same blood with her deceased sister in fact is the deceased who has been merciful to resurrect and continue taking care of her family. The belief of someone coming back to life in a close relative is also seen when a son is given his deceased father's inheritance and people would greet him using his deceased father's name (Gelfand 1977:104).

Mutengatore: The word is a combination of two words *tenga* which means buy and *tore* which means take. A prefix *mu* is put at the beginning to make it a noun. Those who do not understand the concept of bride price refer to it as 'buying' hence the use of the word *tenga*. One is supposed to pay bride price in order to get a wife, but because he has a girl to exchange with he would just take hence the *tore*. Then it means one 'takes' instead of 'buying'. A brother could give his sister in marriage in exchange for his wife. The brothers swap their sisters in marriage instead of paying the bride price. This was not only between brothers but also if a father desired to have another wife, he could negotiate with another family who had a girl and they exchange them. It was prefered because they found it difficult to determine the worth of the bride price (Kanyenze, et al 2011:102).

Chitsaramvi: Is made up of two Shona words *tsara* which means choose and *imvi* which means grey hair. A prefix *chi* is added to make it one noun. *Chitsaramvi* means the one who picks grey hair. It is a fact that by the time a sister is past child bearing age her husband would have grey hair. The girl does not have a choice in most cases and the word used for choose can also be used to mean pick up or select. She picks up the grey hair so that the man would not look too old. If a father-in-law is pleased with his son-in-law, when he sees that his daughter is going

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beyond child bearing age, he gives him a younger daughter as wife to continue bearing him children. In his understanding the sole purpose of marriage is child bearing; hence if this stops something must be done. Sometimes the father-in-law may not have unmarried daughters. In this case he asks his son who may have younger daughters to give one to the son-in-law so that he remains married in one family. The name *chitsaramv*i then is given to a girl who is given as an additional wife to replace a sister or an aunt who is past child bearing age (Hanzi 2006:33).

1.10. Chapter outline

Chapter 1. This chapter introduces the entire thesis and explains the research focus, problem statement, research ethics, and limitations, research methodology and definition of key terms. It acts like the stem from which the other chapters develop and grow.

Chapter 2. Chapter 2 investigates the causes of the girl child suffering Social structures such as assignment of roles and responsibilities, the importance of chastity, modesty in choosing a life partner, the myth of the bumper harvest, sexual abuse, the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty and economic constraints will be examined to establish if they have a bearing on the suffering to the girl child. There are also many other religious-cultural practices that need to be investigated such as the appeasement of avenging spirits; *kuzvarira* (pledging a daughter into marriage before she is born, in exchange for money or goods); *chimutsamapfiva* (getting married to the deceased sister's or aunt's husband); *mutengatore* (the swapping of sisters in marriage) and virginity testing.

Chapter 3 explores the intersection between gender, culture and development in order to discover how these three interact with each other as determinants to the just place of women in the community.

Chapter 4 explores the relationship between religion, culture and gender. It begins by looking at religious and church affiliation in a Zimbabwean context. Thereafter, the chapter explores the concepts of church and gender within Southern Africa, the concept of female submission, and theological challenges that include the concept of God, the role and status of women in the image of God, a discussion of women in the texts and the concept of sin, salvation and wholeness. I draw mainly on the works of African women theologians, although not exclusively, when dealing with theological challenges.

Chapter 5 reports on qualitative interviews conducted with selected religious leaders in the Eastern highlands. It uses a qualitative method which seeks to describe and attach meaning to phenomena.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of all the chapters, followed by recommendations and acts as a conclusion of the whole thesis.

Chapter 2: The challenges of the girl child in Zimbabwe

2.1. Introduction

This chapter investigates the challenges of a girl child in Zimbabwe. I will use the descriptive empirical task which puts together information that helps to "discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations or contexts" (Osmer 2008:4) about the challenges of the girl child in Zimbabwe. This task seeks to answer the question, "what is going on" with the girl child in Zimbabwe? (cf. Osmer 2008:4). In order to respond to this question, there is need to trace the Shona traditional, cultural and contemporary perception of the girl child. In this regard, two approaches will be utilized under this area of study namely: literature study and fieldwork. This chapter deals with literature study and chapter five with field work.

 The girl child in the Zimbabwean context experiences suffering and untold / unreported abuses that may be argued as being more grievous than their male counterparts. These challenges include; assignment of roles and responsibilities, the importance of chastity, modesty in choosing a life partner, the myth of the bumper harvest, sexual abuse, the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty and economic constraints. There are also many other religious-cultural practices that oppress the girl child such as the appeasement of avenging spirits; kuzvarira (pledging a daughter into marriage before she is born, in exchange for money or goods); chimutsamapfiva (getting married to the deceased sister's or aunt's husband); *mutengatore* (the swapping of sisters in marriage) and virginity testing.

Many of these issues remain unreported due to ignorance and/or complicity. In such a situation, the suffering of a girl child in such communities is unidentified, unattended and ignored while these abuses continue to be perpetuated by cultural and religious structures and systems. This chapter seeks to highlight some of these challenges within the context of the Shona culture and tradition. In this chapter, therefore, I engage with academic sources as well as popular newspapers and websites that place some of these practices in a contemporary context. There are 3 categories with regard to practices against the girl child namely those supported by culture, those condemned by culture and those accommodated by culture.

2.2. The Girl Child within an African Context

The girl child in Africa encounters wars of all tactics such as lure of tender minds by seduction, and betrayal by those entrusted to protect them. They also come across ambush by rapists,

deception by the trusted members of their families and immediate community. At times, they are faced by the phenomenon of "sugar daddies"[7], the betrayal by some women in promoting sexual slavery of young girls, and many others. All this is done on unsuspecting girls.

According to the East, Central and Southern Africa Health Commission, one out of three girls in Sub-Saharan African experiences some form of sexual violence before the age of 18. In Mozambique alone, 33% of children between 12 and 15 years have been victims of sexual violence, one of the highest rates in the world (Addaney 2015).

The net effect of all this is that every single stage of growing up is peppered with stories of girls who did not make it to a meaningful career or decent life. The provenance of the girl child challenges cannot be circumscribed to a particular time in history or locale. The girl child survivors in Rwanda during the genocide, for example, have endless stories of children born as a result of rape during that period (The guardian June 2014).[8]

Cultural practices such as *kupimbira* and *fisi* in Malawi that force girl children into marriage without their consent is another reason for girl child suffering (Rembe et al. 2011:67). *Kupimbira* is similar to *kuputsa* (pledging a daughter into marriage exchange for food or money) which is also sometimes practised in Zimbabwe though it is outlawed (Hanzi 2006:33). Girl child challenges seem to be common in most parts of Africa. Traditional African culture made life difficult for the girl child. Girl children in Africa at one point or another would see themselves in what is described from Zimbabwean perspective. My analysis of these challenges is from the vantage point of rural context of Africa with a particular perspective from Eastern Zimbabwe.

2.3. Challenges perceived as positive within Shona culture and tradition

2.3.1. Assignment of roles and responsibilities

The girl child grows up with a clear understanding of her roles in the home. Viola Ingwani in (Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:82) explains how the girl child's socialisation fashions her to remain in the domestic sphere A girl child also discovers that certain tasks have to be carried out only by women (Gelfand 1965:28, Kambarami 2006). All her instruction is aimed at preparing her for the ultimate purpose of marriage, and her training is continued until it is expected that she will marry a good and suitable man.

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[7] Older men who enter into sexual relationships with younger girls in exchange for money or goods.
Source : [8] *https://www.theguardian.com › World › Rwanda*

From childhood, therefore, the girl is in close contact with her mother, sisters or other women in the village. In this traditional setting her time is spent in learning how to cook, prepare food, collect firewood, and fetch water (Gelfand 1965:29, Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:82). She is taught to grind millet or other cereals into a meal, prepare groundnuts (so often used for making relish) and make *sadza* (stiff porridge) at the age of seven. At an early age there are several teachings the girl child receives including using clean language, sitting in a modest way, keeping aloof from men, knowing what to and not to say in the presence of the opposite sex, responding to courting proposals, behaviour towards a boyfriend, and in marriage, and controlling her temper in general (Mutsvairo *et al.* 1996:56; Gelfand 1981:114).

Parents are generally concerned with the future self-reliance of the girl child when she grows into adulthood. The girl child's upbringing was, and still is, moulded by the anticipation that she would become a wife and a mother when she grows older. Hence, all the activities of an African woman are supposed to be brought into practice early in the girl child's life. Gelfand (1965:33) highlights the expected roles and responsibilities of a good wife when he says she was expected to look after her husband including providing his meals, grinding and stamping the various cereals into a meal and washing his clothes. She was expected to take care of her home and look after the children, keep the huts clean and tidy by sweeping the floors and smearing them with cow dung at regular intervals.

Once or twice a week, the girl child is expected to collect grass for thatching the roof, collect firewood for fire in the hut, fetch water for cooking and brew beer, plant seed in the fields and store the crops. With the anticipation that a girl child would become a good wife, parents, especially mothers, aunts and grandmothers - would want to ensure that the girl child participated in these roles and responsibilities early in life (Kambarami 2006). Submission to authority or the elderly including to her future husband is taught to the girl child at an early stage.

In the past, the girls were taught to sit in a modest way, which means they had to sit on the ground and never on a high place like a chair, stool or a stone or anything elevated from the ground (Mujajati 1999:7). This may have been partly due to the notion in the Shona culture that such places were places of authority and were reserved for men. This is also seen in the traditional courts where the chief and the headmen sit on such places while everyone else sits on the ground during court proceedings. Similarly, girls were not allowed to walk in front of men. Girls were always to give way to men so that the men would not lustfully look at women

from behind. This is because, "[a] woman who is not properly married is seen as a besmirch in the society" (Mujajati 1999:7). In this regard, it could be said that chastity is emphasised.

2.3.2. Importance of chastity of the girl child

The Shona emphasis on girl child chastity is demonstrated in the manner the elderly teach the girl child. She is taught that sex is natural, clean and precious to be indulged in and shared only by married couples. Marriage is considered the most important event in a person's life. Also, they are taught that it provides care and control while happiness, when exercised, comes to everyone. The highest purity in Shona life is exemplified by virginity. When a girl begins menstruating, she reports to her grandmother and from then onwards she is inspected regularly for her purity. Mutsvairo et al. (1996:57) emphasise the fact that a girl was to avoid sexual intercourse until marriage. Aschwanden (1982:93) affirms that girls are expected to be virgins before marriage, which is seen as not only to their own advantage but also to that of their parents and brothers.

 Virginity guarantees a good basis for negotiating the bride-price, which is most important to the Shona culture. The bride-price means the continuation of his lineage for it enables him to get wives for his own sons in turn. When a girl is about to be married during the bride-price proceedings, she is again inspected, usually a week after the bride-price had been paid but often the day before she left for her husband's home. If she is a virgin, her father asks for a payment called *mombe yechishava,* a beast from her husband's family. This became the symbol of the family's most important ancestral spirit. Gelfand (1965:30-31) states that the beast, generally an ox, was only paid if the girl was a virgin. The loss of virginity outside marriage was a shame to the whole family and deserves public reprimand.

There were some mythological beliefs that were meant to improve the beauty of a girl child. Gelfand (1965:28) explains that in the early years of the girl's life, her breasts were adorned by tattoos, and the nipples are stretched every day to give them the right shape. Aschwanden (1982:77) also explains that not only the breasts mattered but also the minor labia. At puberty, the girl began to stretch her minor labia, at first under supervision, every morning and also at night. Her paternal aunt checked the progress of this treatment, which lasted for several months. This practice is also done in Mozambique not as individuals but also in groups (Bagnol and Mariano 2012). A godmother is assigned to each girl by her mother or female guardian who then pulls the girl's labia and teaches her how to do it by herself.

Sometimes the girls of the same age work together pulling each other. The Venda people of South Africa also have this custom but they only use the pulling method. They burn bat wings and use the ashes as medicine to help them as they pull their labia (Lestrade 1945:38).

The purpose of this custom is not explained to the girl, she is merely told that it would please her future husband and ensure that he was not going to reject her. It was further believed that this practice increased enjoyment during the sexual act. It was therefore necessary to do anything that would make marriage last. This further underscores that in the Shona culture divorce is regarded as shameful. When a woman is divorced, then her mother and/or her aunty are to blame for failing to instruct their daughter well (Kasomo 2010:127).

2.3.3. Modesty in choosing a life partner

Even if the girl child has completed the aforementioned preparation in anticipation of marriage, she could not take the initiative in making a proposal to a prospective suitor. That is interpreted as being indecent. Even in contemporary times the girl does not have this prerogative according to the Shona culture. As Mutsvairo et al (1996:56) explain, a girl does not have freedom of expression in proposing love to a prospective suitor. Girls may feel attracted to men of their choice but custom restrains them from expressing their passions unless, or until, men make advances. It has been customary that even if an eligible man comes a woman's way, she is expected to subject him to the rigorous lengthy courtship ritual as a way of testing his seriousness of intention.

In the past, the ritual was characterised by disinterestedness, which could even take the form of running away. A girl who quickly got into a relationship with a man was seen as a prostitute (Gombe 1998:70-71). For that reason, girls were mostly confined to their homes with their mothers keeping an eye on them. It has been generally believed that a relationship made briskly would collapse easily. If this was done properly then the man would have more faith in the girl that she would be a faithful wife for she was not an easy and cheap woman. Even the parents would not hesitate to charge the bride-price anticipating that their daughter would not put them to shame by loss of virginity outside marriage (Gombe 1998:97).

Early colonial masters and missionaries interpreted payment of *roora (*bride wealth) as the selling of daughters (Ansell 2001:3). The payment of *lobola* was not abusive. However, it was a protection of daughters by their fathers. Fathers were concerned about the welfare of their daughters and liked to put measures in place to make sure that the daughter would be well cared for. The question often asked is – if a man could not afford bride-wealth, would he be able to

care for his wife? In this regard, it could be said that bride-wealth was not exorbitant, it was just an appreciation. *Kutemaugariri* (literally, this means cutting the waiting) was put in place for the husband who appreciated but could not afford the bride–wealth (Bourdillon 1976:44).

The husband would come and stay with the family of the wife and serve them as a son. He was allowed to build his own house in that home and stay there with his wife (Gombe 1998:97). The wife's parents would provide the family with daily provisions. Gelfand (1981:19) argues that the bride-wealth was a token of love, pride, gratitude and pleasure that a wife had been won and come to the man. The bride-wealth performed a social function as well. It is safe to state that every man paid bride-wealth for his wife and gave her mother a special ritual cow. If this was not done, the bride's grandmother would be upset and may have caused her to become ill or sterile.

Gelfand compared bride-wealth to the diamonds and other jewellery or precious gifts that a Westerner gives to the woman he loves who is generally happy to accept them from the man she loves. To any Shona, his wife is precious and she is the one who gives him a sense of status in the world. Without her, all is lost. Therefore, Gelfand's argument is that the girl-child is also important not only to the husband but also to her father and brothers who gain financially from the bride wealth (Gelfand 1981:20). In any case, however, this practice does not benefit the girl child and hence becomes oppressive to her.

2.4. The girl child challenges which Shona values condemn

2.4.1. The girl child challenges emanating from the myth of bumper harvest

One of the challenges to the girl child, which the Shona culture condemns, and yet is still commonly practised by some, is the myth of the bumper harvest. It is believed by some, influenced by the witch doctors, that if a man wants to increase the productivity of his field, he has to commit incest with his own daughter. Frequently, the girl is forced into this misdeed but sometimes she is paid for consenting. The father has sexual intercourse with the daughter. In most cases this has been done by coercion. After intercourse, the back-flow of semen from the vagina is collected in a cloth and mixed with seeds which are then sown. It is believed that when this is done there will be a good harvest (Aschwanden 1982:101). This practice is called *divisi* and is seen as a way of making one rich or enabling one to rule over a large tribe.

The girl child is a soft target for this lethal behaviour and is raped for rituals. This explains why girls' breasts and clitorises are cut off for ritual purposes. The parts taken from virgin girls, and

especially of albinos, are said to promote the viability of business. It is held that as many men like to have a sexual act with a virgin, so will business customers come to the shop or grinding mill which has such parts put into its foundation. Some prefer to use baby parts regardless of sex because they have the same belief that children have likable personalities and, therefore, people would like their businesses. This practice is reportedly still being done by some. Lately, the incest myth has been largely associated with treatment of HIV/AIDS (Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:39).

 The Shona culture does not approve of this practice because incest is regarded as a deplorable practice among the Shona people. In the past, *Makunakuna* (incest) was punishable by the spearing of the leg of the offender by the elders of the clan. Furthermore the, chief would summon him to move away from his relatives and find somewhere else to live outside his jurisdiction. The chief of the new place might allow him to stay on probation while watching to see if he had reformed. The government of Zimbabwe has made incest a crime and punishable offence. *The Sunday Mail* (2012) had a story of a fifty-five year old man who was jailed for fathering five children with his daughter. A daughter is called *mukunda* which literally means "the one who overcomes."

The etymology of this word suggests strongly that no matter how much beauty and charm one's daughter may have, the father or brother should accept that *takundwa* meaning we have been defeated. One cannot fight the battle to get a sister or daughter as a wife (Aschwanden 1982:99). Having incest with one's daughter for pleasure, prosperity or healing are all associated with witchcraft in the sense that one is using some spiritual means to take advantage of others. Betty Makoni of Girl Child Network condemns the rape of babies for ritual purposes because of the myth that virgins cure HIV and AIDS (Makoni 2011).

2.4.2. Girl child challenges due to sexual abuse by men

Orphans and vulnerable children have no protection against sexual abuse. Makoni (2012) comments on a story in which five different men had sex with an orphaned girl, aged twelve, at five different times. The girl's testimony in court revealed that she was in love with one of them. In 2012, the *Court Reporter* (2012)[9] told the story of a thirty-nine year old teacher who raped an eleven year old Grade 5 girl. Some of these rapes are not reported as people settle the cases in their homes. Relatives and guardians are expected to take care of the orphans and

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[9] Court reporter a section on crimes that the court had dealt with and is published in newspapers.

vulnerable children but in some cases they become abusive. For instance, pregnant girls who were interviewed in a safe house for rescued girls confessed to having been impregnated by relatives, teachers and lovers who did not accept responsibility (Tapply 2011). *My Zimbabwe* (2012)[10] reported two stories of step fathers who raped their step-daughters. The first story was about a thirty-eight year old man who raped a fifteen year old step-daughter and the other about a mother's boyfriend who eloped with her daughter.

Girl child abuse is also found in some religious circles, exactly the places where the girl child expects to receive protection. Chakawa (2010:38) explains how the girl child is exploited in the name of religion by the Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange. Their teaching is that a child should respect her parents and they have high regard for the prophets who claim to have direct communication with God. A prophet sometimes claims that God has told him to marry a certain girl and then the parents are told and they subsequently hand over their daughter without objections. Chidza (2011) quotes Betty Makoni's complaint about Johanne Marange churchmen who claim to have been given little girls in dreams by God and take them as wives even at the age of ten. The girl child is told that she should not rebel against her parents and against God.

Although the girl child may not be coerced, she may succumb for she has been brainwashed from childhood as a member of the church. Chakawa (2010:41) highlights *chiramu* (in-law) as yet another abusive tendency practised in the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church and he defines *chiramu* as a practice in which a brother-in-law can indecently assault his young and unmarried sister-in-law under the guise of culture. This is meant to teach young girls how a man proposes and how to respond to him. The girl also learns how to look after a husband as she is doing it for the brother-in-law. *Chiramu* can also be implemented between unmarried girls and boys related through the marriage between their brothers and sisters. Sexual intercourse between them is not strictly allowed although it sometimes takes place without parents being worried about it (Bourdillon 1976:39).

At times, they end up in marriage. Many girl children have been abused as a result but most of these offences go unreported. Makoni (2011) provides stories where girl children live in fear for they have lost the trust of those who should protect them. People who should be protecting them have turned out to be objects of fear. Makoni (2011) gives the story of a prophet from a different apostolic sect (Madzibaba) who is serving seven years in jail for raping a thirteen year

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[10] Is a daily newspaper for Zimbabwe

old girl. It is alleged that the girl's parents had complained about her bad behaviour and the prophet indicated that he wanted to take the girl for counselling and spiritual discipline. He then took the girl and raped her on the way.

2.5. The girl child challenges which the Shona accommodate

There are challenges that the Shona people accommodate not because they are in harmony with them, but because they have no alternative. If people had means they would not let their daughters bear the brunt of the burden in face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, economic strains and poverty. They would not hand over a daughter to appease spirits if they were not cornered into a situation.

2.5.1. The girl child challenges on account of the HIV/AIDS pandemic

In the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the girl child soon finds herself bearing the brunt of the burden. Since the girl child is trained to care for the family in anticipation that she will manage her own home when married, she automatically finds herself assuming the mother's role when a parent becomes ill. With the challenge of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, when a father becomes ill, the mother if still alive takes care of her husband. If the mother then also falls ill the girl child naturally assumes the role. While it is necessary that somebody should take care of the parent, this is not done taking into account the capabilities and potential of the girl child. A girl child who is brilliant and zealous at school could hardly make an objection to this requirement. Sooner or later the girl child's attendance at school reflects the days and the seriousness of the mother's sickness at home (Mushunje 2006:117).

Beatrice Okyere-Manu highlights the fact that the girl child challenges become critical when both parents have passed away or when they are always absent (Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:40). She automatically becomes the head of the child-headed family even though there may be brothers older than her. The girl child, without much ado, then assumes the motherly role of the family. She is the one who goes to find a job to support her siblings but there is no better job for people who are not educated except being a house maid.[11] Obvious Vengeyi states that house maids are in some cases under paid or sexually exploited (Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:47). Her task tends to be heavier than that of the mother for she is not able to discipline her siblings who may squander the hard earned commodities in the house.

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[11] A house maid is domestic worker

A mother could discipline and sanction her children in order to regulate behaviour but the girl child is found in a situation where there is responsibility without resources and control (Mushunje 2006:118). In 1997 the Government of Zimbabwe endorsed the management of Estates (Amendment) Act; which changed inheritance laws so that women would also benefit (Tsanga 2010; 4). It is assumed that mothers are the custodians of their children when the father dies. They tend to forget that sometimes children lose both parents. Mushunje (2006:119) highlights that sometimes girls are denied the right to inherit their parents' property as relatives scramble for the belongings of the deceased (Tsanga 2010:5).

The challenges of the girl child in failing to provide control to the family is largely influenced by the cultural values that the boy child should be respected. Gelfand (1973:44) notes that a boy must be respected by his sisters even if he is younger than they are. Girls are bound to respect their eldest brother because, when their father dies, his name is transferred to the oldest boy and never to the girl. The eldest son is also important because, although the bride-wealth is received in the name of the girl's father, after the father's death, his eldest son is regarded as father-in-law of the man who married his sister.

The son-in-law must accord the new father-in-law due respect even though he is a boy. Ashchwanden (1982:33) also adds that boys perpetuate the family lineage; therefore they are more important than girls. They see girl children as belonging to different families. Girls get married to another family hence all that has been done to develop the girl benefits a son-in-law. With this in the background, the girl child's release from the frustration of lack of control of the family for whose survival she may be labouring may be to consider being married. This too may not be a good step to take given the predatory promiscuous men who may want to take advantage of her desperation and vulnerability (Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:37).

The extended family that existed to take care of the orphaned girl child is no longer there to help. Protection of girls has diminished and they find their way onto the streets in greater numbers. Rurevo and Bourdillon (2003)[12] portray some of the hard and unbearable conditions in which the girl child finds herself in, which may lead to her becoming a 'street kid'. This opens up to a deluge of complex challenges as the girl child has to live with limited sources of sustenance, no proper accommodation or regular, healthy food, being deprived of education and being at high risk of HIV infection. Many of those on the street have babies when they are too young and lack the basic means to care for them. They are dependent on boys and men who

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[12] Source: http://colorado.edu/journals/cye

cannot be relied upon to treat them well, even if they had the means to do so. They are subject to harassment from other street people, from the public, and from officials. Living on the streets is not only risky and rough, but can also be humiliating and dehumanizing. However, once they have tasted the freedom and independence of the streets, and earned a quick income from sex, it is hard for them to adapt to any other kind of life.

2.5.2. Girl child challenges on account of poverty and economic constraints

Tapply (2011) reveals that many girls in Zimbabwe do not attend school. Poverty, abuse and cultural practices are cited as reasons for girls dropping out of school. "One third of Zimbabwean girls drop out in primary school and sixty-seven percent in secondary school, and are thus denied a basic education" (Tapply 2011). According to Tapply (2011) the research done by Plan International, a non-profit organisation that works to alleviate child poverty, uncovered that "Sexual harassment and abuse even by school teachers and parents, cultural issues, lack of school fees, early marriage, parental commitments and early pregnancies are some of the contributing factors to the dropout by the girl child". Parents prefer to educate the boy child to the girl child in times of crisis. This is evidenced by a story published by *IRIN News* (2003) of a father who had four children, two of whom were girls.

Because of fee hikes he decided to pull the girls out of school. He said reading and writing were enough for girls for they would be married. Chadzuka (2008:39) agrees that more girls are out of school than boys. The girl child, who manages to attain entrance into tertiary education, nevertheless continues to struggle with economic challenges. In the past decade the economic situation in the country made the life of the girl children, especially at universities, incredibly difficult. A great number of girls at universities have turned to prostitution unwillingly due to lack of funding for their tertiary education. Tshuma (2012) published the following stories in the *Daily News[13]*.

 Chipo's case is pathetic. Her parents passed away and an uncle took over as guardian. Chipo's intelligence enabled her to attend the once renowned University of Zimbabwe. However, later her uncle also passed away leaving Chipo with her unemployed aunt. Chipo was faced with no option but to drop out of university studies. It was then that she heard from a friend that prostitution may be one way to continue with education. The friend who had been in a similar

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[13] Newspaper produced daily in Zimbabwe

situation had also been in that way of life. Chipo succumbed to the temptation. She does so with her conscience in turmoil. Similar situations are reported at Midlands and Chinhoyi Universities (Tshuma 2012).

To maintain this, a man cheating on his wife has to be tolerated. Within our context today, adult male betrayal is still largely condoned. This seems to be clandestine polygamy. Men are mortified about marrying many wives, but instead have several mistresses in a number of places. They may provide for some of these, financially and materially. Mushunje (2006:120) calls this practice the 'small house' phenomenon - a household made up of younger, economically desperate orphan girls, who see no alternative for a better life than that offered by an old man. The girl child who may not go onto the street and chooses to get married, for the convenience of evading child-headed family challenges, has challenges too. Mushunje (2006:120) however, sees an ever-present danger of her being deserted. She has nothing to offer into the marriage and she is also aging. The husband may later become attracted to younger girls and may desert the older one and stay with the younger.

The girl child continues to suffer despite the laws put in place to alleviate her problems. The University of Zimbabwe has introduced affirmative action in favour of female students in its enrolment policies in a bid to address the gender imbalance in access to tertiary education. In fact, the Labour Laws of Zimbabwe also make it a criminal offence to discriminate against prospective employees on the grounds of sex (Kanyenze et al 2011:275). Nevertheless, Tshuma (2012)[14] provides four stories of university students who became prostitutes due to lack of finance to sustain them at university. The government grant covers the tuition fees only, without food, accommodation and other necessities. All this that was put in place will help girls who already have a chance to reach tertiary education to reach that goal.

2.5.3. The girl child challenges emanating from appeasement of the avenging spirit

The girl child has a burden to carry in cases where her father or brother or a male relative commits murder. It is believed that the spirit of the murdered person causes misfortunes to the family of the offender (Gombe1998:132). The misfortunes may come in the form of accidents, illnesses or even death. In some cases the affected person exhibits excessive and uncontrollable panicky behaviour when under attack (*Staff Reporter* 2012). When this happens a girl child is demanded as appeasement for the *ngozi* avenging spirit. *Kuripa ngozi* (handing over a daughter

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Source   [14]   http://www.womensviewsonnews.org/2011/11/shocking-reasons-why-girls-drop-out-of-school-in-zimbabwe

to appease the spirit of a murdered person) is a traditional belief that a murderer's relatives need to appease a dead person's spirit with a virgin girl child - sometimes as young as six years old (Gelfand 1977:187; 1959:119).

The virgin has to live with the murdered person's family no matter what her age. When she reaches puberty she is made the wife of one of the male members of her new family. If a person is murdered his spirit becomes a vengeful one *(ngozi)* and seeks to destroy the murderer and his family. It demands compensation, which consists of a certain number of cattle or goats and a daughter to be married to one of the male relatives of the murdered person. In this case no bride-price is required. If the person died without a close blood relation, the girl is given to his father's sister's son *(muzukuru)* so the bereaved family can receive a child to replace the dead person and no bride-wealth is required for her (Gombe 1998:82).

A variation of *ngozi is* called *chikwambo* (ritual murder) (Gelfand1959:119). Muronda (s.a.:146)[15] defines *chikwambo* as the use of human organs and parts to make the holder richer. *Chikwambo* is in fact murder for the sake of bolstering one's business (Mushumbi 2013:49). Often it is children who are most at risk in this murder practice. They are vulnerable and thus can easily be targeted in these rituals. Like the *ngozi* above, the spirit of the murdered person is said to seek vengeance (Gombe 1998:84). Ritual murders, and the use of human parts to enhance wealth, have always been condemned by the Shona. However, if it happens, compensation for the person who was murdered for the ritual is required. The giving over of the daughters in marriage for the appeasement of the avenging spirit is accepted by the Shona as the only traditional way of solving the problem. In this case, too, no bribe-price is required. Hanzi (2006:32) portrays *kuripa ngozi* as a form of child marriage and the government of Zimbabwe prohibits child marriage, using the girl child to appease spirits and child labour. However, sometimes these are done secretly so that the police do not know.

The Shona people believe that the spirit of the dead hover around their village, on housetops, in the forests, on hilltops, in trees, in the pools or depth of the earth and they still have a part to play, for better or for worse, in the lives of the living (Gelfand 1964:32). If a person was murdered, his or her spirit becomes restless and angry and returns to seek vengeance on the one who killed him/her. The presence of the spirit is manifested through illness that resists

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[15] Source http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/RS_No69/No69_17PA_Muronda.pdf

hospital treatment or incidences of mysterious deaths in the family of the offender (Gelfand 1973:61). Sometimes mysterious things would happen that have no scientific explanation.

My Zimbabwe (2012) has a story of a family whose meals turned into human faeces just before eating, forcing the family to sleep without eating. When they woke up in the morning, they realised that their faces were plastered with human faeces. They also figured out that the whole house was full of human waste, and a strong smell had filled the whole house. The family members would then find *n'anga* (witch doctor) who would consult the spiritual world to find out the cause of such calamity (Masocha 1984:58). The spirit would then possess one of the relatives and reveal who he is, who murdered him, and make his demands known. The avenging spirit can demand a number of the girl children. Kachere published a story in the *Herald* newspaper about five girls who were handed over to appease a spirit.

The story of the five girls began in 1995 the year a certain man was murdered by four local grocery shop owners with the help of 13 other villagers. His mutilated decomposing body was found discarded in a dry riverbed. The four local grocery shop owners and one of the 13 villagers had already handed over their daughters. While five girls have already been pledged to the man's family, the grandson of the deceased says his family still demands twelve more virgins to avenge his grandfather's death (Kachere 2009). The virgins would be taken as wives by one of the male members of the deceased's family without any bride-price paid (Tsodzo 2011:46). Gombe (1998:90) highlights that the cases of avenging spirits are common news in the Eastern Highlands of Zimbabwe.

The families that seek to appease the avenging spirits find themselves in a critical position of fearing the vengeance of the spirit on the one hand, and imprisonment on the other (Mafirakureva 2012). The government has for example made it clear that any parent who uses a daughter to appease spirits would face imprisonment (Gombe 1998:89,132). In some cases the girl child may be persuaded to lie to the police in order to evade arrest of her parents. She would rather say that she was not forced to offer herself, but that it was her personal choice to be in such a marriage arrangement (Kachere 2009). Mafirakureva (2012) writes about a fourteen-year-old girl who was given away in marriage to appease an avenging spirit. It is believed that she duped the police who wanted to arrest her parents for handing her over to appease the spirit, and others who wanted to rescue her from this marriage, when she told a court prosecutor that she was getting married not out of coercion but in full consent with her partner. This caused the legal charges to be dropped despite the alarm the matter raised.

A good deal of concerted effort has been expended in abating such abusive challenges to the girl child. Betty Makoni has been quite vocal in deploring the appeasement of the avenging spirits by the girl child (Chidza 2011). The lack of cooperation on the part of the affected families is a major setback in helping the girl children out of these crises. The spiritual attack threats have been intimidating. An effective address of this crisis is not achieved simply by enactment of new laws to safeguard the child but a spiritual and intellectual equipping of the girl child to face the challenges of the spiritual threats.

2.6. The girl child challenges which the Shona approve

2.6.1. Girl child challenges which the Shona approve in traditional worship

The Shona way of worship encouraged perpetual virginity. In the past, virgins were dedicated to the service of God especially in the Matopos in Zimbabwe, that is, in a place where it was believed that God spoke to the people directly. Aschwanden (1982:93) explains that girls were expected to be virgins in order to perform religious duties. These girls were to be of good moral standing. These virgins were called *mbonga,* and the Shona elders differentiated between *mbonga yashe* (virgin of the king) and *mbonga yamabwe* (virgin of the rocks, that is, of the region of the Matopos). As opposed to the virgin of the rocks, the virgin of the king was the daughter of a chief or king who was given land and appointed as chief too. She was to marry but remained chief over her land. She did not move to her husband's place.

The virgins of the Matopos remained virgins all their lives; they never become wives to the high-priests even if they had the desire for marriage. Their own, still untarnished, blood was sacrificed to God in the form of virginity. In this way, the Shona gives his greatest and most valuable possession to God. This was a challenge to the girl child in that they had no choice. The choice to remain virgins was not made by these girls but their fathers. In this case, the girl child's desire to marry was suppressed. With the coming of civilisation and Christianity, this practice became unpopular.

2.6.2. The girl child challenges which the Shona approve in marriage

While there were some situations in which Shona people had little choice but to give their daughters in marriage as highlighted above, there were situations where parents decided on marriage partners for their daughters without their consent. There were several variations of marriage of this nature which were called *kuzvarira* (pledging a daughter to be a wife before she is born), *kuputsa* (pledging a daughter into marriage in exchange for food or money),

bondwe or *chimutsamapfiwa* (to continue on with the deceased sister's husband), *chitsaramvi* (one who picks out grey hair) and *mutengatore* (swapping[16] sister for marriage).

2.6.2.1. The girl child challenges with *kuzvarira*

Kuzvarira is to pledge a daughter into marriage before she is born in exchange for money or goods. A nuance of Shona marriage is found in child marriages, which still take place occasionally in spite of legal prohibitions. In the past, it was possible for a man to favour a friend or an associate and pledge a young daughter in marriage in exchange for money or goods. Now such promises are made rarely and only in times of dire need (Bourdillon 1976:60). Particularly after a bad harvest, a family without enough to live on may try to relieve the situation by marrying off a small girl and using the bride-wealth to buy food for the family. Hanzi (2006:33) points out that even an unborn daughter can be pledged into marriage and this form of marriage is *kuzvarira or kuganha.* There is a variation of *kuzvarira (*literal meaning catching something before it lands on the ground*)*.

 In this case a man who favours a family and wishes to marry from it will book a wife before she is born. In this case the man is looking for a wife, rather than the father marrying off a daughter. This is arranged without the girl's consent because she is not yet born. He can book a wife for himself or for his son who is still too young to propose love to a girl. The man serves the family like a son-in-law in every respect. This was widely practised before the colonial era when elders were able to accumulate young wives through pledging in exchange for grain during times of food shortages (Gombe 1998:84). This type of marriage happened in different ways. If a daughter, either young or mature, was pledged in marriage without her consent it had a different name *kuputsa.* Hanzi (2006:33) believes that this practice has been revived due to the harsh economic conditions currently facing Zimbabwe. The child is given away at any age when the family feels she is capable of performing her duties as a wife usually when she reaches puberty (Gombe 1998:84).

Bourdillon (1976:60-61) tells us that in such a case, the girl stays with her parents until she reaches a marriageable age, and even then the parties accept that should she refuse her husband, they cannot force her to go ahead with the marriage even though they so wished. In spite of the uncertain future of the marriage, there is an incentive to the husband in that it involves a smaller bride-wealth than normal without stigmatizing the marriage as cheap, and in any case bride-

price is returnable should the union not take place (Gombe 1998:84). It is rare for the girl to refuse, although there is the possibility of redeeming one's daughter.

In practice the girl may well accept her destined husband, and is proud to have been of service to her family in time of need. It may sound easy from the way Bourdillon (1976:61) puts it, but having grown up in such a culture I understand that there was no such freedom. The girl child is taught about the importance of her family and cannot let the family die while she can rescue. Whether the girl likes it or not, it is not easy for one to disagree with one's parents. Because there was no alternative the girl had to go and save the family from famine by being married to the family that offered the relief. Were there a better option the girl would choose not to marry the man in this prearranged marriage, for in most cases he is far older than the girl.

2.6.2.2. The girl child challenges with *chimutsamapfiva*

The girl child has a double loss when her sister dies. She grieves over the death of her sister as well as over imprisonment into marriage with a deceased sister's husband. She loses freedom of choice of a future husband. *Bondwe* or *chimutsamapfiwa* (one who takes up the stones which balance the pot on the fire) is another variation of Shona marriage which oppresses the girl child. This is the practice where a young girl is given into marriage to a deceased sister's husband (Gombe 1998:90). Gelfand (1977:45,104) asserts that this girl has no right to refuse.

When a married woman dies her father gives her husband her young unmarried sister as a wife. If there is no one younger and unmarried sister then the deceased's brother would give his unmarried daughter to replace his deceased sister. This also happens if the sister or the aunt is barren (Tsodzo 2011:46). The father or brother calls his son-in-law and he comes with his father's oldest sister. The father-in-law explains that he has summoned his son-in-law to give him another wife to look after him and his children. The son-in-law claps hands and the aunt also expresses her happiness by making a joyful noise. She may give the father-in-law a present as a thanksgiving for what he is doing. The daughter being married to the deceased's husband is present at the time and has no right to refuse (Gelfand 1977:45). The wife gained after the death of her sister is called *bondwe* and her father expects much less bride-wealth for her than he received for her sister, the husband's first wife (Gelfand 1977:104). This practice is still in use to date.

My Zimbabwe (2012) has a story about an aunt (50 years) and a niece (16) who visited an uncle during the memorial service of his late wife. On arrival the aunt revealed to the niece that the purpose of their visit was to hand her over to the uncle (66) as a wife. The girl was forced to

share a bedroom with the uncle and was raped twice that night. Culturally, people believed that if the children lost their mother, their mother's sister was the best person to take care of the children. It worked well during the period when people really cared about relationships. Not only relationships mattered but also religious beliefs.

It was believed that if one refused to take care of the deceased sister's children, her spirit would fight against any progress the deceased's sister tried to make (Gombe 1998:88). Some even believed that because of that refusal the deceased's sister would not be able to bear children of her own. Though the practice is still in place in some areas, we see that some girls accept it but do not care for the children as expected. Some give birth to their own children and then mistreat their sister's children. With education and Christianity girls are enlightened. Not only after the death of a sister was an unmarried younger sister given in marriage to a sister's husband but also when the sister had grown past child-bearing age. The older unmarried sister would not fit the situation in two ways.

Firstly, it is assumed that the older sister would get past child-bearing age before the younger sister; hence, she will not be able to bear children for the husband. Secondly, because the elderly are to be respected, refusal of their suggestion would be considered a sign of disrespect. A wife's younger sister was given to the son-in-law to continue bearing children for her husband. This wife was called *chitsaramvi* (the one who picks out grey hair) (Gombe 1998:91). The same would also happen if an aunt (the father's sister) dies; one of the nieces (the deceased's brother's daughter) is given to an uncle as a wife. In those days, marriage was meant to maximise fertility, secure family alliances, and protect girls from pregnancy outside marriage (Hanzi 2006:33). In some cases, a satisfactory son-in-law might be given a younger sister of his wife as a second wife with little or no bride-price to be paid. In the olden days, after the head of the family had given a daughter, he had to ask his 'son-in-law' for permission to negotiate the marriage of other daughters to other families (Bourdillon 1976:55).

2.6.3. Girl child challenges emanating from contemporary virginity testing

In the traditional Shona society, *kurukova* (virginity testing) was done at home by close relatives such as a grandmother or an aunt. This was done by putting a finger into the vagina to feel whether the hymen was still intact. Hanzi (2006:37) holds that some traditional leaders in Zimbabwe issued directives in their villages to reinforce virginity testing of the girls in public ceremonies. In 2002, about five thousand girls attended a virginity testing ceremony at Osborne dam in the Makoni area, under Chief Makoni. In 2004, at least four thousand young girls were

tested at the same place. The girls who pass these tests were given certificates in public as proof of their virginity. Not only have the community leaders called for girl child virginity testing but so are the leaders of religious sects also (Chakawa 2010:43). The Johanne Marange Apostolic Church (JMAC) uses the word *zemeni* to mean virginity test and has brought it into the public realm. The young girls in the JMAC are subjected to virginity testing every year at *gungano* (Pentecost)[17] before taking *chiraro (*Holy Communion). Hanzi (2006:38) argues that virginity testing is indistinguishable from sexual abuse. The certified virgins are exposed to a high risk of sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS due to the myth that sex with a virgin cures HIV/AIDS. She further argues that human rights are violated through virginity testing.

2.7. Conclusion

From the literature study in this chapter it has been revealed that the assignment of roles and responsibilities, the importance of chastity, modesty in choosing a life partner, the myth of the bumper harvest, sexual abuse, the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty and economic constraints are some of the things that cause suffering to the girl child. There are also many other religious-cultural practices that oppress the girl child such as the appeasement of avenging spirits; *kuzvarira* (pledging a daughter into marriage before she is born, in exchange for money or goods); *chimutsamapfiva* (getting married to the deceased sister's or aunt's husband); *mutengatore* (the swapping of sisters in marriage) and virginity testing. It was indicated that many of these issues are unreported due to ignorance and sometimes complicity. In such a situation the suffering of girl child in such communities is unidentified, unattended and ignored, while these abuses continue to be perpetuated by gender bias, cultural and religious structures and systems.   These will be explored in the next chapter to establish how they hinder the human development of women.

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[17] Their Pentecost is on July 17 the date which they claim Johanne Marange received the Holy Spirit and this church was born. On this day members of this sect from all over the country would gather at one place for *gungano* (Chakawa 2010:43).

Chapter 3: Exploring the intersection between gender, culture and development within an African context

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explored the challenges of the girl child, which include the assignment of roles and responsibilities, socio-economic challenges and religious-cultural practices that oppress the girl child. This chapter deal with the interpretive task which carries on with the empirical analysis as it seeks to answer the question "why is this going on?" (Osmer, 2008:4)? Why is the girl child suffering? It draws on the theories of the arts and sciences in order to better understand the reasons "patterns and dynamics that are occurring" (Osmer 2008:4) with girl child challenges in Zimbabwe. I will also explore development, missiological and anthropological literature on gender, culture and development. This chapter starts by defining gender, culture and development. The aim of the chapter is to examine the relationship between these three and illustrate how they interact with each other. Here, it should be noted that culture is not static; therefore, it is necessary to describe the relationship between traditional culture and gender.

The chapter investigates the effects of modernisation on gender relationships. The question that could be asked here is – "Does the modern world value women in the same way as they value men?" In view of this, women involvement and the role of culture in development will also be examined. Finally, the chapter examines theoretical approaches in locating women involved in matters of development such as Women in Development (WID), Gender and Development (GAD), and Women and Development (WAD). These approaches are used for bringing parity between males and females through interventions such as welfare, anti-poverty interventions and empowerment approaches.

3.2. Definitions

3.2.1. Gender

Gender is understood as what the community believes and agrees about the difference between males and females (Chirimuuta 2006). It refers to duties and responsibilities that are culturally or socially ascribed to women, men, girls and boys. In this respect, Momsen (2010:2) argues that gender roles are constructed by the society and are not universal. The gender role is put in place by the people in a given community to distinguish women from men and informs the

ways in which women and men relate to each other. As Reeves and Baden (2000:2) put it, "gender is a culturally ascribed set of characteristics that define what it is to be a man or a woman in a given cultural context at a given time". Gender as socially constructed often tells us the difference between what women and men should do and explains how they behave. It also shows us how they should relate to each other within a specific context. Gender is constructed specifically for a particular context. There are, therefore, taboos put in place in each culture about what women and men can or cannot do in the society. Most societies differentiate the roles of men and women with regard to their access to resources and their participation in decision making. Women are mostly at the periphery of these and are visible around the home (ADF VI 2008:v.)

3.2.2. Culture

Eade (2002:1) defines culture in terms of material, intellectual, emotional or spiritual resources used by people to interpret their life experiences. In the same vein, Paredes (1987:63-64), a Christian development scholar, provides a definition of culture as follows:

> "an integrated system of beliefs (about God and reality or ultimate meaning), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, walk, work, play, trade, farm,…etc.) and institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temple or churches, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, security and continuity."

Leslie A. White compresses culture into three parts namely, the ideological, sociological and the technological system. The ideological system is composed of ideas, beliefs, and knowledge, expressed in articulate speech or other symbolic form. It includes mythologies and theologies, legend, literature, philosophy, science folk wisdom and common sense knowledge. The sociological system is made up of inter personal relations expressed in patterns of behaviour, collective as well as individual. It includes social kinship, economic, ethical, political, military, ecclesiastical, occupational and professional, recreational, etc ...systems. The technological system is composed of the material, mechanical, physical and chemical instruments and techniques by which people interact with their surroundings. Here we find the tools of production, the means of subsistence, the material of shelter, and instruments of offense and defence.

3.2.3 Development

There are many varied definitions of development. On the one hand, according to Burkey (1998:27), development is economic growth and positive social transformation, eradication of poverty and promoting human wellness. Onwunta, and August (2012:2), on the other hand, define development as **"**a complex and slow-moving process involving people, on the one hand, and the factors of production and organisation on the other." In of the context of this thesis, development ought to be meaningful, participatory, autonomous, and people centred as presented by Davids (2009:17). There is need, therefore, to create awareness in the people for them to realise their own needs.

Theologians support the notion of people-centred development. This means, development should not be limited to the material or focused on social change and westernisation alone. In this theological understanding of development, the choice is, at times, made for the term 'transformation' rather than development as it is argued that transformational development includes both the material and spiritual dimensions. That is to say, transformational development is holistic and leads to shalom (justice, wellbeing, flourishing, freedom, equality, etc.) for all according Myers (1999:3) and. Bowers-Du Toit (2010:266).

3.3. Traditional culture and gender

Culture is in a constant flux and is influenced by the movement of people and goods (Paredes 1987:63), Most traditional cultures do not give space to women and girls to exercise their freedom and often hinders their self-development. Nussbaum (2000:170-172) provides several examples of this in Indian culture where traditional laws and customs did not permit women to divorce. These traditional laws did not even allow women to have equal property rights but allowed polygamy and child marriage. In many ways, those laws are not different from the Shona culture when it comes to the treatment of women.

The Shona worldview has a tripartite domain of life which is more pronounced than the European understanding. These are the public domain, the private domain and the domestic domain (Mukonyora 2007:19). . Men deal with the public and productive sphere while women deal with the reproductive and domestic sphere (Hughes & Bennett 1998:241). In the public domain men lead the community while women produce the economy; that is, through farming and pottery. The power of women was seen in the domestic domain where they spent much of their time. Being confined to a home was not an inferior position in a traditional family set up (Mukonyora 2007:19). The kitchen in which women spent most of their time was the core of

the home and linked to public politics since visitors and passers-by also sat there for food and warmth.

The social status of the family rested on the wealth produced by women through agriculture. The surplus that was gained was sold by the man into the public domain since women were not expected to transact. The kitchen also acted as a classroom for both boys and girls to acquire wisdom from mothers and grand-parents who warm themselves there. The cattle used as payment for bride price also boosted the economy of the family (Mukonyora 2007:20). For this reason, a home without a woman is considered a shame (Kasomo 2010:129).

Many important activities were done in the kitchen. Marriage transactions were determined in the kitchen that is money or number of cattle that should be paid (Mukonyora 2007:21). Although women were oppressed in the pre-colonial era they were not marginalised because their domestic domain formed the foundation for the public domain (Mukonyora 2007:24). In the Shona culture, naming was one of the most significant events. This is because names tell a story of one's experiences in life. The injustice that happens to women is expressed in the names given to their children or the nicknames they choose for themselves (Mukonyora 2007:78). There are common names such as Nhamo (poverty or funeral) or Tambudzai (trouble) that express the suffering of a woman who bore that child. The Shona culture was eroded when missionaries gave Christian names to their new converts at baptism and when the colonial masters renamed their servants to associate them with their servitude (Mukonyora 2007:79).

The life history is lost together with the name. The shadow side of culture is also revealed through the fact that infertile women were often suspected of witchcraft and evil doing. They could be divorced, and the husband could ask for another wife from the barren wife's family as compensation or the barren wife would find money to pay for bride price for another wife of her husband's choice. Women were considered strangers to the family of the husband though they had children in that family. There is a belief that more women than men practiced witchcraft in the Shona culture (Mukonyora 2007:28). Elizabeth Schmidt (in Mukonyora 2007:17) contends that in a patriarchal society men claim to possess everything. She points out how men claim the success and pride in agricultural activities where women and children toil all day. The glory goes to the man who possesses the wives, the children and the land (Mukonyora 2007:17).

This explains why Oduyoye sees patriarchy as the root cause of corrupt human relationships (Oduyoye 1994:177). She also states that African men should not lie to people that African women are not oppressed but they should let African women speak for themselves for they know who oppresses them (Oduyoye 1989:442). Hierarchy in a patriarchal society places women at a low level in every aspect of life. Indeed, womanhood is associated with impurity or being less human. At puberty, a girl ceases to participate in religious rituals as she distinguishes herself as a woman (Oduyoye 1986:123). Marriage often further displaces her because she moves from her community to a different community. After she gets married, she loses her position. If she is good enough, she could become a leader for women in the community.

In the event that the marriage is dissolved she would lose the power again as she goes back to her community of origin. This hinders women's personal development, argues Oduyoye (1984b:33). It is because culture has confined women to inferior status. It has portrayed the boy child as a priority in food distribution, provision of health care and education. The inferiority of a girl child is seen in the context of marriage where the bride price does not benefit her. It is seen as the purchase of authority from the girl's father to the husband. Property inheritance distribution was uneven as boys inherited more than girls as Hughes and Bennett (1998:227) suggest.Women are often ceremonially unclean and purification rites are frequently performed for them. They are said to be unclean during menstruation and at child birth and after. Women are also often seen as a source of contamination according to Oduyoye (1994b:19).

In some African cultures, men are not allowed to enter the room where a woman gave birth for a given period and if one does purification rituals are done. During this period the husband does not even eat food prepared by the wife who is deemed unclean. For this reason, some justify polygamy to avoid man from associating with feminine gender roles. This is not caused by women since it is their biological function (Oduyoye 1994b:22). The shading of blood outside a sacrificial activity was deemed impure and rituals hinder women's personal development (Oduyoye 1994b:32). It was anticipated that modernisation would liberate women since it would bring with it education and necessary technology needed for development. It would also make life better for everyone in the society. This did not happen as this brought different problems which will be discussed below.

3.4. Effects of modernisation on gender relations

Modernisation is often regarded as the process of improving the living standards of people. However, behind the Modernisation Theory lays the assumption that traditional societies are underdeveloped and backwards (August 2010:30). In the process, farm machinery, technology, improved seed and the right inputs are often introduced in anticipation of good life for all. Transnational corporations then become involved in the production and extraction of raw materials, marketing and banking information. The results of this intense capital development led to colonisation as the transnational corporations compete for raw materials, mainly from Africa and market from abroad. Raw materials and minerals are then sent to Europe where there are industries to manufacture products (industrialisation). This kind of development results in rapid urbanization as people moved from rural to urban areas to work in industries.

In Africa, working women were degraded as sexually immoral and rural women were distanced from resources and intimate relationship with their husbands who were removed from rural to urban areas. Rural women either worked on farms or were caught in abject poverty as resources moved from Africa to Europe (Mukonyora 2007:18). Frank (2005:13) asserts that poverty is caused by the movement of resources from the rural to urban area (periphery to core). In this case, the core is Europe and the periphery is Africa where the raw materials and minerals are obtained and sent to Europe for processing (Burkey 1998:27). This could also be true in Africa as men take up employment in towns leaving women and children in rural homes. There, they work in the fields and produce food to feed the family. In some cases, the husband comes home to take some food items while he spends his money on prostitutes, food and drink. Surplus goods produced in rural areas are then sold in towns. They depend on town people for markets and are exploited seeing that the value of goods is determined by the buyer.

Poverty has become a stamp on women and children as they are the permanent features of the rural home. In this way, Modernisation Theory does not take into consideration the effects of colonialism and is decisively critiqued as eroding the culture and natural resources of the global South (Davids 2009:12). The effects of modernisation had a direct impact on gender relations and the positioning of Zimbabwean women in the manner in which history is recounted. Mukonyora (2007:16) looks at how cultural practices affected gender, beginning from the colonial era until the independence and after. African men were taken to go and work in urban areas leaving their wives and children in rural areas. Men became the source of information

about Zimbabwean culture to their masters in towns. It is important to note that European scholars used men as informants in their research – even with regard to research on women.

This is suggestive that women's contributions were ignored since they did not even have the language to communicate with researchers. Men depicted themselves as the leaders of the community in a patriarchal world without women. Mukonyora (2007:16) argues, therefore, that these provided a picture of what men thought about women and were not an accurate portrayal of the realities of culture and women's role within that time. The information provided by men, rather supported the patriarchal order of Shona society and excluded the contributions of women. Some of the contributions excluded include the provisions of food and services rendered to the freedom fighters during the war. When the stories of freedom are told by the male informants, women were at the periphery of every meaningful event (Mukonyora 2007:17).

The complex relationship between modernity, colonialism and the church should also be noted with regard to gender relations. Christian values were often used to shape people's mind-set about sexuality. The missionaries, together with the government, tried to abolish polygamy by introducing heavy taxes on polygamists and gave a provision to register only one wife per husband. This was not successful since they would register one and have many private unregistered wives (Mukonyora 2007:50). The latter highlights the need to recognise the intersection between religion, culture and gender. This is discussed in detail in the next section.

3.5. The intersection of development, culture and gender

3.5.1. Development should be cultural

The aspect of culture and religious beliefs are often excluded from development. This, in spite of the fact that they are key to understanding the life worlds of the poorest of the poor. This is explained by the fact that Western thinking often separates the spirit from the material. This has translated in their ignoring of the spiritual-ethical part in development within an African context. In many cultures, this cannot be separated from the other aspects of development. Modernisation Theory argues that all development should mimic that of the West, with the result that Western notions of competition and ownership of private property, often triumphed over cooperation which is a core value in the African culture (Eade 2002:3). Economic activities cannot be separated from social and religious life. This is because, by so doing, life is only defined in economic terms. People's dignity has to do with what is accepted within a given culture and not only by one's economic status.

Culture permeates every dimension of life and should, therefore, not be left out in development schemes. It is the local culture that defines development and it is the community who defines what the "good life" is – not foreign NGOs who impose what they think is a good life for the people (Eade 2002:7). The spiritual aspect of culture should also be considered in development as the local people's spirituality affects decisions about people's health and wellbeing. Here, spirituality refers to the interaction between the people and the spiritual realm, which they believe is the source of answers to any of their problems (Eade 2002:9). They decide who should treat them and their children. Indeed, traditional health systems are made up of healers and midwives who are mostly women. Their healers use prayer, herbal medicines, sweating, massaging and purging. In the case of mental health, the Shona people believe that it is caused by witchcraft or angered spirits and should consult a traditional healer.

Westerners, however, believe that it is neurosis, the exaggerated forms of normal reactions to stressful events (Eade 2002:10). Although not wrong in and of itself, change to modern medicine had spiritual, social as well as consequences[18] related to gender and health.

Spirituality does not only affect health programmes but also agricultural activities as Eade (2002:10) finds. This is why Modernity and development should be resisted if their practices are hostile to the values of the local culture. Thus, failure to consider local knowledge may become an obstacle to development. Shubi Ishemo (in Eade 2002:3) provides examples where projects failed due to the lack of local knowledge. The new stove introduced in Ghana did not produce much smoke and used many pots at a time. However, the women of Ghana preferred their old stove that produced smoke and killed pests and preserved their grain (Eade 2002:3).

Similarly, the Nigerian rubber industry was not a welcome development. It destroyed shrines and trees that were used for medicine, therefore, culture, economics and power relations should not be seen in isolation. The local respected people of integrity should be convinced before new ideas or changes could be introduced. For example, the African culture values cooperation and kinship while the European culture often values individualism and profit-making. This is why development that does not value communal life may, therefore, be difficult for the African people. It is because the accumulation of wealth for oneself without considering the community at large may not really make sense. As it were, traditional African culture teaches that a person is a person because of others and as an individual entity.

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[18] It took time for a medical doctor to be trusted and accepted by the local people whose world view was that their traditional healers did the administration of medicine and God healed them.

Most religions also teach the love and unity of those who belong to the same faith (Eade 2002:10). This explains why Eade (2002:11) argues that "[t]he aim of human life is the transformation of the individual from a self- centred, greed-driven way of being to one that is other-centered and greed-free". A modernistic form of development, however, creates a spirit of competition and not the generally accepted solidarity needed for people centred development. People did not compete against each other; they shared their possessions, success and failure. The Enlightenment brought individualism and did not value communal life. Indeed, this left women out and it resulted in patriarchy in the society. It left most of the church structures, practices and missions in the hands of man with minimal participation from women (Onwunta & August, 2012:3).

3.5.2. Development should be gender inclusive

Hughes and Bennett (1998:225) argue that development should not be separated from gender issues because women constitute the majority of rural populations. Indeed, as noted by Burley (1998:66), development programmes that do not take cognisance of this fact fail to understand rural realities. Development programmes for women should be inclusive in the major development programmes in agriculture, irrigation, forestry and small-scale industries to effectively assist women (Burkey1998:66). Failure to bring development to gender matters is to limit it to men who are the privileged minority. Such development is not effective; it is rather selective. It should be emphasised, nevertheless, that both men and women need one another in whatever form of development. Burkey (1998:66) emphasises that rural development should target women for they play a key role in rural economy through subsistence farming.

Furthermore women's participation in rural development strictly benefits the family since women do not spend money on beer or smoking. In addition, women are more open to change than men. Thus, they easily embrace development programmes (Burkey 1998:66). African women sacrifice in many ways for the benefit of the society. Oduyoye (1983b:109) notes that this sacrifice is often best represented in the role they play as mothers. They carry life within them during pregnancy and do all they could so that they deliver the baby safely. When the baby is born, the mother carries the baby with her to ensure safety. She carries water, fire wood and finds food for the family to remain alive (Oduyoye 1983b:109). They do all they can to bring livelihood in the home and to protect life. Their portraits are usually painted   showing them carrying babies on their backs and carrying firewood on their heads. While certain tasks that may be labelled reproductive could be viewed as inferior to the productive.

This is mostly done by men as they (men) cannot do without the reproductive roles of women. Someone has to take care of children, do housekeeping duties, care for the elderly; all of which are defined as reproductive tasks. The reproductive tasks are indispensable. Humanity, that is men and women, cannot do without such tasks. This further underscores the notion that, if women play such an essential role, it would not make sense to leave them out in matters of development notwithstanding the development approach used. Their concerns should, therefore, be taken very seriously (Hughes & Bennett 1998:9). Hence, development is indispensable in engaging gender inequality challenges. Women have worked very hard to make life better for the society but it has become imperative that both men and women work together for the benefit of the society (Oduyoye1983b:112).

3.6. Theoretical approaches in locating women in development

Coetzee, Graff, Hendricks and Wood (2001:158-161) identify three theoretical approaches with regard to the manner in which women have been located within development discourse.[19]

3.6.1. Women in Development (WID)

Coetzee, Graff, Hendricks and Wood (2001:158-161) provide three theoretical approaches in locating women in development strategies. The first one is Women in Development (WID). WID is influenced by the Modernisation Theory and measures its success by Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It emphasises gender equality and efficiency. Crawley & O'Meare (2002) argue that gender equality is achieved through an active rather than a reactive approach. In this approach, people should not react to things that happen within the community to bring gender equality but should rather plan what they want to do before time to avoid fighting and quarrelling over what happens in the society (Crawley & O'Meare 2002). Bringing gender equality by promotion of development is, therefore, regarded as an active – and not reactive – approach.

Similarly, the equity approach seeks to promote the women's political and economic autonomy. It seeks to engage the question of why things have been the way they are. This approach seeks to increase women's opportunities such as education and employment with the assumption that it would end gender discrimination and usher in equal opportunities. This criticism is also imbedded in many assumptions. These include assumptions according to which

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[19] Moser developed Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) coined together as WID/GAD policy matrix which "facilitates the examination of what development approaches have been used in the existing programs and policies to meet women's practical and strategic gender needs" (Rimal n.d: 17).

women are not able to balance and do efficiently the task and roles that men do in their families. In the same vein, the criticism is embedded in the assumptions such as men react when they are politically and economically empowered (Coetzee, Graff, Hendricks & Wood 2001:158). This explains why, in this approach, women are also encouraged to take up formal employment. Although WID was accepted by the United Nations and other international agencies, it is criticised for not dealing with the transformation of gender relations and imposing a notion of universal womanhood that has no recognition of class, race and culture. This approach is not concerned with the source of oppression – namely patriarchy

3.6.2. Women and development (WAD)

The second theoretical approach is women and development (WAD). This approach is concerned about the assignment of roles and responsibilities in the colonised world. In this approach, men took over production and politics and consigned reproduction and consumption to women (Singh 2007:101). Nazneen Kanji (1995:54), in writing on gender, poverty and economic adjustment in Harare, Zimbabwe, reveals that during economic hardships, however, more women than men had to scale down their spending. This is because more women than men spent their money on family needs. Nevertheless, men had the luxury to use their money on personal and private interests. This approach concentrates on wages and unpaid labour of women. Hughes and Bennett (1998:225) put this rightly when they say the following:

> Women work 67 per cent of the world's working hours; they earn only 10 percent of the world's income, and own less than 1 per cent of the world's property. Women constitute 70 per cent of the world's poor and two thirds of the world's illiterates. They occupy only 14 per cent of managerial and administrative jobs, 10 per cent of parliamentary seats and 6 per cent of cabinet positions.

This approach, however, excludes those in informal employment and leaves out issues of legal protection. It also fails to take cognisance of the fact that poverty alleviation and dealing with the effects of colonialism was more important than equality in many developing countries as Momsen (2010:13) finds. Moser (in Binns 2013:152) argues that the first and foremost task is to deal with the low status of women in society that hinders their full participation in development. Development initiatives benefited men and women differently since they have different status bestowed upon them by the society (Haddad 2010:121).

Moser (in Binns 2013:152) further argues that modernization should not be placed at par with development. This is because women were considered as ignorant and backward without any

meaningful participation. They were kept captive by tradition (Haddad 2010:122). In the late 1950s to 1960s, development planners targeted men since women were confined to their homes as prescribed by their culture. They were not educated enough to be able to participate. They assumed that women could not play any significant role in matters such as politics and economy (Haddad 2010:122).

3.6.3. Gender and development (GAD)

The final approach is that of gender and development (GAD). This approach combines WID and WAD, and it is the more inclusive.[20] Issues of women were often left out in the development agenda especially on matters pertaining to politics and economics (Haddad 2010:122). The approach views development as a set of processes influenced by political and socio-economic forces. It further proposes that the state should provide support for social reproduction programmes such as child care and health (Momsen 2010:13). It, furthermore, focuses on appropriate strategies for the employment of women in specific places and gender legal framework while including and recognising the roles played by both men and women.

Haddad (2010:121) notes, for example, her preference of the term 'gender and development' rather than 'women in development'. This is because, she argues, women issues cannot be dealt with in isolation. This explains why the term 'gender' is more inclusive since it includes roles played by both male and female (Moser 1993:3). In this approach, there must be initiatives designed to overcome domestic conflicts, gender and generation differences. That is to say, women need economic independence, political activism in legal reform, social transformation and coalition building (Coetzee, Graff, Hendricks and Wood 2001:159). In the same vein, Moser (in Binns 2013:152) argues that the most important task is to deal with the low status of women in society that hinders their full participation in development.

3.7. Approaches that have been tried to close the gender gap

It is a notable fact that there is disparity between men and women, with men having more advantages than women in every way. The United Nations observed the discrimination against girls in schools and women in all walks of life and prioritises this in their 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and all levels of education no later than 2015" (UN 2013:18). However,

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[20] Ester Boserup i(Binns 2013:151), a proponent of WAD for example highlighted the centrality of women in the development process without taking heed of the fact that women have subordinate positions in the society hence their poverty remains. Culture and religion were not put into consideration (Binns 2013:151).

many countries are still far from achieving this goal (Nayyer 2012:21). The struggle of women in childcare, family planning and in managing meagre resources for the family is observable burdens. Four approaches that have been attempted to curb these problems are welfare, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment approaches.

The welfare approach addresses the women's felt needs (practical needs) such as child care and family planning. Moser (1993) explains that the practical gender needs are the immediate necessities which are typically found among those of a low human development index. The strategic needs are those which indicate areas that need transformation of the existing the current gender imbalances over time (Moser 1993; Rimal n.d. 17). Tomalin (in Binns 2013:150) argues that women do not need handouts to solve these problems. However, should deal with the source of gender in equality as evidenced by the low status of women in religion and culture. This approach, however, does not engage the challenges of the gender imbalances. The anti-poverty approach became an alternative in development since economic growth failed to eradicate poverty. The anti-poverty approach focuses on creating and maintaining financial base for women for the purposes of intervening to the practical needs. In the same vein, Burkey (1998:28) refers to this as the basic needs approach that seeks to meet the basic needs of the poor people.

Definitions of basic needs are, therefore, needed as they vary from community to community (Burkey 1998:28). The demerit of this approach is that it does not seek to address the problems of gender inequalities.

Similarly, the efficiency approach seeks to maintain both the practical and strategic needs of women. It seeks to promote women's participation in their own productive activities without reducing their reproductive responsibilities. Productive activities such as making goods for consumption or trade. The reproduction refers to activities like housekeeping, taking care of the children and the elderly and collecting household supplies (Moser 1993). The efficiency approach is criticised for overloading women with responsibilities. Its maintenance of the reproductive activities of women appears like it is an overload even though it seeks to make women participate in the productive tasks as their male counterparts (Rimal n.d 18).

The empowerment approach is like a combination of some aspects of both equity and efficiency approaches. Like equity approach, it seeks self-reliance, which may be regarded as akin to political and economic autonomy. Like the efficiency approach it helps women to achieve strategic needs at the same time "acknowledging the power dynamics rooted in class, gender,

age and ethnicity" (Rimal n.d 18). Though women were employed, the gender wage gap still exists. Paid employment failed to liberate women and proved that modernisation and industrialisation is not the solution to gender inequality (Eade 2002:12).

It is evident that there are several approaches to development in relation to matters pertaining to gender, and each approach has its own strengths and weaknesses. In addition, each of these approaches has a specific context and a specific time in which they can be most effective. The appropriate one has to be employed accordingly since development is indispensable in engaging the gender inequality challenges. Culture hinders the self-development of women, freedom of religion and even gender equality.[21]

Onwunta and August (2012:3) assert that partnership is another way to end gender inequality and highlight four advantages of partnership as a way of regaining our common humanity and restoring our community. The four advantages are fostering community change, peace, innovation and strengthening democracy. They proceed to explain that it needs teamwork to bring meaningful change in the community. People should have the same understanding of their problem and move together towards a solution. It is not foreign to the society if people have worked together to achieve a common goal. It is when people work together that that they unite and the community will be at peace. Development is easier when people are at peace with each other, which is why we become innovative when we work together.

It is important to note that people are able to advance and focus attention on important matters for the future of their community. In this respect, Onwunta and August (2012:4) assert that "[g]ender equality in governance is necessary to ensure that women have equal economic, social and political opportunities." When people feel that they are included then democracy is possible. All would have the opportunity to give their opinion freely. They also laid down principles for partnership as equality, transparency, love and integrity, diversity and accountability (Onwunta and August 2012:5). It is unfortunate that in most communities these important principles are missing. Oduyoye states that African men should not lie to people that African women are not oppressed. They should, however, let African women speak for themselves because they know who oppress them (Oduyoye 1989:442).

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[21] In India, for example, there was a protest when the court ruled that there should be equal share of inheritance between sons and daughters (Nussbaum 2000:168). The ground becomes uneven and the daughter may develop low self-esteem due to these societal norms. Gender equality seems to be a farfetched concept.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter began with the definition of gender, culture and development. It examined the relationship between these three and showed how they interact with each other as people view or pursue them in day to day living. It revealed that culture is not static, therefore, it is necessary to describe the relationship between traditional culture and gender. This, whether women were at the periphery of the society or included in societal decisions and activities. This chapter also investigated the effects of modernisation on gender relationships. The question to be asked in this instance is, does the modern world value women in the same way as they value men? The involvement of women and the role of culture in development were also examined. It explored theoretical approaches in locating women in development such as Women in Development (WID), gender and development (GAD) women and development (WAD). It further evaluated the approaches used to bring parity between males and females such as welfare, anti-poverty interventions and empowerment approaches. Dealing with gender, culture and development in the absence of theological beliefs may not capture the correct picture of why things are the way they are in a given social set up. The following chapter will, therefore, bring in theology and explore its intersection with culture and gender.

Chapter 4: The intersection of Theology, Culture and Gender

4.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter has dealt with gender, culture and development. It examined the relationship between these three and showed how they affect each other as people view or pursue them in day to day living. This chapter is the normative task. It uses "theological concepts to interpret particular episodes, situations, contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from good 'practices'" (Osmer, 2008:4). The level of analysis seeks to respond to the question, "What ought to be going on?" Since the girl challenges are influenced by several factors such as theology, culture, and gender. Normative source therefore intervenes in providing guideline on what the desirable situation of the girl child should be. Literature from the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians and evangelical women theologians who have interpreted the Bible to use as the basis for the normative task will be utilised.

This chapter seeks to explore the relationship between theology[22], culture and gender. It starts by looking at religious and church affiliation in a Zimbabwean context; thereafter, the chapter explores various contextual practices and theological perspectives that have an impact on the manner in which women are positioned and treated within the church context. The discussion includes theological challenges such as female submission/male headship, the role and status of women as made in the image of God and God as gendered. It also includes a general discussion of women within the biblical text and concludes with the intersection of sin, salvation and wholeness in the context of gender. This chapter draws largely on the works of African women theologians - although not exclusively - when dealing with theological challenges.

4.2. Religious[23] and church Affiliation in the Zimbabwean context

There are three major church councils in Zimbabwe. First, the Zimbabwe council of Churches which has 25 member churches across the divide; any church could become a member.[24]

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[22] Theology here refers to how people understand God particularly in Christianity

[23] Religion is inclusive of all ways of reaching the Supreme Being in any way of worship including ATR, Islam, and Christianity etc. In this chapter religion refers to Christianity though it has various forms.

[24] Source www.zcc.org.zw/-churches/2

Second, the Evangelical Fellowship Of Zimbabwe is a fellowship of Christian churches and organisations that confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and saviour according to the scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[25] The third Christian body is, the Apostolic Churches Council of Zimbabwe. This is a body of 600 indigenous apostolic and Zionist indigenous churches.[26] Examples in this group include Zion Christian Church, Jekenisheni, Apostolic Church of John Marange and Masowe. There are Catholic churches, Protestant churches (which, in this thesis, are referred to as Mission Churches. These include the United Baptist Church, the Anglican Church, The Reformed Church, and the United Methodist),[27] African Instituted/Independent/Initiated/Indigenous Churches (AICs) and Pentecostal Churches. Mapuranga (2013:305-311) categorises all AICs denominations into three churches, namely: the Ethiopian Churches, the Zionist Churches and the Apostolic Churches.

The Ethiopian churches are those which have no claim to manifestations of the Holy Spirit. They reject European leadership. Their leadership hierarchy is similar to that found in mainline churches. They are inspired by Psalms 68:31b, which says: "Let Ethiopia hastens to stretch her hands to God." Examples of such churches include the African Congregational Church by Rev Sengwayo, First Ethiopian churches (*Topia*) by Bishop Gavure and the African Reformed Church by Rev Sibambo. The Zionist type churches are those related to the Zionist movement in South Africa and Zion City, Illinois, in the United States of America (Anderson 2001:16). They emphasise the activity of the Holy Spirit, healing, prophecy and abstention from pork. Examples of the Zionist movement in Zimbabwe are Zion Christian churches by Bishop Samuel Mutendi, the Zion Apostolic Church by Bishop David Masuka and the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission by Bishop Andreas Shoko.

The third category is the apostolic type churches. There are some similarities and links with the Zionist churches. The two are usually referred to as Spirit type churches because of their reference to the Holy Spirit Mapuranga (2013:308). The Apostolic churches emphasise the phenomenon of speaking in tongues, basing on the Acts account of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13).

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[25] Source ww.efzimbabwe.org/
[26] Source https://www.pindula.cozw/Apostolic
[27] Churches brought to Africa from abroad by white missionaries as opposed to those which originated in Africa

The AICs use local traditions more extensively and have a healing focus on African issues. These include barrenness, avenging spirits and bewitchment, to which they often seek African traditional solutions. The Johane Marange Apostolic Church, in particular, holds to the belief according to which only the Holy Spirit heals (Chitando & Chirongoma 2013:65). Nevertheless, Elizabeth Vengeyi (in Chitando & Chirongoma 2013:66) contends that their doctrine robs the girl child of her right to Western and traditional medicine as they emphasise divine healing without using any medicine. Some women in this church are teenage mothers but are denied access to modern family planning methods. As a result, they end up having so many children. They are also denied access to Western education as they marry very early (Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:68-69). In this case, the girl child exists to take care of the husband and to give birth.

Zimbabwe is considered a Christian nation although many are merely nominal Christians[28]. A demographic survey conducted in 2010-2011 places Christianity at 85% of the population.[29] If one travels by road during the day, the "white garment"[30] Christians may be observed under different trees worshipping. Thus, it could be argued that Zimbabweans are highly religious. They simply claim to be Christians considering the strong presence of syncretism in their practices because many of the traditional customs and beliefs in their traditional religion are maintained.

4.3. The interaction of church and gender

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Gender discrimination is still a burden to women in African culture. Indeed, it is still a burden even to the women in the church. The church promises equality through the Bible, and rest is assured to those who are burdened. Even sacrificial love is guaranteed to wives as well as happiness is expected in marriage.[31] The church in Southern Africa, however, through communal life and relationships, payment of lobola, and polygamy often re-enforces rather than relieves women of oppressive practices and norms.

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[28] Nominal Christians are identified within this context as those who are members of the church, but may return to Africa Traditional Religion.

[29] editor@relzim.org

[30] AICs are sometimes referred to as white garments churches because they wear white garments when the do religious activities.

[31] Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

(KJV 1Co 7:4 The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.

Just like any other African nation, marriage in Zimbabwe is not only seen as being exclusively for the married couple. It is also considered to have a communal aspect. That is to say, it accommodates the extended family and the community in which one is married (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:310). In the Shona context, the girl child is socialised into believing that she should be able to serve her future husband and his family. In this context, it is viewed as unnatural for a husband to love his wife in such a manner that he would help her with household chores. If this happens, the community would discourage the husband and accuse the wife of using supernatural powers to make him (the husband) love her. In this regard, it is proper to state that culture is in conflict with the command that God gave to husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church.[32] The community and the extended family play a significant marriage role. This is argued as impacting on the sacrificial love that a wife expects from her husband (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:311).

In view of this, marriage without payment of lobola is invalid in the Shona context. Misguided husbands treat their wives like property for they claim to have paid for her when they pay the bride price. Kanji (1995:51) sums up this practice as follows:

> In Zimbabwe *lobolo* (bride-price) strengthens men's position, in that women have been "paid for" and owe their labour to their husbands. The issue is, therefore, not only one of economic survival without men, but includes ideological aspects which women (and men) internalize. This includes undervaluing unpaid domestic work, child-care and socialization, and nurturing and affection which promote emotional well-being in the family. It also includes accepting inequalities and double standards in sexual behaviour, morality and leisure.

Furthermore, important decisions are made by the family court, from which women are excluded. This violates the biblical principle that in marriage the two shall become one (Genesis 2:24). The family court is made up of the husbands' brothers and cousins and she is not considered. As a result, the husband's infidelity is often condoned and the wife is easily divorced. Here, it can be observed that even though God hates adultery and divorce, culture seems to be at peace with them. One can argue, therefore, that the holiness expected from Christians is compromised as culture infiltrates the church. Many women suffer abuse as they are not allowed to divorce for fear that their parents are not able to return the bride price if their

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[32] Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;I will deal with the issue of submission and headship as referred to here later in the text.

daughter divorces. Because of this, women are forced to stay in abusive marriages. A wife does not own anything; all she works for belongs to her as long as the marriage continues. Culturally, a divorced or widowed woman loses everything that she worked for to the husband or his relatives (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:313). As a result of these cultural issues, the equality promised by the Bible remains a dream.

Polygamists who became Christians found themselves in a dilemma as missionaries required them to divorce some wives (or one wife if they are only two) and remain with the most favoured one. The divorced ones would lose everything they owned together with the husband and would go back home without anything. They were not allowed to take their children with them because children belonged to their father in a patriarchal society. Rutoro (2015:310) states that, in Zimbabwe, women have no right over their children. Instead of building family life, families were torn apart through this practice. Some women resorted to prostitution to earn a living. As a result, many years later, most women preferred a church that enforces monogamy for the sake of the future of their daughters. It is clear that unmarried women were also attracted to such churches (Kasomo 2010:134).

In search of freedom of expression in worship, AICs were born. Men and women expected to be equal in the newly formed churches. However, women were still discriminated against when it comes to leadership positions. This, despite the fact that they were allowed to do certain things that they were not allowed to do in mainline churches. Kasomo (2010:137) notes that "two thirds of all in the AICs are women which makes them a significant force in the movement". However, although women were the majority, the top leadership of the church remained a male assignment. The freedom sought by the introduction of the AICs, therefore, remained farfetched. This is because women were hindered by their application of prohibitive Levitical laws about menstruation and child birth (Oduyoye 1995:127).

Women in AICs are liberated because they are allowed to be prophetesses, healers and midwives. However, they are excluded from positions of authority and leadership in the church hierarchy. In addition, they may not be ordained as church bishops or elected into the church executive (Kasomo 2010:137). Furthermore, churches such as Johane Marange Apostolic church and Africa Apostolic Faith of Paul Mwazha do not allow women to lead anything – even music in the church. Silence is perceived as being a sign of respect and obedience to elders, husband and to God. The most used passages in this context are 1 Corinthians 14:34

and 1 Timothy 2:11-14. These are the passages used to silence women in the church. They are used as though they are a direct instruction from God (Mapuranga 2013:115).

With regard to mainline churches, Jane Moyo (2016:29) holds that it is not the above mentioned passages that are problematic but the way they are interpreted. The literal interpretation of these passages would result in women being passive in the church of God. At the inception of the United Baptist Church, women were not even allowed to take the position of a deacon. All church leadership positions were meant for men. Later they were allowed to be deacons and also to receive pastoral training. There was, however, a major debate whether these trained women could take up pastoral positions. This led to them managing church bookshops and mission tuck shops. As time progressed, they were taken into pastoral positions but with limited participation. They are still not allowed to administer church ordinances such as the Holy Communion, baptism, officiating weddings and doing burial procedures (Moyo 2016:26). They are also denied district leadership and can only work at a local church level which has limited influence.

Women founded churches in search of liberating strands of their faith (Kasomo 2010:135). In Zimbabwe, Mai Chaza left the Methodist Church to form Guta raJehovha (City of Jehovah). Alice Mulenga Lenshina founded Lumpa church in Zambia and Ma Nku also did the same in South Africa. The leadership in these churches is female. They are confident that God has called them to do so. Women, therefore, became full participants in rituals and found a fulfilment in their worship (Mukonyora 2007:15).

4.4. The concept of female submission in religion and culture

Onwunta and August (2012:7) highlight patriarchy and religious beliefs as a barrier in achieving gender parity. It is important to note that many in society look up to religion in order to locate the origin of hierarchy, of responsibility, and of authority (Hughes and Bennett 1998:243). Much of this discrimination against women within a church context stems, as noted, from hermeneutical issues of interpretation. This then intersects with issues of culture. Religion, culture and gender roles are often identified as the three components of a woman's burden and each component is seen as exerting its weight upon her. In religion, and within certain evangelical forms of Christianity, in particular, a woman is expected to submit to her husband both as Christian and as required by cultural. This is often re-enforced by the expectation that she follows the cultural norms that given society, despite the oppressive nature of these norms.

In this way, the notion of submission becomes oppression. "Women's submission" is therefore understood as compliance of a wife's interests with her husband's will. This compliance could be done voluntarily or through coercion. Women's submission, as a virtue, is encouraged by some cultures and religious groupings but it has been identified as one of the practices that feed gender inequality (Oyedokun 2003:7; cf. Mungwini 2008:203). In some gender discourse, woman's submission, violence and gender inequity are related and mutually reinforce each other. On the one hand, submission results in the woman allowing male dominance to an extent that her rights are downtrodden. This, too, results in gender inequality. On the other hand, if a woman fails to submit to her husband but resists, men may project their dominance through force. If submission is improperly conceived and practiced, therefore, it becomes a fertile ground for gender inequality, oppression of women and gender based violence.

For that reason, there are conflicting voices such as those that discourage women's submission and those that encourage it (Mungwini 2008:204). According to Meadow (in Marshall 2005:191), women's submission is viewed as one sided, degrading, undermining and suggestive of the inferiority of women status and dignity. It is argued that male headship and equality are incompatible because ontological or spiritual equality means men and women are to be functionally equal in their roles (Groothuis 2005:302-305). The argument contends that biblical injunctions on women's submission were culturally conditioned. Their contemporary application is on the basis of cultural expectation and should, therefore, be temporal and not always binding.

Others within the same school of thought maintain a more radical stance in arguing that women's submission is nothing less than pathological (Meadow 1980:114), abusive (Bilezikian 1985:36) and "a rejection of new creation in favour of the norm of the fallen world" (Groothuis 2005:185). This should, therefore, not be upheld in contemporary contexts. Marshall (2005:192) suggests that there is change of culture in the West, and this makes female submission irrelevant. In the West, he argues, "many husbands and wives see one another as equal partners". He further states that "one-sided subordination of wife to the husband is seen as inappropriate and is not demanded" (Marshall 2005:192). This picture of husband and wife relationship in the West, however, is to a significant extent contrary to the prevailing situation globally. The American Bureau of Justice Statistics, cited in the National organisation for Woman (National Organization for Women, 2010), reveals that in 2005, "1, 181 women were murdered by intimate partners. Each day there is an average of three women murdered and a third of the total murder cases of women are by intimate partners".

Taking this situation as a projection of male dominance, which is a proxy of coerced submission, suggests that even in the West some men and women do not view each other as equals in marriage. While culture is viewed as the determining factor in assessing the relevance and practicality of women's submission, there is much objection to this notion (see for example Marshall 2005:191, Fee 2005:185, cf. Groothuis' 2005:309). Mungwini (2008:204 – 205), in arguing from a social constructionist theoretical framework, objects that culture is a determinant of women submission. Mungwini (2008), therefore, maintains that social values and beliefs are socially constructed which means they are dependent on "contingent aspects of our social selves" (cf. Boghossan, n.d). It is the society that creates and defines gender roles. This then means nothing can be predetermined or absolute and there cannot be any given nor are there "essences" about people that cannot be challenged (Boghossan, n.d). This position gives credence to human agency in bringing about change. Mungwini (2008:204), therefore, proposes that, in view of the current challenge of HIV/AIDS, women as agents for change must be capable of positively engaging themselves in the process of social transformation.

The weakness of the constructionist approach is that it exerts pressure on women to deal with their own challenges. While Mungwini (2008) calls upon women to utilise their numerical advantage in bringing social change, what happens when the anticipated change fails to materialise? In such situations, this position is likely to blame women for failing to confront their challenges effectively in bringing up positive changes. As Mungwini (2008:204) also concedes, this approach is akin to blaming the victims for the problems they did not cause. The approach assumes supremacy in establishing causation of social beliefs and values. It does not provide room to other disciplines of study to explain causation of social phenomenon like women submission, male headship and others. The Social Constructionist approach disagrees even with the notion that "scientifically supported claims have more authority than aesthetic claims because for them is grounded in rationality" (Ortlund (2006:102). Carson (2006:153) also objects that the application of women's submission is culturally conditioned.

They also differ with the approach of the Social Constructionists. They argue that woman submission does not promote male dominance. Ortlund (2006:102) explains, "male dominance is a personal moral failure, not a biblical doctrine" (2006:102). These social norms are the "implicit and explicit rules regarding appropriateness of behaviour" (Neighbhors et al 2010:371) in different communities. Felson (2000:92) underscores this notion when he says, "violence against women is anti-normative or deviant behaviour that violate special norm protecting women from harm and is not acceptable even in the patriarchal settings" (Felson

2000:92).   The foregoing discussion on the relationship between women's submission and equality reveals that there are two different views on women's submission, namely: those who view culture as the major determinant, Social Constructionists and those who hold that submission is a good practice but it appears evil because of people's moral failure. The silence of women as taught by a literal reading of the Bible and Shona culture demeans them.

A question could be posed, in this istance, should women remain quiet in abusive marriages so that the marriage contract continues? Should women enjoy or endure their marriages? The Shona traditional culture is emphatic with regards to women's submission, yet they condone evils such as wife beating and leniency with regards to a husband's promiscuity and polygamy. Instead of rewarding submissive wives, they make their lives miserable (Mungwini 2008: 208; cf. Hindin 2003:502). In the Shona culture, a woman in an abusive marriage is encouraged to endure. This is because it is cheating and/or beating one's wife are considered to be man's nature. This is due to the fact that that the poor woman could not pay back the *lobola* that the husband paid for her.

In this regard, she is not encouraged to ask but to submit to her husband. In this case, where would a woman find her deliverance? Klien et al (2004:87) warns that when the churches fail to identify with the "marginalised in their quest for full equality, human rights and a decent life for all… then they *de facto* align with inhuman, sexist, and racist powers of the world". Christian theology has to be "hope inspired" and an agent for "new possibilities of being" that "transforms and empowers people" (Louw 1998:102). Practical Theology's goal is to correct defective practices (Magezi 2010).

4.5. Theological challenges

People's theological understanding influences the way they perceive life. It is in line with this that people understand who they are and act in certain ways. This section holds various theological themes that include the concept of God, the role and status of women in the image of God, presentation of women in the texts and the concept of sin, salvation and wholeness which are mostly misunderstood in the intersection between gender, culture and Christianity – particularly within an African Christian context. These theological themes will be discussed and problematized in the light of the intersection between gender and culture.

4.5.1. God concept and its impact on the dignity of women

Though there are clear roles and responsibilities in Africa between men and women, they are often hierarchical (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1992:10). Participation in African religion is not gendered as women own shrines and some are priests and mediums (Oduyoye and Kanyoro 1992:9). The way people understand God informs the way they behave in relation to God and to others. The names of God are very important because they build the image and the relationship. The African names of God are not gender specific. It is also important to note that most people within the biblical text, who met God, gave Him a name according to their experience with Him. God is named in line with ones experience of Him. Abraham named him Jehovah Jireh, which means the One who provides (Genesis 22: 13-14) and Hagar called him El Roi, meaning the strong One who sees (Genesis 16:13) (cf. Racoczy 2004:62).

Although there are feminine images of God in the Bible, God has often been depicted as male. This makes God remote for females. Feminist theologians hold that there is no adequate image that could be used to describe God, however in many church liturgy and prayers; God is referred to as father (2004:63). The often exploitative nature of the relationship between men and women with man having more privileges than women, has distorted the image of God. What underlies this oppression is men's need to be closer to God in nature rendering women the position lower than them in the hierarchy. Miller (2005:5) highlights feminine imagery for God. Isaiah 66:13 describes the care of God as a mother comforting her children. God protects his people just like a hen protects the brood under her wings Matthew 23:37 and Luke13:24. Besides care and protection, Miller goes on to point out other texts that speak of God nursing and giving birth which are feminine attributes.

The image of God is nevertheless both male and female (Racoczy 2004:46). Genesis 1:27 states that both male and female were created in the image of God. Matsveru and Gillham assert that man and woman were given joint stewardship over the rest of creation Genesis 1:26, 28-29 (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:37). Genesis 3:16 is used by those who argue for hierarchical social structure and in marriage. The effects of the fall affected Eve in three ways; labour pains would be multiplied, this notion is emphasised by repetition, "in pain you shall bring forth children" However, the pain will not be unto death she shall be saved in child bearing (1 Timothy 2:15). Secondly, "your desire shall be for your husband." Rutoro (2015:312), in commenting on the desire of a wife for her husband notes that, "The Shona believes that woman's desire to be loved and accepted by their husbands lead them to seek

supernatural intervention. Loving one's wife is not viewed as natural, but as a result of supernatural powers used by the wife to make the husband love her". Thirdly, "your husband shall rule over you." God's original plan is that man and woman be rulers of the world together as partners but as an effect of sin or as a punishment for Eve the husband shall rule over her. Matsveru and Gillham (2016:41) further assert that, Marriage has become like a caricature with exaggerated prominent features. Because of sin, man's rule over a woman in marriage has become a distorted representation of God's original plan of a marriage relationship.

Indeed, the death of Christ brought transformation to those who believe in him. The image of God distorted at the fall is restored when people value each other in a right relationship. If people are properly respected the whole community benefits (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen and Togom 2015:36-37). The effects of the fall are reversed in Ephesians 5:22-33. Instead of desiring her husband, God commands the husband to love his wife. Her desire is fulfilled in a mutual love relationship. Rather than dominating the wife, the husband is to love unconditionally and sacrificially. The distorted representation of a marriage relationship has become a proper representation. Male dominance should be a thing of the past to those who are in Christ (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:46). The latter interpretation further speaks to issues of submission and headship as discussed in the previous section. It serves as a corrective to the re-enforcing of the kind of male headship and female submission that leads to the intersection of religious and cultural oppression.[33]

4.5.2. The role and status of women: *Imago Dei*

The role and status of women in the church and society has been a topic of much debate – particularly among the Evangelicals. Two schools of thought are visible. The first one holds that man and woman are equal in status. Equality means that all are created in the image of God and are children of God through faith in Jesus Christ (Hughes & Bennett 1998:250). The second school of thought holds that they have different functions. This means that a woman is under the authority of man, because she was created second using Adam's rib. In this school

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[33] Head covering during church service is mandatory to women especial in AICs. It is taken as an instruction from God 1 Corinthians 11:7-9. In these verses relationships are put in a hierarchical order with man under God and women under man. Man is the image and glory of God while woman is the glory of man. For this reason a woman has to cover her head (Kasomo 2010;132). Paul appeals to nature to validate this argument in verse 14 of the same chapter to say that women have long hair naturally to cover their heads. However, in Africa, particularly in Southern Africa, there is no distinction between male and female hair. Therefore, it could be argued that head covering is not a universal norm and was meant for particular people in a given geographical location.

of thought, woman owes her existence to man. Kasomo (2010:132) argues that when God created Adam he made the rib in a way that would make it possible to create a woman using it.

The creation of a woman was not, therefore, an afterthought, but rather God's original plan. When God finished fashioning Eve, he did not give the breath of life again since she already had this when she was still in Adam as a rib. The time between their creation is not really something to emphasise since it could be argued that they received the breath of life at the same time. God knew that Adam would be lonely without Eve therefore, in his original plan he created a rib that He would latter use to create a woman. Both man and woman, then, owe their existence to God who is the giver of life (Kasomo 2010:132). The fact that God brought Eve to Adam to be named by him does not show inferiority in any way since people give names to God according to the way they encounter him.

Proponents of the view that women are inferior to men draw their opinions from Augustine, one of the church fathers, who believed that a woman becomes the image of God together with her husband. According to this view, an unmarried woman does not have the image of God (Racoczy 2004:34). More disturbing in light of the topic of this thesis is the fact that another church father, Thomas Aquinas, even went as far as describing a girl child as a defective human being.[34] The second creation story is used to support this assertion that a woman is lower than a man, because she was a second creation (Racoczy 2004:44).

Okure argues that the passage does not emphasise the time difference between the creation of Adam and Eve but rather the unity and equality as evidenced by Genesis 1:27-28 where both were given a mandate to be fruitful and multiply and rule the earth in partnership and 2:23-24 the two shall become one flesh (Racoczy 2004:45). The order of creation does not really show hierarchy and Kosomo (2010:129) provides an African perspective with regards to the reason why God created a woman after man: Ancient Africans believed that one of the reasons God made a woman after making man, was that he wanted to improve on his art. He wanted that art to reflect among other attributes, physical beauty, intelligence, tenderness, compassion, patience and tolerance. That God had tried but miserably failed this combination in man. All he had got were muscles, a bit of brain and very little else. Forget about beauty! Africans also believe that God knew that man would be lost without a woman.

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[34] If this is correct then the unmarried man does not have the image of God, too, because Genesis 1:27 the image of God is both male and female (Racoczy 2004:34).

That he would be incomplete hence would only be a half human. In modern times, the woman in Africa remains a powerful figure. She is the essence of being and existence. A man is not considered a man in Africa unless he has a woman behind him. A home without a woman is looked down upon and often the object of ridicule by society. Other views with regards to the subordination of women include the notion that as Eve was deceived by the serpent, she is, therefore, untrustworthy and should not be placed in any position of authority (Hughes & Bennett 1998:251). Some believe that Paul used the above argument to support the hierarchy of authority in marriage when he addresses the Ephesians and the Corinthian churches. Okure (in Racoczy 2004:43) further argues that Eve was not present when God instructed Adam not to eat the fruit. The Bible states that all have sinned. The effect of sin affected both male and female and were made responsible for their sin.

Ortlund (2006:109) argues that as Eve is identified as "helper" – this implies subordination. Others note, however, that "The biblical portrait of God as a helper of those in distress and suffering oppression has been of great encouragement to many suffering from slavery of male dominance" (Levison 1992: 466 – 467). Helper does not imply subordination but strength and ability to help. Matsveru and Gillham (in Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:36-37), however, both assert that both male and female were given the mandate to rule the rest of creation. Man and woman are co-dependent. They cannot exist apart from each other. A woman was created from a man's rib and yet man is born of a woman (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:36-37). It is also important to note that the maleness of Jesus is at times used as a reason to prevent women from being ordained to priesthood. This is particularly true of the Roman Catholic Church, who in a Vatican declaration of 1976 emphasises that women should not become priests, because Jesus was male. Women could not represent Jesus because they are not in the same image and gender with him (Kasomo 2010:128).[35]

It emphasises the maleness of Jesus rather than the purpose of his coming. Jesus did not come to authenticate male dominance, but rather to give freedom to those who are oppressed regardless of their gender. The good news of the gospel has been twisted to support male privileges. The gender of Jesus is used to define humanness and to justify patriarchy (Racoczy

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[35] "It is the unbroken tradition of the Catholic Church that women have never been admitted to the holy orders, with which the orthodox tradition also concurs. Jesus Christ did not call any woman to be part of the twelve, even his own mother. The apostolic church faithfully carried out this exclusion of women from priesthood that was instituted by Christ. Moreover, it should also be said that the maleness of the priest reflects the sacramental mystery of Christ and the church. As a representative of the head of the church the bridegroom, the priest must be male. There must be 'natural resemblance' between the priest and Christ. For Christ himself was and remains a male" (Vatican declaration, 1976 in Kasomo 2010:128).

2004:45). God has been portrayed as male and women have no space in the image of God. The gender of Jesus and the maleness of God have been used to deny women the image of God. In this way it may be argued that their bodies are devalued as they go through menstruation, pregnancy, child birth and menopause (Kasomo 2010:128). All these are experienced by women and not men. Can a male saviour save women? Jesus is the man in the best position to challenge the male definition of humanity and male privileges since his incarnation has nothing to do with gender but humanity as a whole (Racoczy 2004:45). This is proved by his inclusiveness in his ministry as discussed in the following section.

4.5.3. Women in the text: both leaders and the vulnerable

Parity is still far from being realised within many churches. This is often because women's role within the text and even the faith are not fully recognised. The Bible portrays women as leaders, vulnerable and equal with men. There are women leaders who were called by God to work in the same ministry with men. Although the Old Testament was written within Jewish culture and at times portray women in subordinate roles, women still feature within the biblical text as leaders and used by God to play important roles despite the patriarchal culture in operation. Women such as Rahab, Ruth and Esther helped in bringing right relationships with God and others and indeed Deborah occupied prominent religious office as judge and prophetess (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen &Togom 2015:-44; cf. Kosomo 2010:134).

However, the same Biblical text also presents a dark side where women are presented as temple prostitutes - without pointing out the male figures and their transgressions. (Kasomo 2010:131).

The vulnerability of widows is seen when a woman leaves her father for marriage and loses her husband. God's special care for vulnerable women such as widows is also noteworthy. God put measures to protect the vulnerable widows by inviting those who believe in him to care for widows and provide for them and indeed God is even identified as judging those who mistreat widows Deuteronomy 10:18 (Hughes & Bennett 1998:245).   There are also verses that clearly show equality between men and women. Kasomo (2010:132) uses Galatians 3:28 to illustrate equality between male and female. He also uses Matthew 23:8 to show that all are children of God. Many feminist theologians argue that Jesus is a friend to women as evidenced by his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well John 4:1-42 (Racoczy 2004:35). He healed a woman in public (Mk 5:25-34) and allowed women to follow him (John 11:27).

Women were also the first to witness the resurrected Jesus in the absence of men but their testimony was not valid until Peter ran to the tomb to see for himself. As it were, Jesus

commanded the women to take the resurrection message to the disciples (Hughes & Bennett 1998:245; Mt 28:8-10, Mark9-11, John 20:10-18). Adeney (2012:93) points out that though there are many evil practices in some cultures, Christians should not be divorced from the community. Christ is the transformer of culture because he works within it (Adeney 2012: 93). He chose to come in the world through a woman. Jesus healed a haemorrhaging woman Mark 5: 25-34. Jesus was aware that it was against the law (Leviticus 15:25-29) to get in contact with such a woman but he publicly spoke to the woman who confessed to have touched Jesus. He raised a girl from death against the Jewish law - despite Numbers 19:11, 16 , which states that the one who comes in contact with a dead body is defiled and should go through ritual cleansing (Woode 1990:65). He even received financial assistance from women (see Luke 8:1-3) (Racoczy 2004:42). Furthermore, Jesus was an advocate of vulnerable women: he had concern for women as evidenced by his encounter with the Samaritan woman (John 4:7-29); he protected the dignity of a sinful woman in a Pharisees' house (Luke 7:36-50).

The Early Church is indeed also a point of contention as many passages use to support male headship in the church today, are often not consistent with other passages where women are displayed as participating in the work of God. The early church shows that women became actively involved in the life of the church and the Apostle Paul, the writer of the passages in question, gives us a list of women who worked together with men for the advancement of the gospel (Moyo 2016:29). At the birth of the church at Pentecost both men and women received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; 17-18). Both men and women are seen as being empowered to take the gospel message to the end of the world and are being transformed into the likeness of God (2 Corinthians 3:18) (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:43).

Paul mentions women as disciples, leaders, prophets and co-workers, working alongside men. Phoebe, for example, served as a deaconess (Romans 16:1), a position which was traditionally for men in Acts 6:3. Priscilla, Aquila's wife is mentioned among Paul's fellow workers and Junia is noted among the disciples (Racoczy 2004:41). Lydia as noted in Acts16:14-15, indeed became the first church leader in Macedonia. The participation of women is more evident as they freely serve God. Paul mentions no less than nine women who were in leadership of the church and worked hard for the gospel (Mouton, Kapuma, Hansen & Togom 2015:43). The evidence of women's involvement in the life of the church is clear and it is also clear that as leaders they did not perform these ministries in silence – despite the use of the text that women should be silent in church as evidence of the position of women in the New Testement church.

If Paul had women as his co-workers then the proper interpretation of the passages that prohibit women from participating in the church must be sought.

4.5.4. Salvation and wholeness

This section examines how an individual understanding of sin has privatised salvation and links this to how issues of gender abuse have gone unchecked by the church. The church as the sole bearer of the massage of salvation should be an illustration in word and deed of God's involvement with the world (Bosch 1990:368). Salvation in the modern paradigm is liberation from religious superstition, giving attention to human welfare and moral improvement of humanity.[36] It should not only focus on a limited understanding of the salvation of the soul alone. The scope of sin has led to wide spread deception, distortion and domination in all forms of relationships: human relationships, with God, within oneself (family), within the community and between people and the environment (Myers 1999:27). The distorted relationships caused by the fall rendered lack of freedom to grow and resulted in poverty, injustice and marginalisation – the relationship between the genders is indeed one of these. In the same vein Bowers-Du Toit (2010) argues that sin distorts God's perfect intention, which leads to oppression, poverty, injustice and the alienation of individuals, communities and nations.

Quotations from the ancient world reveals that salvation was meant for men and it is through them that women might get salvation. Kasomo (2010:127) highlights the Jewish understanding with regards to women and the Torah as follows: "He who teaches his daughter the torah is like one who   teaches her dissoluteness… may the words of the Torah be   burnt before anyone delivers them up to women" (Rabbi Eliezer). Nothing religious was to be taught to a girl child and, hence, salvation and religious matters were male assignments. If they were allowed to be taught they would be wise and discover their identity in Christ. Keeping people ignorant is the best way to oppress them because knowledge is power. People perish because they lack knowledge.

 In the same vein, Billerbeck (in Kasomo 2010:127) is in agreement that salvation was meant for men and mediated through them to women:"Each time that I beat my wife, she has to thank me because she is closer to the Salvation". (Kasomo 2010:127). Billerbeck (in Kasomo 2010:127) further indicates that the greatest sin is feminine. Sin is consigned to female gender.

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[36] Bosch lists four dimensions which are economic justice against exploitation, human dignity against oppression, solidarity against alienation and hope against despair in personal life (Bosch 1990:370).

If one is female, she is not created in the image of God. There is no communion with God and salvation is not possible. It is the man who should bring salvation to a woman through even beating so that when she fully understands may be salvation is near.

In the ancient Jewish world, the birth of a daughter brings anxiety to the father who has no powers to stop her daughter from sinning. There is sin in every stage of a daughter's life. As a youth the father is worried that she might not get a husband and singleness becomes a sin. If she gets a husband the father is worried by two things; divorce and defilement and found with child in her father's house. When she is properly married the father is still worried that in case she should be barren. Singleness, divorce, defilement and barrenness are all considered as feminine sins that worries the one who gives birth to daughters (Kasomo 2010:127). Therefore, it is observable that some churches understand sin as natural and feminine. Biological conditions such as menstruation, pregnancy, child birth and menopause are seen as directly related to this and, therefore, act as obstacles to prevent women from fellowshipping with God (Oduyoye 1995:127). As women are denied the image of God in other churches, they are excluded as those who do not have communicable attributes of God and are left out of the picture – so to speak – in serving God.

Gender issues go unchecked in the church as they use the Bible and its culture as directives from God. What is even sadder, is that the exclusion of women from church leadership and women submission are fertile ground for gender based violence. The death of Jesus, however, brings divine forgiveness and disarms powers and authorities. We should, therefore, not accept the rule of oppressive structures of deceiving and dominating social systems – even those embedded in systems such as patriarchy (Myers 1999:36). God is working to restore us to our original identity-image of God, productive stewards and living together in just and peaceful relationships. He is reconciling all things to himself Colossians 1:19.

4.6. Conclusion

Within Zimbabwe and more especially the Shona society, religion and culture are both in agreement and in conflict as far as gender roles are concerned. For this reason, religion is, on the one hand, viewed as oppressing women and, on the other hand, as bringing liberty to those who are oppressed. Zimbabwe is a Christian nation with most of its people attached to a church although some still hold on to traditional customs. The potent interaction of gender, religion and culture, therefore, poses many challenges. Women are the majority in the church, yet they do not hold significant posts in leadership within Southern African mainline churches. As a

result, some women formed their own churches which they cannot always lead because of the prohibitions in the book of Leviticus. This chapter has highlighted the notion that concept of women submission demeans women and that the church should identify with the oppressed to fight injustice within the church and the society.

Although God had been always portrayed as male it is also clear that there is no adequate image that could be used to describe God, however in many church liturgy and prayers; God is referred to as father. This chapter also shows that using the creation stories to rob women of their image of God is invalid as the creation of a woman was in the original plan of God when he created Adam's rib. The Bible, furthermore, portrays women as leaders, vulnerable and equal with men within the early church. The church's understanding of salvation should change its emphasis from the salvation of the soul in the future to salvation as both already and now yet. Salvation in the modern paradigm is liberation from religious superstition, giving attention to human welfare and moral improvement of humanity.

In personal life, salvation should include economic justice against exploitation, human dignity against oppression, solidarity against alienation, and hope against despair. The death of Christ brings hope. It restores our relationships with God, with each other and with nature. The original plan of God that people have life in abundance is realised in Christ. Social justice, economic justice, human dignity, solidarity and hope are realised in Christ.

This chapter explored the relationship between theology, culture and gender. It has dealt with religious and church affiliation in Zimbabwe, the interaction of church and gender, the concept of female submission in religion and culture and theological challenges which include God concept and its impact on the dignity of women, the role and status of women: imago Dei, women in the text; both leaders and the vulnerable and it concludes by looking at salvation and wholeness. The next chapter will deal with empirical findings on the Shona perception of the girl child challenges. It reflects the voices of church leaders and women with regard to their perceptions of gender and culture, women and the church as well as the challenges faced by the girl child in the present times.

Chapter 5: Empirical Findings on the Shona perception of the girl child challenges

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 dealt with the Shona culture and the girl child. This was followed by a discussion in Chapter 3 concerning the intersection of development, religion and gender. The previous chapter explored the relationship between theology, culture and gender. This chapter will report on empirical qualitative interviews conducted with some of the religious leaders in the Eastern highlands. The interviews highlight some of the lived realities with regard to the issue of the girl child and that of the Shona culture. Further, the chapter will be shed light on the intersection between the Shona culture and the girl child.

All the interviews were conducted in the Chimanimani district. The reason for conducting all these interviews in this one district of Chimanimani was due to its proximity. The interviews reflect the voices of church leaders and women with regard to their perceptions of gender and culture, women and the church as well as the challenges faced by the girl child. This chapter begins by outlining the empirical research methods used. It explores key themes including women and theology, the role of women in the church, participation of women in AICs, women in church leadership, women and the *Imago Dei*, the role of women in marriage and in the community, cultural practices, the church and social transformation as well as the question of social justice. The above themes are explored from an evangelical Christian perspective.

5.2. Methodology

I have used the qualitative method, which seeks to describe and attach meaning to phenomena. I also made use of the purposive sampling method to recruit participants. The purposive sampling was based on the following three factors as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2003:21): enculturation, current involvement and adequate time. This form of sampling led to the interviews with church leaders from three African Initiated Churches namely, Jekenisheni, Johane Marange and Zion; and two mission (that is, mainline) churches. These mission churches include the United Methodist Church and the United Baptist Church. The interviews with these church leaders were conducted in order to identify whether there are any differences in opinion between the AICs and mainline or mission churches. The interviews were conducted with church leaders because they are custodians of their doctrines. Since most cultural beliefs

and practices are communicated orally by elderly people according to their gender, I have interviewed three (3) elderly women also who are in charge of the girls in the African Initiated Churches. The purpose for interviewing them was to understand their perceptions of a "well mannered" girl child. This was important because it may be argued that the teaching the girl child receives from women informs her worldview. This was helpful in determining whether the study contributes to the present situation of the girl child. Apart from the church leaders interviewed, I have also interviewed the police and members of one NGO dealing with children. This was done in order to discover whether the suffering of the girl child is also observed in the country outside the church.

I used semi-structured interviews with a set of planned questions; this, in order to direct the conversation in the desired direction and allow participation (Coetzee et al. 2001:15).   Semi-structured interviewing was preferred because it involves topics or aspects rather than specific questions on a topic of study as indicated by Huysamen (1996:145). As it were, interviews seek to cover such topics but questions are, sometimes, phrased such that they accommodate different experiences and the respondents' levels of education (Huysamen 1996:145). Furthermore, the semi-structured method was the preferred mode of data collection in this research particularly because of its advantage in promoting a relaxed atmosphere between the interviewer and the interviewee. Unlike the structured method, which sticks to a questionnaire, this method enables the interviewer to gain additional insight on some issues that were not thought of prior to the interview through probing (Huysamen 1996:144).

In this research, it should be noted that all interviews were anonymised in order to protect the identity of the respondents. The research, therefore, adhered to the ethical procedures of the University of Stellenbosch under which the ethical certificate to conduct this research was obtained. In this regard, names that could lead to the identification of participants or of the organisations they represent, such as the African Independent Churches, are coded as AICs with specific numbers assigned to each code. In the same way, the Mission churches are coded as MC.

In addition to interviews, I also used participant observation to complement and add value to the primary mode of data collection. Participant observation, as a method of data collection, consists of observing participants with a view to obtaining needed data. In this same context, I used research assistants to assist in design, data collection and interpretation.

As already noted, in this research, a qualitative study method was employed. For that reason, the target population for this research was small. The overall sample was twelve people[37]. It is nevertheless important to note that the interviews were in-depth and rewarding and sought to unpack the phenomena and discover reasons behind the cultural understandings and treatment of women, which is why the sample was sufficient for the purposes of the study. Ultimately, the interviews led to the cultural understanding and treatment of the girl child. Particular attention was given to the understanding the role of women in the church, the community and within the Shona culture.

It appeared that each respondent was well aware of the situation of the girl child either through enculturation or through their active participation in issues pertaining to the girl child in church or at work. As Babbie and Mouton (2003:21), citing Spradley (1979) point out, in choosing interviewees, three criteria are used namely, enculturation, current involvement and adequate time. In this research, all these criteria were appropriate for representing the general population of the Shona people in shaping their perception of the girl child. The findings are classified thematically. Themes are identified and these themes are used to analyze the findings. Letters and numbers are used to represent each theme. In addition, different numbers are also used as codes for the various coded themes.

5.3. Code MT1: Women and Theology

5.3.1. Code MT2: The role of women in the church

The enquiry into the role of women in the church is one of the most momentous issues facing the church today (Miller 2005:4). The problem centres on the New Testament interpretation of the Apostle Paul's theology of women. The debate about the meaning of his words raises large questions for the church, especially questions of biblical authority and interpretation. It also raises questions of church and family order as noted previously (cf. section 4.3). This section seeks to highlight the participation of women during church services in AICs, their teachings about the girl child, participation in everyday life of the church and AICs and women in leadership. This will be compared and contrasted with how mission churches deal with such issues. The comparison and the contrast will be based on the findings of this research as

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[37] 12 interviews are sufficient for research of this nature as I am looking at interpretive data and that I had saturated sample for information

obtained from the interviews conducted. The section also explores the involvement of the church in issues of social transformation and social justice

5.3.2. Code MT3: The participation of women in AICs

5.3.2.1. During church services

In all AICs women participate in church music. AIC2 and 3 allow women to sing and dance as they express themselves before God. In AIC1 women sing and are not allowed to dance in church. This is because they believe it is not proper for women to dance before men especially in the presence God. AIC 2 is peculiar in that women are allowed to preach although they are not allowed to teach in the presence of men. However, it appears that women in AICs are allowed to exercise their spiritual gifts. This is because all the three AICs are in agreement that women should use their gifts because they are God-given. Those gifted in prophecy would, therefore, be helping the congregants by prophesying into their lives for them to know the will of God during that particular period. The sick are also brought to them for healing. In this case, women minister to anyone (both men and women) who requires their services. They also remind people of their sin as they enter the worship place. This is to ensure they have confessed all their sins to God. It is done by both male and female prophets as they are inspired by the same spirit for the work of God.

All the three AICs further agree that there are God-given roles that women are allowed to perform in public within the church such as healing and prophesying. Although AIC1 and AIC3 allow their women to perform healings and prophecy, they do not allow women to preach in the church. Their argument is that the two are done directly by the Holy Spirit who possesses people and directs them during these "performances". Preaching is viewed as involving the human mind and women are viewed as not being able to understand and expound the 'right' doctrine to the entire congregation that includes men. The women from the two AICs have the same understanding as the men that God does not allow them to stand before men since it is a taboo in the Shona culture. This is why cultured women are expected to kneel while speaking to men as a sign of humility.

AIC2 constitution allows women to be voted for any post from local to national leadership. However, women always lose elections and are not in any position at the district, province or national. They are free to be elected, but they are not elected. This further underscores the fact that culture that does not allow women to lead is still deeply rooted within people (Kasomo

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2010:131). Although women are the majority in the church they do not want to be led by other women, hence they vote for men in influential positions.

Women have many roles in the church. Women who are inspired by the Holy Spirit could prophesy, heal the sick and teach children and youth revival meetings and dance during the praise and worship service. They also prepare the Holy Communion. Women cook food during church meetings (AIC2, 3. Female).

Both AICs and mission churches are similar in that women have full participation in praise and worship as they sing and dance in the church. Another similarity is that they leave the 'food ministry' to women during church gatherings. In this context, women organise to buy the foods, they do the cooking, they serve the food and, at the end, they wash the dishes. They also clean the church meeting place afterwards. This might be influenced by the African culture that has confined women to reproductive roles. Oduyoye (1983b:112) notes that there is need to wake up African men to participate together with women in reproductive roles. It has become difficult to distinguish between culture and religion since cultural practices are carried into the church in the case of AICs.

5.3.2.2. Everyday life of the church

As it were, women have significant ministry outside the worshipping place. AICs believe that there are roles given to people by God and there are those created by man in order to have smooth running of the church. These are done outside the place of worship for the edification of the church. Most of these are observable. These include; teaching children in general and particularly girls how to become acceptable people in the church and community and their participation in midwifery.

5.3.2.3 AIC women as teachers

The mother is the first teacher to their children. Both boys and girls get their first teachings from their mothers. This is why it is important to teach children the right doctrine from the beginning. All the respondents interviewed seem to agree that mothers are the first teachers to the children and therefore women should be teaching children. At adolescence, the boys get most of their teachings from their fathers and mothers continue teaching the girls. Rites of passage are sometimes used as a demonstration to mark the beginning of another stage of life In AICs, the Shona rites of passage are Christianised. Rather than doing as women in African

Indigenous religions do, they get instruction from the Holy Spirit. This is further indicated by a priest's wife from AIC3 in the following statement:

When a girl menstruates for the first time a prophetess is consulted to help the girl with advice and to hear what God had to say about her new stage of life. God would then reveal how the girl should be helped. If the prophetess sees any dangers in the girl's life then she would ask God for prevention. She is also taught how to contact herself during her days of defilement that is she is not allowed to join in worship or even in family prayers (AIC 3 female).

The girls are taught how to develop into women. In this context elderly women in the church teach young girls how to lengthen their minor labia and shape their breasts in readiness for marriage. The question whether lengthening the labia or shaping the breasts is a good or a bad practice is always met with different reactions. AICs believe culture is God-given and, therefore, no one has the right to question or correct other peoples' cultural practices. In addition, the girls are also taught gender roles so they would remain loyal to the church despite the fact that things are ever changing.

Besides, they are taught about respect and humility as the best virtues for a girl. This is because, it is believed, these virtues would make her fit into any society. Such teachings are done in anticipation for a good marriage that would guarantee social security to the girl and respect to the parents. The girl should understand that though she is in the world, she does not belong there. It is therefore required of her to be and remain different. AICs are in agreement about the seclusion of the girl child during menstruation period. They are very much into the Old Testament laws and culture. It looks like culture and scripture are at par since they inform each at the same level. The Holy Spirit seems to be controlling the day to day life through prophesy and advice. For them there is nothing new except what God says, which no one has the right to question.

5.3.2.4. AIC women as midwives

One person may have more than one gift and all can be used at the same time. Prophecy, healing and midwifery could be fulfilled in pregnant women. A woman who has a gift of prophecy could warn a pregnant woman of dangers ahead of her during the period of pregnancy. To prevent misfortunes the pregnant woman stays with the prophetess who would monitor the pregnancy and pray for safe delivery of the baby. The sickness of the woman during pregnancy is healed and the baby is also healed from childhood sicknesses. This means they emphasise faith healing rather than doctors and hospitals. They believe that if people deliver their children

in hospital they would have no testimony for their trust is in the nurses and doctors not in God. However, it should be noted that healing comes from God, and not from people. This is confirmed by Elizabeth Vengei (in Chitando and Chirongoma 2013:82) when she points out how women in AICs are denied access to modern medicine.

Keeping a patient outside the hospital is seen as negligence by mission churches and as great faith and reliance upon God by AICs. A comparison between AICs and mission churches shows that prayer is understood differently. For AICs, prayer is only supernatural and should not involve human wisdom. This is seen in the way they deny their members hospital medication. They believe that if medicine is used God is not involved. Mission churches believe that it is God who gave the wisdom to doctors and, therefore, through prayers God can either use doctors or heal in any way he wishes.

5.4. Code MT4: Women in church leadership

Churches in general do not allow women to be leaders in the church. Out of the five churches interviewed only two agree that women should be leaders together with men in the church. However, the two that accept women in leadership do not have women in the district, provincial or national committee. They argue that women who were eligible for votes lost the elections to men. The churches that do not accept women leadership cite reasons such as Levitical prohibitions, the founder was male, Jesus was male, the twelve apostles were all male, etc. They also note that there was no single woman pastor in the Bible. Views regarding women leadership are described below:

They are not allowed to hold leadership positions in the church because they are weakened and defiled by child bearing and menstrual blood.[38] They can only hold leadership positions in the women department or as youth advisors. Women could not be freed from this condition because that is how they were created. Sin came through a woman and women are sinners by nature. If women lead men, they may cause more harm than good. Women's sin is always before God and this could lead men into unrighteousness just as Eve caused Adam to sin. The Bible does not highlight women leadership (AIC1 male).

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[38] Leviticus 15:19-33 describes a bleeding woman as unclean and a source of defilement. Such a woman should be separated from the people of God and at the end of her defilement; she should bring a sin offering. According to this passage bleeding is sin and needs cleansing. This bleeding is either menstruation or the bleeding resulting from child birth – and both are natural women phenomena. This law is viewed as still having relevance and as being applied today.

Here, it can be observed that the reasons provided for the exclusion of women from leadership positions are not valid. They are invalid because the Levitical laws that prohibited women from assuming any leadership position were lifted by Christ through his death and resurrection. In addition, it should be noted that the Bible records a number of women participating in bringing the nation of Israel to God. Paul mentioned nine women who were in leadership of the church and worked hard for the gospel (cf. Section 4.5.2). Although AICs and MCs are not in agreement in their doctrines and practices, they are in agreement that the church top leadership position should only be occupied by a man. This means they are united in discriminating against women from leading the church.

MC 2 believes in the equality of men and women and that all are eligible to lead the church. In this regard, they ordain female pastors. However, it is clear that women would always occupy lower positions. In AICs, there is more participation for women as they participate as prophets, healers and teachers in the women's department. Nevertheless, they are not represented in the church leadership and do not feature in the church hierarchy. As it were, it is important to note that women are the majority in the church. Yet, they do not vote for fellow women in high positions. It is interesting to further note that women in AICs accept everything without questioning. Some of them believe and accept their roles as defined by men. They are happy that men have extended the worship of God to women who are not considered the original recipients of God's grace.

The founder of our church denomination is male and all leaders are male. We are lucky to be allowed to worship God because we could have been left out. Worshipping God is not about leading but being connected to our creator. Women could lead the women's department in the church and teach the girls to love God and follow His commands (AIC1 female).

The issue of the maleness of Jesus was dealt with in the previous chapter but it was deduced that it is normative. It was concluded that; the maleness of Jesus is used as a tool to block women from priesthood (cf. Section 4.5.2). The AICs emphasise the maleness of Jesus rather than the purpose of his coming. Jesus did not come to authenticate male dominance. He came to give freedom to those who are oppressed regardless of their gender. The good news of the gospel has been twisted to support male privileges, and the gender of Jesus is used to define humanness and justify patriarchy (Racoczy 2004:45).

It is an oversight to conclude, therefore, that there were no women leaders in the Bible because a careful investigation would unearth that they existed (cf. Section 4.5.3.) It is within African

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culture in general, and Zimbabwe in particular, that women should be led by men almost in everything. This culture has crept into the church and affected the relationships. It has made some church members believe there are no women leaders because God prohibited them from leading.

Show me any verse that records where men were led by women in the Bible. The Bible is clear about the role women in the church. Women are not capable of leading men (AIC1 male AIC3 female).

It has been argued in the previous chapter that the Bible portrays women as leaders at the same level of equality with men. This is because there are women leaders who were called by God to work in the same ministry with men (Cf. Section 4.5.3). However, it is noteworthy that the AICs does not only fail to notice women leaders in the Bible, it also appears to coerce them into subordinate positions. Women submission is not voluntary but measures are taken if a wife fails to submit to her husband. They believe they would be helping women to do the will of God and be pleasing in God's sight. They also believe that if there were no women, men would not have sinned.

In this regard, a woman is identified through Eve as the cause of sin. As a result, men oppress women without any sense of guilty. When the husband sees his wife is not submissive, he rebukes her. If she continues, then the matter is taken to the women's fellowship so that the leaders may also rebuke her. In the same way, women who do not submit to their husbands are disciplined by the leaders of the women fellowship. In this case, it could be argued that the oppression of women is reinforced by women themselves. This is because they have set aside a day every week to teach young women how to love their husbands, how to submit to them, and how to take care of their home and the family. The following views were expressed in support of this assertion:

The Bible teaches that women should submit to their husbands as to the Lord. It also teaches that women should learn in silence in the church. Older women should teach young women to love their husbands and to take care of their children. Eve led Adam into sin and the whole world is in sin and no relationship with God because of this. It is God's design that men should be leaders in the church (AIC2 male)

The question of women submission is a concern in many churches. Some churches take it positively and others negatively. Those who emphasise on women submission exclude them from leadership positions. Within the AICs, it appears that ignorance has been used as a tool

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to hide the truth of the word of God from uneducated women. The truth of the gospel is particularly hidden from women when it comes to correct interpretation of the question of submission and headship in the Bible. As it were, Ephesians 5:22, 23 is seen by many as a command for women to submit to men. However, the passage states: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body". The part that says "as unto the Lord" is interpreted by many to mean that they should submit to the husband the same ways as they should do to the Lord. A closer study of that interpretation shows that it is faulty because it would put the husband on the same level with God. Such an interpretation would also make the husband God's representative on earth and in the family.

The above interpretation of Ephesians 5:22, 23 is indicative of the fact that most women just quote what they heard from men who could read the Bible and appear to struggle to distinguish between the Bible and its interpretation. In other words, it is men who tell the women what to believe and what to teach other women. Thus, women are often controlled by men and appear to simply repeat what they have been taught by them. It is also interesting to note that the two mission churches interviewed are not in agreement on the role of women in the church. MC1 believes that women should participate in ministry because they were called by God to that effect. However, the quote bellow shows that they still have reservations and limitations in implementing this fully.

They should hold leadership positions but should not take the top leadership position. We still have to realize that man is the head. They can be pastors, evangelist, and teachers but should not be the national presiding bishop (MC1 Female).

Just as in AICs, MC1 reserves the top leadership positions for men. Even when their constitution is favourable to women such as it was the case with AIC2, women are still not in influential positions. It appears that there is full participation of women but upon closer inspection, one discovers that women are actually excluded. If they are to pastor a church, they have to call a man pastor to administer church ordinances such as Holy Communion (Lord's Supper) and baptism. This is not only about the church ordinances but also when it comes to the dedication of children, the officiating of weddings and burial rituals can only be solemnised by men pastors. One can say that some of these practices in the church are merely a replica of the traditional set up.

With regard to the traditional set up, birth, marriage and death are followed by rites of passage in the Africa Indigenous Religions[39] because they are important stages in life. Women work behind the scenes in preparation of these traditional practices although they are solemnised by men. In the same way, women play important roles in the church behind the scenes but they are not recorded as Dhube (1997:8) indicates. A few instances include the fact that it is the mother who prepares and takes the child to the pastor for dedication. Even at marriage, the aunt instructs the girl for marriage and accompanies her to the church for the wedding. At death, it is the women who spend the whole night singing and giving testimonies in the room where the coffin would be even as they design the white cloth used for covering the coffin. Besides, they are the ones who buy and/or arrange flowers that would be put on the grave. However, the burial procedures are done by a male pastor.

In this vein, Wachege (in Kasomo 2010:130) notes that when the church fails to ordain women into Sacerdotal Ministry, it cuts them systematically from the subsequent religious roles. Wachege further argues that, in such instances, the roles of women in the church are limited on the basis of their gender. This could be the reason why the AIC has specific regulations when it comes to women in leadership. In other words, there are certain things that are prohibited for women in AICs. Among these is preaching. In AICs, women are not allowed to preach because preaching is associated with exercising authority.

Men and women are not equal and the Bible does not teach equal rights but women submission and male headship. If a woman is submissive there is no need to think about equal rights. Whatever the husband acquires he could distribute that to his wives. He could acquire a big portion of land and allow the wives to use the land to produce food for their children. There is no need for women to own land because they can still do what they need on the land owned by their husband (AIC1 male). The church has devoted more time to teach the girls how to keep what they were taught in their youth. They are also encouraged to learn in schools within their culture so that they are not exposed to very different teachings. This assertion from a man perspective reflects how homes are run with a man as the "king" of the family. Because women are not allowed by culture to be above men, they are to show their submission physically by kneeling down when bringing food to the husband or to his relatives. She is also expected to do the same as she greets her in-laws. In addition, she is expected to show submission by serving the husband and his relatives.

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[39] Also often termed African Traditional Religion or ATR.

This scenario is brought into the church where women are not to stand before men. This is in agreement with what Kasomo (2010:127) noted with regard to women in African culture not being allowed to speak in public. Mercy Amba Oduyoye (1995:15) notes that there should be total liberation of women at home, at workplace, and in the society at large – including the church. From both a men and women perspectives, it can be observed that gender roles within culture are taken into the church as Chitando and Chirongoma (2013:82) have posited. The Mission Church opinion below certainly emphasises that women are restricted to certain roles in the church:

> Women preach and pray in the church. They can do evangelism and lead people to Christ. They can be elected to be deacons but cannot be church elders. They can be pastors but they could not administer church ordinances nor do burial procedures for church members (MC1 male).

MC1, therefore, acknowledges that God used women in the Bible but women ministry is limited. MC1 could as well highlight women contributions but their argument is that there was no single woman pastor. They argue that those women who are seen as ministering within the Bible worked together with their husbands in ministry like Priscilla and Aquila and not on their own. The male interviewee from MC1 argued from his church history that although missionaries came as families, their wives were not ordained ministers. They would do other jobs related to the husband's ministry as helpers.

For example, the wife of a missionary would be a teacher in a mission school so that people would be able to read the Bible or a nurse in a mission hospital so that the hospital would work as a place for the male hospital chaplain to win souls. She could as well teach Bible stories to children or lead in the women department. To them, a woman is simply a helper, and a helper in this sense means someone inferior. However, this contradicts the meaning of the term "helper" within the cultural context of the Shona people. As it were, in the Shona culture, the one who is strong helps the one who is weak. The helper is, therefore, stronger than the one who is being helped.

5.5. Code MT5: Women and the *Imago Dei*

In the Mission Churches, both men and women agree that they were created in the image of God but for different functions. They do not agree, however, on the different functions they were created for. The men perspective is that the mother is responsible for children but women argue that they are both responsible. The woman understands child bearing to include

pregnancy, child delivery, child care, and providing for the needs of the baby. The man understands it just to mean pregnancy and delivery. It was observed that women are not satisfied with their status but it is difficult to change because of culture.

Although the men in the Mission church appear to see women as co-workers, they clearly do not support the ordination of women in their churches. They believe women are co-workers with their husbands as couples. The church practices reflect their mother board; for example, missionaries worked together with their wives in Bible colleges but none of the women were ordained although they both teach in Bible colleges. The first woman pastor worked in the Sunday school department. Opportunities were created for women pastors to preach, to work as nurses and teachers in church institutions but not to pastor a church. Women could hold leadership positions in the church institutions like schools and hospitals.

This view seems to suggest that a woman cannot serve God without a man to work alongside her. The fact that the first missionary evangelists were men does not prohibit women from working in God's field. It is possible that since Africa was a new field, women may have found it difficult to come to Africa due to family commitments. Considering that both men and women were allowed to teach at Bible colleges, one can deduce that they had the same function despite the fact that women were denied ordination. Here it could be said that patriarchy has crept into the church. It is the effects of patriarchy that hindered women from being ordained.

In the same way, some tend to justify the suppression of women and their non-ordination because Jesus had only men as his disciples. However, there are many possible reasons why Jesus chose men as his original disciples. Since Christianity is founded on the Jewish culture, it would not have been easy to have women as disciples. Judaism does not have women leaders in authority within their hierarchy. For this reason, Christianity would have gone against the Jewish cultural norm if it were to have women in leadership as disciples. In other words, the nature of the ministry of the first disciples is now different from that of the present-day disciples.

Besides, since Jesus had to move from place to place and could even stay with his disciples from time to time, he would have been misunderstood if he had taken women as his disciples and move in with them leaving their families behind. Jews would have reacted the same way they reacted when Jesus was anointed by a woman in a Pharisee's house[40] or when he spoke to

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[40] Luke 7:37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

a Samaritan woman at the well.[41] While these days a pastor can stay at a local church or work within one district where he or she can stay with his or her family, in the time of Jesus it was not the case. However, because of the changes in time and ministry, Jesus had many other disciples including women. In this vein, Paul mentions certain women as disciples, leaders, prophets and co-workers working alongside men (cf. Section4.5.3).

The two MCs agree that both male and female were created in the image of God. The ideal is that they should have the same rights but they note that women are denied their rights by culture. Women should also have the right to property just like the girls in Numbers 27 whom God allowed to possess land.[42] The Jewish culture did not permit them but they asked Moses to inquire from God and they were granted the permission to have a piece of land as their possession. The two MCs believe that there should not be distinctive roles in the church for men and women considering that there is no difference between them as they both are the same before God. As noted in Chapter 4 (cf. Section 4.5.2.), they are both created in the image of God, despite the fact that the Jewish culture did not consider them equal.

In Judaism the temple had compartments and the women worshiped in the court of women far away from the holy of holies. The death of Christ has removed all the barriers that hindered women from accessing God in their worship. It is in this context that Galatians 3:28 says that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus". Who are we, then, to hinder women from serving the Lord? However, in these findings it is clear that while both men and women acknowledge that they are the same in everything, in practice, there are discrepancies. Although they agree that they are equal, they do not want to be led by women. This is evidenced by not voting them in

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[41] John 4;29ff

[42] 1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. 2 And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying, 3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the LORD in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. 4 Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father. 5 And Moses brought their cause before the LORD. 6 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 7 The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. 8 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter.

influential positions. AIC2 is attractive to women from outside as the constitution allows women to participate fully.

Yes, they are allowed to hold leadership positions in the church. Some offices are ascended through marriage. If one is married to a bishop they share the office. If the bishop is absent, the wife acts on his behalf. A woman could not become a bishop independent of her husband. In the local assembly women are allowed to be in offices like the secretariat or treasurer. The constitution allows them to hold these offices but they have to be elected. It is unfortunate that no woman has ever been elected into the committee since the inception of this church in 1926 (AIC2).

Furthermore, the physical or outward appearance of women during worship time is also a concern. Although men are without mandatory regalia, it is noted that women are to dress in a specific manner deemed acceptable by men. In this context, head covering is mandatory to women especially in AICs. This is taken as an instruction from God (1 Corinthians 11:7-9). In these verses marital relationships are put in a hierarchical order with men under God and women under man. In other words, it is considered that man is the image and glory of God while a woman is the glory of man. For this reason, a woman has to cover her head. These views are noted in the quote below by one of the respondents:

The Bible commands that women should be dressed modestly. They should also cover the head whether in church or out. The Holy Spirit agrees with the teachings of the church for the church receives new revelation from God in everyday life. The Bible gives only skeleton information about women and the flesh comes from the Holy Spirit and our own culture. The Bible teaches that women should learn in silence. In this case women are like children they are to be taught. When they could fully understand or come to the level with men may be the Holy Spirit would communicate again to let them speak. Women should bear as many children as possible because they shall be saved in child bearing (1Ti 2:15). If barren women do not cause their barrenness, God has the answer for them but if they are involved in the cause of their barrenness they are destined for hell (AIC1 male).

It should be noted that, in verse 14 of the same chapter, Paul appeals to nature in validating this argument when he says that women have long hair naturally to cover their heads. Although the two Mission churches interviewed said nothing about head covering, it is observed that their church uniforms have head coverings. For them, it is only when they are in a church uniform attending a service that they cover their heads. They do not wear their uniforms daily but only

when they are attending church services. In the AICs, women's heads are always covered whether they are in church or at work and even working in the fields they cover their heads. However, in Africa, particularly in Southern Africa, there is no distinction between men and women's hair our hair is similar all is short. It could, therefore, be argued that head covering is not a universal norm; it was rather meant for particular people in a given geographical location during those days.

From the AIC1 men's point of view, women are not at the same level with men in terms of understanding. According to them, women should learn in silence. Only when they have been fully taught, will they be considered to be at the same level with men. This respondent stated that perhaps God "will speak again to the church so that women would be allowed to teach and preach in the church of God". In his view, the Holy Spirit and culture are in agreement as to how women should be treated in the church and in the society. According to him, women should bear many children for their own salvation. They emphasise the literal interpretation of the scripture which implies that God saves women through child bearing (cf. 1 Timothy 2:15). The scripture was cited to support the answer. In this context, barren women who cause their own barrenness are viewed as going to hell; God, however, does what he wishes about women who are naturally barren.

From the observation and findings, women appear to believe in what men teach them in the name of God. They seem to accept anything that is claimed to have come from God. It is also clear that equality between man and woman has been interpreted in a negative way. In some of these views, women are equated with children who are not mature but are still growing. In this understanding, the measure of maturity is a man. They believe that when women reach maturity, then God would communicate to show men that women are now at the same level with men. The Bible and misinterpretation are used to keep women under men. They do not take cognisance of the fact that there were women used by God in the Bible and were at the same level with men (AIC1 male perspective). It is important, therefore, to note that women such as Junia is noted among the disciples and not mentioned alongside a husband – if indeed she had one (Racoczy 2004:41).

5.6. Code MT6: Girl child Empowerment in AICs

Women are denied property ownership as all should be owned by the husband who would allow the wives to use the land but not to own it. Although there are many women in this situation, they continue to teach their daughters to fall into the same trap in the name of religion. AICs

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wish that their youths could marry amongst themselves but if the girl becomes pregnant by an unbeliever or someone who is not a member of AIC, then there is no option; she has to get married by him. This means, even if the girl is raped and becomes pregnant as a result of the rape, she should not stay with her parents. This is because people would say her father was responsible for the pregnancy, which could be a great shame in both the family and the church. If the parents believe their daughter is in danger, then they have to report the matter to the church.

With the blessing of the church, the father takes the case to the chief where the perpetrator is brought to book. The perpetrator is asked to pay for the damages in terms of cash or cattle. The parents would take whatever is paid and use it to care for their raped daughter. If the girl becomes pregnant then the baby is to be taken to the home of the perpetrator to grow up with its family. In this regard, abortion has no place in the believer's life. It is equivalent to murder and witchcraft. Nevertheless, some girls are not comfortable with the way they are treated. It could be argued that most of these practices result from the lack of or insufficient education. As it were, education is a game changer with regard to perceptions. Educated girls are attracted to new teachings and new ways of life. For this reason, the AICs encourage their girls to marry and not to attain higher education.

 AIC1 adds that if girls are married young they would be pure because they get married before the world defiles them. They are afraid that educated girls may despise their parents and the church. The church has devoted more time to the teaching of young girls so that when they grow up they will not leave the ways of the Lord. In this context, girls are taught and encouraged to marry within the church. The church mothers have time to pray with the girls and warn them about the dangers of marrying unbelievers. The church has started schools to teach its youth life skills needed for survival. They believe that there is no need for the girls to acquire a high level of education because they could be taught to make that which people buy. The girls are taught dress-making and knitting while boys are taught how to make pots, tins, baskets, building and carpentry. For this reason, they see no need to register their schools for they need no certificates or employment but to be self-employed.

5.7. Code MT7: The role of women in marriage

The role of women in marriage is basically the same in both the AICs and the MCs despite a few noticeable variances. They both emphasise the issue of women submission, men headship and the notion that household chores remain exclusively an assignment for women. They differ

in that, on the one hand, AICs make marriage compulsory, condone polygamy, have no room for single adults, replace barren wives and teach traditional upbringing of the girl child. The mission churches, on the other hand, advocate for monogamy, do not replace barren wives, allow their wives to work outside the home and they educate both boys and girls.

It should be noted that, in the Shona society, marriage is compulsory and there is no room for single adults.[43] This culture has also affected those who are single in the AICs since they do not understand singleness as a gift from God. They believe that God would judge those who remain single when they are due for marriage if they do it by choice. There are also some who believe that singleness is a curse, and the victim with the help of their parents should seek help from traditional doctors. According to them, singleness is against God's law and calamity shall befall them. This is why single ladies are encouraged to get married now while there is still room for negotiations rather than waiting for the day mentioned in Isaiah 4:1.[44]

It is, therefore, a shame to refuse a marriage proposal in the Shona culture. This is because no one wants to be in a polygamous marriage, and ladies often would strive to get a man. Mujajati (1999:7) confirms this when he says: "A woman who is not properly married is seen as besmirch in the society". They do not advocate for equal rights in marriage since they believe that submissive women should not think about equal rights but how the family could get the next meal. If a wife becomes incompetent, the man can simply marry another. However, it is difficult for woman to leave her children and look for another man. In this way, a woman has to work very hard to keep the family together. In so doing, she is expected to please the man so that he would not leave the home. She is also expected to provide for the children.

The AICs further hold that the Bible does not condemn polygamy and that godly women do not compete with men for equal rights. They assert that they are not of this world, they are citizens of heaven. The joy of this world is short lived and they want eternal happiness (AIC3 female perspective). Man was given the leadership role by God. He is the head of the family. Christian family should not fight over rights because the law of God is clear. Man should love his wife and the wife should submit to her husband. Rights are destroying families especial those who claim to be educated. They cannot endure family hardships and the male leadership.

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[43] If one reaches marriageable age and shows no sign or interest in marriage, the family and the society begin to question why one is not married. At times rituals are done to cleanse the victim so that one would attract suitable suitors.

[44] Isaiah 4:1 and in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.

As a result there would divorce. A Christian family is governed by God not by right (AIC2 Female).

It is observable that men in the AICs believe they were created differently with different rights. In this regard, they think women only have the right to belong to a family. Nevertheless, men have freedom to marry as many wives as possible and can choose whether they want to work or not. Women, however, do not have any choice but to wake up very early in the morning to go and work in the fields. Again, men do not seek permission if they want to go anywhere; that is, they have freedom of movement.

As it were, young women are taught to take care of their husbands. This includes working very hard to produce food to feed the family and observing meal times. The husband works as a facilitator or director of the family. If he has many wives, each of them is given a piece of land to work on and produce food. He makes sure that each wife has enough things to use. These include land, hoe, and inputs (fertilizers and pesticides). If there is surplus food then she could sell and have money to buy that which she could not produce. The wives take turns to feed the husband. He should not do hard work for the benefit of the wives. If he is always tired then it becomes difficult for him to perform his husband duties. The church also gives holy water to their men to strengthen their backbone for that purpose. In this regard, the husband has his own bedroom in which the wife on duty would bring food, clean sheets and blankets and spend a night there. It would be fair to insinuate in this instance that an African husband, particularly in the traditional Shona context, lives like a king.

It is here observable that both the AICs and the traditional Shona society place women at the periphery of the society. They do not really believe that women should enjoy the same rights with their male counterparts. They believe that God made them above women and a little bit lower than God. In this same context, one male interviewee from AIC1 gave an example of cross breeding in animals. He said that people buy the male if they desire that kind of animals. They do not buy the female because offspring comes from the male. He concluded that a nation comes from a male and quoted the story of Abraham who was promised to become a father of nations. It then appears that this biblical story is used to support male privileges.

Both male and female were created in the image of God, but man is the original creation. He was created out of mud which is non-living and a woman was created using a rib from a living man. Without a man a woman would not have existed. A male is the actual substance whether in animals or humans (AIC1 male). Contrary to the above, Kasomo (2010:132) argues that

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when God created Adam he made the rib in a way that would make it possible to create a woman. The creation of a woman was not an after-thought but it was God's original plan. When God finished fashioning Eve, he did not give the breath of life again since she already had this when she was still in Adam as a rib. It could be argued that Adam and Eve were created as one being and, later on, they were separated, which saw the forming of the woman.

AICs, however, believe that even from a women perspective, women are made to believe that they are only equal in the sense that they all have their origin in God. Their differences are noted in that God gave men more privileges and freedom than them. They believe that Adam owned the rib which was used to create a woman hence she should be silent when men speak. They should be humble and submissive to their "owner". However, women in AICs as well as the Shona society should all submit to God who is the owner of all life. Kasomo (2010:132) indicates that God knew that Adam would be lonely without Eve; therefore, in his original plan he created a rib from which He would later use to create a woman.

 In this way, both man and woman should owe their existence to God who is the giver of life (Kasomo 2010:132). God granted equality between men and women as evidenced by equal distribution of property in Numbers 27, which appears to be supported by a female respondent from the Mission churches: "Yes, the Bible says the two shall become one. They both have the same right to life and property. Numbers 27 allowed the girls to have land that was distributed according to male headed households" (MC1 female). Rutoro (2015:313) asserts that, in Shona marriage, women do not have the right to property or authority over her children because the husband has paid *lobola* for her. Women accept the low status as based on the creation order.

However, as Racoczy (2004:45) asserts, the time between their creations is not really something to be emphasised since it could be argued that they received the breath of life at the same time. Culture has confined women to an inferior status. It has portrayed the boy child as a priority in food distribution, provision of healthcare and education (Hughes & Bennett 1998:227). Shona women do not appear to have power over their own bodies nor do they have the right to initiate the divorce even when in an abusive marriage. It cannot be overemphasised that the bride price is one of the contributing factors of women oppression.

As illustrated in Chapter 4, despite the fact that the Bible teaches equality between men and women they still take a low profile. Odeyoye (1986:123) notes that hierarchy in a patriarchal society (as in the Shona society) places women at a low level in every aspect of life. Besides, womanhood is associated with impurity or being less human (Odeyoye 1986:123). According

to a female AIC respondent a woman has no choice in family health or family planning (AIC1 female). Family planning of any kind is viewed as a sinful. For them, it contradicts God's command that we should be fruitful and multiply. Interestingly, both men and women agree that family planning is sin.

Family planning is not God's will. The number of our children is determined by God. God who gives children as gifts to families knows how many children we should bear and the resources they shall use. God does not give children and deny you the resources to take care of them. People should not limit God because of their selfish desires (AIC1 male, female). The argument presented against family planning includes the assumption according to which earth will never be filled if people were to practice family planning. They believe that from the day the girl has her fist monthly period she should bear children. They feel that they should maximise fertility. One should bear children until all are born.

This means from the first menstruation to menopause children should be born. If one grows old before marrying they say; *'uri kupedzera vana mumvura"*, which could be loosely translated in English as "She is drowning children in water". In this way, they see family planning as opposing the will of God. For them, God determined the number of children to be borne by each woman. If one does family planning and these children do not come out, they wait for her in heaven for judgment. The woman would be judged of murder because those children also wanted to live (AIC 1, 2, 3 both male and female). What may be interpreted from these views is that while they value life, they do not care about the quality of life lived. They encourage each other to have as many children as possible but they do not plan how they would care for them. To them, life is more important than resources used to sustain it.

The effects of such ignorance on girls become even more poignant as they get married very early and struggle throughout their entire life. In the same vein, those who practise family planning are seen as selfish people who are concerned about themselves and deprive their unborn children of life. According to them, people who are involved in family planning value resources more highly than people. It cannot be overemphasised that women have a very fundamental role in the upbringing of children – especially the upbringing of the girl child. As soon as a girl child is born, elderly women demonstrate to the mother how to shape the girl's structure so that she would look attractive. The most important outward appearance is the buttocks and the waist. The baby is laid on the mother's lap facing down and the mother pushes the buttocks up using her lower arm. This is done until the baby is one year old. The waist is

held tight during this exercise to make it small. In the same way, at puberty, women teach the girls to stretch their minor labia so that when they get married the husband would be satisfied and would not divorce her. It is done until they are two centimetres long.

They also teach the girl child to stay pure by abstaining from premarital sex and discourage them from using WhatsApp[45] by married women because it raises suspicion. This would make the husband suspect that the wife has a boyfriend. However, men could use WhatsApp because they could marry as many wives as they want. To them, the use of WhatsappWhatsApp is linked to a love affair or extra marital relationships (AIC1 female).

On the same note, the role of women in marriage from the perspective of AICs is bearing children, serving the husband and working in the fields, and as indicated, –there is no room for singleness and barrenness. If one remains single diviners are consulted to find the cause and the solution. The same applies to a barren woman. If no solution is found for a barren woman, the husband asks for a compensation wife from the barren wife's father. She is replaced by her sister, half-sister, cousin or niece (cf. Section 2.3.3.2.2). It is up to the husband to keep both or to dismiss the barren wife. Women are confined to the home and do most of the household chores. It also appears that a woman does not enjoy the same rights as a man and is controlled by her environment.

Life becomes a daily routine, repeating the same thing over and over again. She does what she sees other women around her do. In this understanding, it is the man who should decide what women should do and should not do (All the 3 AICs both male and female). It was found that both AICs and MCs emphasise the submission of women in marriage. Women who are not employed become custodians of rural homes where they work in the fields and take care of livestock. MCs have marriage certificates that do not give them the laxity to divorce and remarry easily. They advocate for monogamy and the equality of men and women. Although they teach voluntary women submission, it does appear that, at times, it is demanded. Women in MCs have a choice as far as the number of children they want to have.

For them, family planning is welcome and barrenness is understood as God-given. They do not require another wife as a replacement for the barren one. Also, for the MCs, women are allowed to be employed and go for work outside the home. Besides, their children have the right to education and freedom of choice as far as marriage partner is concerned. There is a disparity

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[45] It is a freeware and cross-platform instant messaging service for smart phones (Wikipedia , 2015).

between the ideal and the practice as AIC1 believes that it is a very big problem for a girl to marry outside the church but it is not a big problem if a man marries an unbeliever. This is because the unbeliever is brought to the church and eventually the wife becomes a church member. In this case, a woman has no church of her own choice. She is either in her parents or her husband's church. However, it is the responsibility of parents to lead their children to faith and to keep them in touch with God. If a girl marries an unbeliever, she is cut off from the community of faith and from God. There is no more future for her; she will not be remembered anymore.

This is because, for them, marriage goes on even in the afterlife. A believing man, therefore, forms a new nation in heaven and it will be a sad story if one's daughter would not be able to be with her family in eternity. These girls are to be mothers to the holy nation that will be formed in heaven but only if they marry within the church. The new nation will reign with Christ and will judge the angels. Before this, they would go through such teachings in the school of the Holy Spirit so that they would have power to judge angels. Therefore, a girl should not be married outside the church.

It shows failure by the parents to nurture their daughter the right way. If a girl marries outside the church she would be defiled by the world systems as she would be forced to participate in beer brewing and rain making ceremonies. If the girl marries outside the church it may hinder the establishment of the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God there will be new nations whose mothers are these Christian girls (AIC1 female). The AIC's also appear to attach a soteriological dimension to marriage. This is because, for them, a girl's salvation depends on whether she marries a believer or not. If she marries a believer then she is saved. If she marries an unbeliever there is condemnation. For fear of losing their daughters, they then teach the girls the "correct" doctrine. This they do from the very moment they start to understand until the time they get married.

In some cases, however, the girls become "disobedient" and get married to unbelievers. The father takes his daughter back and asks men from the church if anyone is interested in marrying her. If someone is interested then a believer takes her at a very low bride price because she is no longer a virgin. If the daughter refuses to be taken back home by her father then she is disowned by the family. For his integrity, the father would not accept bride price from an unbeliever and would inform the church about his stance. Because of this, whatever happens to the daughter would not concern the father. This is because, in such a case, the father believes

he is no longer related to his own daughter. It is this kind of belief that makes fathers try by all means to isolate their daughters from unbelievers. Some parents even stop their daughters from going school.

AIC2 is worried if the daughter marries an unbeliever but does not restrict their daughters to a particular church. In theory, they are allowed to get as much education as possible but in practice they marry very early with low levels of education. It is possible for a girl to acquire high level of education, remain pure and submissive to the church if she is well taught. In their view, the girl can acquire any education and go anywhere provided she abides by the church doctrine if she was schooled under the Holy Spirit. In this regard, the Holy Spirit would lead and guide her. She could be married young and stay as a daughter to the senior wife of her husband as she pursues her education. She would then come back and submit to the senior wife who took care of her, to the husband and to the church. Some of them go astray but others remain obedient.

It is a great loss to the family, the church and the new nation in heaven if a girl goes astray or backslides on account of education. Yes, it is a problem if she gets to a higher level of education. The girl becomes defiled and is exposed to world systems. She is forced to eat and dress differently and in a manner which is not acceptable by the church doctrine. She is removed from the community of faith (AIC3 female). Eternal life becomes the motivation in choosing a life partner. At times parents become participants to secure their daughter's salvation. The major concern for parents in AIC 1 is where their daughters would spend eternity. In eternity, according to their soteriological view, marriage continues and children will be born. These would then make new nations in heaven who would judge the angels. The church girls would become mothers to the new and holy nation.

This is why they are taught they are supposed to go through the school of the Holy Spirit to learn how to achieve this. These girls are expected, therefore, to marry within the church. It should also be noted that the choice of the girl does not matter much in marriage. If she marries an unbeliever her father has the right to take her back home and 'auctions' her to fellow church men. All the three AICs agree that girls should not marry outside the church. However, AIC 2 and 3 would not take their girls back home if they marry an unbeliever. This, despite feeling sad that they would not be with her in eternity, they believe that if girls are well taught they would not be led astray by world systems. This is why, in most cases, women accept their destiny in anticipation of great joy in heaven.

5.8. Code MT8: The role of women in the community

The role of women in the community is pivotal to the wellbeing of the society, particularly in rural areas. In this vein, women are involved in agriculture, which is food production for the family and community. They also run small projects to improve their livelihood and organise rain making ceremonies. Arguably, mothers are natural leaders in the community as they work very hard to improve the state of the family. Each woman has a field where she works for the survival of her family. They also work in gardens to produce vegetables to be sold and consumed. Sometimes they work together in one big field (*zunde ramambo*) that is under the chief's custodianship. The produce from this field is used to feed widows, orphan and those who could not produce enough until the end of the year. During drought, the chief distributes food to his people from food stored from previous good years (both male and female AICs and MCs). Apart from agriculture, they mould bricks for sale and use the income to build their own houses. A group of women may make a cooperation where they work together and produce enough bricks to build their own houses. They mould bricks in exchange for iron sheets. They also form clubs where they teach each other skills for survival such as cookery, basketry and weaving. They sell their goods and improve their livelihood (AICs female).

In AICs, women are not allowed to be leaders in the community. Although they do not have a problem in seeing women leading the community, they believe it is only the unbelieving women who desire to rule. However, there is no problem if the community votes them in positions of authority. In their view, the community is different from the church. This is because it is governed by worldly standards, yet the leadership that God desires is different from the way the world views leadership.

Yes, the community is not governed by the church or the Bible and it operates using worldly systems. It does not affect the church whether the community is led by a woman or a man. However women who accept to lead the community are not well cultured. If women are not allowed to be leaders in their homes and their churches, how could they then lead the community? (AIC1, 2&3 Female AIC1,2&3 male).

In view of this, women in AICs believe they are not gifted in leadership because God did not give them the mandate to lead men. If they lead, they think they have gone against God's design for leadership. To them, leadership is a male assignment and submissive women are led by men. This brings the rule of God on earth and God blesses the families and the community. They believe that the economic challenges faced by Zimbabwe are resulting from the fact that

God is expressing his anger upon the nation. Women have embraced equal rights and marriages are shaky. As a result, families are broken down.

Both AICs and Mission churches are in agreement that women should be leaders in the community; however, they have different reasons for agreeing. The AICs believe that the laws of God do not apply in the community but in the church; mission churches believe that it is through gifting from God. If the woman is gifted, let her lead and bring development:

> The laws of God do not apply to those who are not in Christ. The world does its things in the worldly manner and we cannot apply our Christian principles upon them. Outside the church women can lead if they are not ashamed of themselves when they exercise their authority upon men. The ungodly women love respect and recognition. They are not satisfied with their marriages and want to show the world that they are better people (AIC2 male).

They also hold that it is only 'ungodly' women who desire leadership roles and are not respectful to men: "We do not expect modesty women to accept such a position. These are the works of the flesh. Worldly women are interested in leading men outside the home and affect their marriage by lack of submission" (AIC3 female). In addition to this, the woman should seek permission from her husband first. The husband could deny her the chance to be voted for in community leadership. "If the husband permits her, there would be nothing bad. The activities of married women are governed by the rule of the home" (AIC1 female).

From an MC1 perspective, both male and female agree that women should be leaders in the community if they qualify, gifted or voted in. Inasmuch as women hold selected positions in the church, it seems difficulty to let them operate independently. In this regard, the church is lagging behind as far as gender equality is concerned. "The world has already cried out for equality and women are also elected in leadership positions such as councillors, members of parliament and ministers. If they are elected they can hold leadership positions".

Just as their constitution accords women freedom in church, so do MC2 in the community. They accept that women can contribute to the building of the church and the community. They allow women to carry on the leadership of the society for it is naturally so. However, it cannot be overemphasised that women are more knowledgeable when it comes to the needs of the community.

Women should be made leaders in the community for the good of all the community. Women interact with life giving things and are able to use resources for the benefit of others. They

know when the society needs bore holes, grinding meal electricity for they use these things daily (MC2 male).

AICs and MCs, both male and female, accept that women are pivotal in food production and in doing projects that improve livelihood for families. They also agree that women should be leaders in the community although they do it for different reasons. AICs believe that the community is different from the church and it does not really matter who leads it. However, it appears that women in AICs are not keen to lead even if they are given the chance to do so. There are sentiments that women who are ambitious to lead are not godly. Also, if women aspire to lead they should seek permission from the husband first. MCs believe that they should lead the community because they are gifted and if they qualify. Women are better placed and more knowledgeable to lead the community. Because women spend most of their time in the community, they know the needs of the society the most. If women lead the community, it is for the benefit of the whole community.

5.9. Code MT9: Cultural Practices

Gender activists have struggled in vain to end cultural practices that violate human rights. The introduction of human rights disturbed the status quo of men in the society. The Shona society does not recognise women as equals to men. Men felt devalued and criticised this as bringing instability to the Shona families. This move was criticised by the church to extent that biblical equality could not be taught without objections. This section seeks to examine how churches in Zimbabwe react to virginity testing, child marriage, avenging spirits and polygamy. Several issues that were noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis as having special reference to the girl child are highlighted in this section.

5.9.1. Virginity Testing

AIC1 enforces virginity testing of their young girls as noted in Section 2.3.3.3. They perceive virginity as a sign of purity and it is emphasised in the church. Elderly women help the church carry out the exercise of testing girls to see if they are still virgins. This is done once a year during the annual meetings called *gungano*. It is done to maintain chastity and to prevent them from HIV. Girls who lose virginity outside marriage are not allowed to sit together with other girls in the church. They sit behind the line of virgins close to married women and are encouraged to marry so that they are not put to shame. They understand virginity in two different ways. Firstly, they define a virgin as any girl who has never had sexual union with a man. Secondly, a widow who was married to a church man is also regarded as a virgin because

was never involved in sexual misconduct. They believe her blood is pure and could join virgins in the church. The old women are the ones who judge the status of the girls and widows in the church.

Virginity test is a deterrent that helps girls to stay pure until marriage. Those who lose their virginity outside marriage are reprimanded publicly and shamed. They are of less value and a very low bride price is paid if ever they would like to marry. If this would happen it would be a very great shame to the girl who lost virginity outside marriage and to the church.

AIC1 blends culture, the Old Testament, and what they claim to be special revelation in their dealing with the issues concerning the girl child. All the cultural practices that the girl child is involved in benefit the father or the husband. When the girl is prepared for marriage, she becomes the source of money as bride price will be offered for her hand (Gombe 1998:97). The future husband also benefits when he gets a prepared wife. Hanzi (2006:37) holds that some traditional leaders in Zimbabwe issued directives in their villages to reinforce virginity testing of the girls in public ceremonies. It is not only community leaders that call the girl child for virginity testing; religious sects also do that (Chakawa 2010:43).

Although all AICs emphasise the purity of the girl child, AIC 2 and 3 do not physically examine their girls for virginity. They just teach them the right thing and the spirit of God would continue teaching and restraining the girl from sexual immorality. They also encourage the girl to confess whenever she has committed any sins. They do not teach forgiveness but the shame that would come to the defiled girl and her family. There is evidence of gender discrimination as only girls are put under scrutiny while boys are "scot free". Girls are defiled by boys or men but their male partners in this sin are not judged. MCs are silent as to how girls should be prepared in this regard.

Oduyoyo (1994:177) asserts that patriarchy is the root cause of corrupt human relationships. Based on this understanding, it is clear that the patriarchal nature of the Shona society pushes the girl child to the periphery of this society. The way women are treated in the society influences the way the girl child is raised. NGO 2 holds that a girl child is considered as a second class citizen in that first preference is normally given to the boy child if resources are scarce. The society holds that the girl child would leave home when she gets married and all that is invested in her would benefit her husband's family. The other assumption is that she is less gift or talented and of less value. Culture plays a major role in enforcing these challenges of a girl child in that peoples mind set is shaped by their cultural values.

Religion also reinforces the challenges of the girl child as it influences behaviour patterns. The church should encourage equal participation and opportunities to both boys and girls. Community should be involved if the problem is to be uprooted because all these challenges are rooted in the community. Laws do exist in this regard, but sometimes they are over enforced verbally but not enforced legally. Some Churches disregard the girl child and is even difficult to help the girl if the parents belong to such churches. Because of the numerous reports of child abuse the government through the police established child friendly fora to support the cause of the girl child such as the child line services, child friendly units in police stations and victim friendly courts established to help children.

5.9.2. Child marriage

Child marriage is condemned by all. However, there are variations as to what age does childhood ends and where marriage starts. According to Oxford dictionary definition[46] of child, childhood ends at 18 years. AIC1 pegs adulthood at puberty because their measure of maturity is the ability to bear children.

> Child marriage is bad. Anyone who has not reached puberty is a child and could not be married. One becomes an adult at puberty when she is able to bear children. If a child is given into marriage before puberty the husband keeps her as a daughter until she is ripe (AIC 1 Male).

The quotation above shows that they are aware of where marriage starts. However, it is worrying that it is only before puberty that they recognise that is still a child. In the Shona culture, it is generally agreed that marriage starts when the marriage procedures are done. The procedures include the payment of bride price and the relocating of the girl to the husband's home. The girl is in the husband's home as a wife not as a daughter. AIC1 seems to confuse sexual contact with marriage. In this case, AIC1 practices child marriage even when their girls have not reached the age of majority. In this regard, both male and female in AIC1 place maturity at puberty for their emphasis on bearing children. Out of all the things God commanded people to do they hold fast to the fact that God wants us to be fruitful and fill the

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[46] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/child

earth. This kind of reasoning shows us that the mind is captive to culture where minors were forced into marriage.

The other two AICs do not totally condone child marriage although they are not very strict with those who marry off young girls. They seem to respect the choices of their children. If a child chooses to marry early, they advise the children to wait until they are eighteen and then do the marriage procedures. If the child fell pregnant before she is 18 years old, then they have no option but to let her get married. It is not all AICs that marry children but the AIC1. However, they deny that they allow child marriage in their church.

MCs condemn any form of child marriage and they believe it is a violation of human rights. They do not only say "no" to child marriages, they also work to prevent it and free those who are forced into it. They report such matters to the police to help free those who are entangled in such marriages.

> Child marriage is evil. It is a culture that was done by our fathers in ignorance and now we all know its evil and it should stop. It destroys the future of the girl child. It is happening because corruption has become a stumbling block to the arrest of the perpetrators (MC1 female).

Sometimes it works and sometimes it does not work. This is because they often encounter problems. Problems encountered include the refusal of the child to leave the marital home and corrupt officers who would accept bribes and free the perpetrator.

MCs believe that God created grown up people, not children, and instructed them to marry. In their view, child marriage destroys both the body and the spirit as the mind is forced to be an adult before time and there is no childhood in such a child. The girls in such a marriage are deprived of childhood activities such as formal education and play. Despite the fact that MC respondents assert that child marriage is bad, they find it difficult to stop it from happening in the community.

> We say no to child marriage within the church but it is hard to control those outside the community of faith. We cannot control them because we have different values. They are governed by the world. Child marriage is outlawed though it takes place secretly in the rural communities. The community knows it but they do not report (MC1 female).

AIC1 condemns child marriage verbally, but in practice it is clear that it is condoned. Underage girls are given into marriage and at puberty they are expected to be mothers. AIC2 and 3 are

aware that it is not good to marry off young girls but at times they do. MCs strongly disagree with the issue of child marriage because they believe it ruins the future of children. It deprives the children of their right to education and play. Adults who marry children must be arrested.

5.9.3. Avenging spirits

The Shona world view believes that everything has a spiritual influence. They use the spiritual world to explain the physical whether good or bad. The spirits of the dead relatives are believed to be around and could interact with the living. Those who die a natural death would join ancestral spirits in protecting the family and those who were murdered become avenging spirits. Avenging spirits would cause misfortunes and deaths in the family of the offender. The church in such a background finds it difficult to fight the spiritual realities of Africa. This section seeks to highlight how the churches react differently to the issues of avenging spirits (cf. section *2.3.2.3*).

AIC 1 believes that avenging spirits are a family problem; they do not affect the church. It is the family that should convene a meeting and discuss how they should rescue themselves from calamities that befell them. Those who are not church members should settle the matter for believers should not be involved in traditional ways of settling the avenging spirits. The unbelieving brothers should give over a daughter to set free the whole family.

> Avenging spirits are a serious problem whether one is a Christian or not. It is an unbelieving brother who should solve such issues because it is not good for a believer to hand over a daughter to appease spirits. If the unbelieving brother needs help then those who believe should contribute money to compensate for the unbelieving brother who would give his daughter to save the whole family including the Christian brothers. If all the brothers are Christians then they should team up and seek peace with the offended family. They should request the spirit to accept cattle or money. If they reject these then the family has no option but to hand over a daughter to the offended family (AIC1, 2, 3 male and 2 female).

The concern of the AIC men is not the giving over of a daughter but the fact that she is marrying an unbeliever. "He should negotiate with the avenging spirit so that he could pay money or cattle because a believing family could not handover their believing girl to unbelievers. Our children are not allowed to marry unbelievers". They are not worried about the life of the girl but their church doctrine. If cornered, they hand over a daughter for their own salvation. "The daughter is not going to be killed but only to marry a man whom she has not chosen. After all,

whether one chooses a husband or given one it does not really matter. What matters is that they have fulfilled the law of God that they should be fruitful and multiply" (AIC1male).

Although the findings suggest that men think it is justifiable to hand over a girl child, some women think it is not justified. For them the girl child is handed over to unbelievers and cut off from the community of faith. They fear for her eternal destiny. It is interesting to note that even the women are more concerned about their afterlife than the here and now.

> It is not right because those who accept the girl child as appeasement of avenging spirit
> are not of the same faith with us and the girl would be cut out of the community of faith
> and away from God. For the sack of the girl's salvation it is not right (AIC1 female).

The woman's perspective is different because crimes of this nature are committed mainly by men. She thinks that it is not fair to accept such an offender in the church for it gives a wrong impression of the church practices. She suggested that if an offender wants to join the church, it is better that he deals with the avenging spirit before joining the Church (AIC1 female). The girls who are in the church belong to God and should not be given to a mere spirit. People should not come to church to hide their sins but to worship God. If one learns about the avenging spirit while he is already a Christian, then he has to let the church elders know about it and work together with his family members to sort it out.

What happens if the offended is a family member of a Christian family? All the AIC male respondents did not see anything wrong in marrying such a girl if she is handed over to them as appeasement of their deceased brother. They say it is the church gaining a new member rather than losing one to unbelieving family. Furthermore, it is good because the deceased member is happy that the family has obeyed his orders. Contrary to this, women feel that the church member who is controlled by the spirit of God should not be led by ancestral spirits or avenging spirits. They believe if such happens to a believer that is an opportunity to preach forgiveness. However, there is need to ask God about what should happen.

> The church should help their suffering member. The prophets should ask the Lord on
> how to deal with such a spirit. In some cases the Holy Spirit would prevent the avenging
> spirit from haunting the family (AIC3 Female).

MCs are against the handing over of the girl child to appease avenging spirits. This is despite the fact that it is the traditional way of dealing with avenging spirits. It is because they believe that there must be negotiations. The offended family should ask the spirit to accept money or cattle. If negotiations fail, then it is better to seek justice from the courts rather than the chiefs

and their traditional methods. MC2 believes that if the court of justice is consulted then the offended family would understand.

> A girl child should not be handed over in appeasing avenging spirits, though it is the traditional way of dealing with avenging spirits. It is better to seek justice from the court. The church should promote the wellbeing of children. If resources permit the church should promote girl child education by paying school fees for the orphaned and vulnerable girls in the church (MC1 Male).

Women perspectives from MC1 and AIC3 are similar in the sense that both want intervention from God not from the courts of justice or negotiating with the avenging spirit. Maybe it is because of the lack of trust from men considering that women are often victims of gender based violence in the society.

> The girl child should not be used to appease avenging spirits. I believe that the death of Jesus delivers us from such curses. I also believe that if the girl child is a Christian and refuses to be used in that manner, God will protect her and nothing bad would happen to her. We should teach our children the protection and freedom they have in Jesus as Christians (MC1Female).

Both male and female in MC believe that avenging spirits should not be a problem in the church. Jesus is viewed as protecting those who fully depend on him. It's only that people at times mix Christianity with traditional religions and it is not easy to recognise when God protects his people. The spirit will be silenced by the Holy Spirit who lives within a believer. It becomes a problem if family members who are not believers would force a believer to participate in appeasing the avenging spirit.

> Avenging spirits are a problem but I personally believe that God can help us and the spirit will not haunt us. The girl child has done nothing wrong and she should not be used as payment for the offense she did not commit. The girl child should not be handed over to appease avenging spirits (MC2 male, female).

All the churches admit that avenging spirits are a problem but AIC 2 believes that it does not affect the church, but rather the individual family concerned. In this way one leaves the church and goes back to traditional ways of dealing with such problems and re-joins the church afterwards. The church leaves the case to the individual to sort the family problems. AIC 1 believes that it should be sorted out by those who are not members of the church. That is to say, the unbelieving brothers should give over a daughter to set free the whole family. AIC 3

believes that they should exorcise the avenging spirits. Women perspectives from MC1 and AIC3 are similar in the sense that both want intervention from God not from the courts of justice or negotiating with the avenging spirit. Both MCs believe that Jesus is greater than avenging spirits and if one is in Christ life becomes new and there is no room for avenging spirits in the life of a believer. This needs a lot of teaching for the congregants to be able to practice their faith in this regard.

5.9.4 Polygamy

It should be indicated that the Shona traditional culture allows polygamy. It is from this set up that people accept Jesus and join churches. Polygamy is recognised as a valid marriage by the government under the customary marriage. Nevertheless, churches are not in agreement on whether polygamists should be full members in the church of God. That is to say, churches are divided whether polygamy is sinful and whether it affects the church or not. Different churches and their positions are going to be discussed and contrasted (cf. Section 3.4.).

MCs do not permit polygamy in their churches. They still struggle with the issue of polygamists who accept Jesus as their saviour. Should they be full members or should limitations be put upon them? MC1 believes that polygamists who become Christians should be allowed to worship God but should not have leadership positions in the church. They believe that one of the qualifications of leadership is being a husband of one wife. But if one among Christian brothers becomes a polygamist then the church has the right to discipline him. Polygamy brings disunity in the family as wives and children often scramble for meagre resources: "Polygamy is culturally acceptable but many women suffer in it. It was good then but with many sexual transmitted diseases and shortage of resources it is doing more harm than good" (MC1 Female).

MC2 believes that polygamy is not good, but that the Bible does not strictly prohibit it: "If Christian brothers marry many wives then are to be put under discipline but if a polygamist accepts Jesus as personal saviour like us we do not have to limit his participation because Jesus loves him as he is" (MC2).

> Polygamy is not strictly prohibited in the Bible but we have to learn from those who practiced it and see whether it was good or bad. As a church we do not accept polygamy but if a polygamist comes into church we would accept him because Jesus accepts people as they are (MC2 male).

The woman in MC2 are not in agreement with their fellow male church members in this regard. She feels that it is her right to have her own husband without sharing. Polygamy to her is a

violation of human rights. The woman would not experience the love she anticipated in marriage because the time and the husband are scrambled for by wives in a polygamous marriage. Happiness in marriage would remain a wish. AICs find no problems with polygamists participating fully in the church of God. They believe that there is nothing wrong in being Christian and polygamist. They assert that polygamy is biblical in the following manner: "The Bible is full of polygamists and God did not condemn them. People like Abraham, David, Solomon to mention a few, were all polygamists" (AIC1, 2, 3 male).

MCs, however, do not accept polygamy. They do vary, however, on the way they treat polygamists who become Christians. MC1 believes that they must be allowed to worship God but not in leadership positions. MC2 feels that it's being judgmental, Jesus does not hold on to people's past sins. According to them polygamists must be accepted as they are. The two are in agreement about a new convert who is a polygamist. It is clear from the female perspective that polygamy disadvantages them. The woman in MC1 highlights that women suffer in polygamous marriages, despite the fact that it is traditionally acceptable. Women suffer from STIs, shortage of resources and they lack sexual satisfaction. MC2 female clearly bases her argument on a human rights point of view – it is her right to have a husband and should not share with other women. She feels devalued if she shares a husband. It looks like one woman is not capable of taking care of one man. Women who grew up in AICs are not much worried about polygamists for they have never experienced another way of living marital life. They believe that male and female are very different and men have their God given privileges. Things are created like that and that is what it is and we cannot change it.

5.10. Code MT10: The church and social transformation

The church and social transformation is a topic that many people do not link together. They see the church and the society as parallel institutions– this of course ties back to discussions the previous chapter on the nature of salvation (Cf. Section 4.5.4). They do not see the two as one component. The church is in the society sharing the same resources with members of the society who are not believers. From the AIC point of view, social transformation should have its origin in God, not in society. The only thing they think should change is the use of a girl child to appease avenging spirits. They believe is not in the will of the Lord and there is need to change that for the sake of their daughters. It is a great problem because the believing family has nothing in common with unbelievers. If any problem like illness or death occurs then there is a tag of war. The unbeliever would like to seek help from traditional healer while a Christian

would prefer a prophet. The other concern is the bride price which the family would lose for in this case no bride price is paid to the family of the girl.: "God does not change and things that are done in the Lord should not change. We will continue to do good though the world is changing. We continue to teach chastity of the girl child and encourage them to marry within the church before they are defiled by the world".

The church is teaching and encouraging the girls to marry within the church. They also organise youth conferences where their youth have time to socialise together as Christian boys and girls. They believe through this they may become attracted to each other and marry within the church. The major problem that is shaking the church is that the youths are bringing 'foreign' teachings that are impacting the church and that this is largely through the education of the girl child which brings 'new ways of life' which are contrary to that of the church.

The educated girls forget where they came from. They are attracted by new teaching and new way of life. They easily change and see as if the guys in their church are not as good as those outside. They look down upon the church of their parents and see as if they are now better than everyone else (AIC3 Female)

They believe it is rare for an educated girl to return to join the church. For this reason, the church has established informal schools where their youths could gain life skills. They are taught to use their hands and the girls are taught how to sew. In this context, girls would often sew church uniforms and any other clothing that people need. From this, they could earn a living. They are equipped only by those within the church and there is no involvement of people outside the church. They assert that the church should not change together with the world because the world shall be destroyed. God does not change and the way of worship should not change. From these findings, it appears that the AICs are resistant to change and are concerned about their daughters going astray.

> We all thought that the world was getting better with education but it is not always the case. We teach our children to abstain from sexual immorality but secular education teaches them condoms. Those who are educated have no employment and they loiter around without a purpose. They delay marriage in search of employment. Our values have changed for worse (AIC3 male and female).

For them, the world is not getting better with education as anticipated. This amounts to what they view as a loss of salvation. They have established schools to train life skills without much formal education within their church environment. They view equal rights as ungodly and

should, therefore, not be claimed by Christians. Girls exposed to this kind of worldly thinking may be changed by the world. Women sometimes like the change, but because of the church doctrines they fear falling away from grace of God. In their view, change should only come from God, not people in the world because they do not want to be condemned together with the world.

> Though many things are changing in the society about the girl child, we only change when the Holy Spirit has communicated and command us to change. Change does not come because of what the world is doing but because of what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church. We should not be changed by the world but we should change the world (AIC1 male).

They believe that if God wants people to change He will communicate to His people through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the agent of change in word and deed. There is communication and empowerment from within. He enables his people to change. Their afterlife seems to override the present. They are to some extent resistant to change.

Both MCs believe that social transformation is a necessity. With the increase of people in numbers and great movements change just happens, things cannot remain the same. Cultures influence each other as people interact. There is nothing wrong with change if it makes life easier. MCs believe that God is still at work through people's initiatives. Social transformation and social justice are related in that there is need to transform societal practices which deny justice to certain vulnerable groups in the society.

5.11. Code MT11: The church and social justice

MCs are strongly support the idea that social justice is the reason for Christian call. There is no way a Christian would not be involved in social justice since it was one of Jesus' concerns and he was active in administering justice. It should also be noted that the missionaries who started these churches were involved in social justice. Many of these missionaries established hospitals where the sick would be healed. In each hospital they placed a chaplain who would share the word of God with patients and pray with them. They provided sight through eye operations in hospitals and education where people were taught to read and write.

For the MC's it is important to care for both the spiritual and the social: "the church should continue the work of Christ through feeding widows and orphans and giving hospital care and educational necessities to those who are in need in church and their society" (MC1 male MC2 male).   Both male and female agree that they should be involved in social justice and they

have already taken action to that effect. The sister's union has established orphanages to help the orphan by food, clothes and basic necessities:

> God loves social justice as evidenced by James 1:27 we should take care of widows and orphans. Proverbs 21:3 teaches that to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. The sisters union has established two orphanages in Manicaland province where they provide food and clothes to the orphans. Most of the orphans are girls (MC1 Female).

Females from both MCs are supportive of notions of social justice, however, they do not just help without assessing what the people can do and where they should come in. For example if a widow is young and able to work they may find a job for her and she would then be able to take care of her children. Sometimes they group the widows and start different projects for them. They explore all the avenues for help before they actually give handouts.

NGOs deal with both girls and boys. They help orphans and vulnerable children. Most children that came for help are girls and most of them are neglected and they lack basic needs. The manager of the NGO which I interviewed attributed this to culture as boys may not come out to the open as culture ascribes. The manager also observed that the people who approach the NGO on behalf of children see that more girls are in need. Boys are given preference and are taken care of by their relatives. Both culture and religion do not value male and female alike. The girl child needs more help because she is more vulnerable.

In AICs, both male and female, believe that the traditional way of taking care of orphans is better and there is no need for orphanages. Relatives should take care of the orphans left by their relatives. They should be raised in the home environment with their family values. Widows should be inherited so that they get the comfort of the home and within the family church. AICs do not notice the change of times and interests. They seem not to admit that resources are scarce. If the family becomes too big they suffer more than being an unattached widow. Mission churches and NGOs are, however, in agreement that the church should be involved in social justice and much has been done to that effect.

Very little has been done to enforce social justice as far as the plight of the girl child is concerned (2 female MCs). It is also interesting to note that it is difficult to define justice when people do not hold the same ethical values. For example one may want to rescue girls from child marriages while other churches do not see the injustice caused by child marriages or

polygamy. People have the knowledge but there are no resources ready to help due to economic challenges facing the country. It is more verbalised than acted.

5.12. Conclusion

The empirical study, much like the literature study, shows that the challenges of the girl child are influenced by religious beliefs, gender roles, and cultural practices. These include issues such as virginity testing, child marriage, avenging spirits, polygamy, resistance to social change and the church's silence in issues of social justice. It is also clear that cultural practices have found their way in AICs and that the role of women in the church and community is influenced by cultural beliefs and the patriarchal nature of the Shona society. The Shona culture and the Bible are used as major sources in determining the role of women in the church, marriage and in the community. Even within the Mission Churches there is no uniformity concerning the role of women in the church. The patriarchal nature of the Shona society defines the role of women in marriage, community and has infiltrated the church. Cultural and societal norms shape people's theological understanding and beliefs as evidenced by their response to social transformation, social justice and their soteriological view.

Social transformation and social justice should be the core business of the church, just as Jesus Christ addressed both spiritual and social challenges of his audience in the Gospel through his acts of teaching, preaching, and healing. Lotter (2008:223) urges the church to act like Christ. Churches, NGOs and Police see the need to help the girl child but are limited by the lack of resources. They report that they have tried to do what is within their means to make it possible for the girl child to get the necessary help. Nevertheless, all the identified avenues are not yet exhausted. Many things are put in place on paper, but sadly they are not implemented. Churches on the other hand do teach their church girls to desist from harmful cultural practices such as tattoos for beauty enhancement and they do not allow their church members to have many wives or to marry children, sadly, they do not rebuke or report if such incidents happen outside the church.

This is partly because they believe that it is not biblical to rebuke people outside the church, as is the case with MC1. The only thing they think is necessary to share with unbelievers is the gospel. This also limits the church as far as social transformation and justice is concerned. They realise there is need for social justice but they do not have resources. If the church does not make its stance clear, then girl child challenges will continue unabated. The final chapter summarises all the chapters and the key findings from both literature review and empirical

research. It also gives recommendations on how the girl child challenges could be dealt with and evaluates the relevance of models of intervention and proposes a model that would be applicable in dealing with the challenges of girl children.

Chapter 6: Summary and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter reports on empirical qualitative interviews conducted with some of the religious leaders in the Eastern highlands. The interviews highlight some of the lived realities with regard to the issue of the girl child and that of the Shona culture. This chapter deals with the Pragmatic Task which is about "determining strategies for action that will influence situations in ways that are desirable and entering into a reflective conversation with the 'talk back' emerging when they are enacted" (Osmer 2008:4). With a curved interaction of the descriptive, interpretive and normative task areas that require improvement among the Zimbabwean perceptions of the girl child are considered with a view to develop a transformative model. In addition, recommendations are proposed. The chapter gives a summary of the findings and provides the conclusions drawn from literature review and empirical research. Recommendations are also made, based on the findings, on how the Zimbabwean churches could work as a community development locus in addressing the challenges of a girl child in the Eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. As a study situated within the Gender, Development and Theology programme at the University of Stellenbosch with a major in Community Development, the study took an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach to gender, development and theology. The chapter attempts to answer the study question how could the churches in Zimbabwe conscientize and facilitate in the alleviation of girl child challenges?

The church is expected to continue with Christ's mission as stated in Luke 4:18, to help the poor and the oppressed. The church's mandate is to advocate for the rights of the vulnerable and the marginalised. For this reason the church should be involved in community development programmes. This chapter will provide a summary of this entire thesis. This summary will be followed by a set of recommendations on what the church should do to assist in the alleviation of girl child challenges. Models of intervention will be discussed and evaluated.

6.2. Summary of chapters and key findings

Chapter one proposes that the church can serve as an agent of change in the conscientisation and facilitation of the mitigation of the repressive challenges faced by the girl child in rural Zimbabwe. This chapter discussed the motivation, problem statement, aims and objectives,

methodology as well as a literature review in order to introduce and explore the nature of the situation. . The chapter further mapped the path of this study. Chapter 2 deals with the causes of the girl child's suffering within the context of Zimbabwe's socio-economic challenges as well as within Shona culture itself. The causes identified include: the assignment of roles and responsibilities, the importance of chastity, modesty in choosing a life partner, the myth of the bumper harvest, sexual abuse, the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty and economic constraints. There are also many other religious-cultural practices that oppress the girl child such as the appeasement of avenging spirits; *kuzvarira* (pledging a daughter into marriage before she is born, in exchange for money or goods); *chimutsamapfiva* (getting married to the deceased sister's or aunt's husband); *mutengatore* (the swapping of sisters in marriage) and virginity testing. *This chapter points out that many of these issues are unreported due to ignorance and sometimes complicity. In such a situation the suffering of girl child in such communities is unidentified, unattended and ignored, while these abuses continue to be perpetuated by cultural and religious structures and systems.*

Chapter 3 reveals that there is a complex interplay between gender, culture and development. These three affect each other as each works as a determinant to the other. Development workers should, therefore, consider the culture in which they work in order to be effective. They also have to see what works for a particular culture and should be relevant. The study reveals that although in traditional culture women are often not central role players or the leaders in decision making within a particular community, this does not mean that they were either at the periphery of the community and were included in societal activities as evidenced by the importance of the kitchen.

Modernization is also critiqued within this chapter as not truly bringing the promise of a better life in African society as anticipated, but rather widened gender gap in traditional societies and often resulted in the individualization of traditional values and the marginalization of women. Men were formally employed and women were left in the rural areas to till the land and care for children, which this created further disparity between men and women. The involvement of women in this approach to development was also minimal. As a result theoretical approaches emerged in locating women in development, which included: Women in Development (WID), Gender and Development (GAD) and Women and Development (WAD). These approaches were discussed each have their respective limitations and strengths. Each approach may be particularly effective in certain context than others. However, no development approach is ideal. People change with time as a result of exposure and contexts.

The people who have been quite comfortable with an efficiency approach may realise after a while that an equity approach is also good. Hence, there is need for flexibility in engaging different development approaches in distinct times and contexts (cf section.3.7.1).

Chapter 4 explores the relationship between religion, culture and gender. It starts by exploring religious and church affiliation in a Zimbabwean context, thereafter the chapter explores: church and gender within Southern Africa, the concept of female submission, and theological challenges which includes the concept of God, the role and status of women in the image of God and a discussion of women in the text. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the concept of sin, salvation and wholeness. I draws mainly on the works of African women theologians - although not exclusively- when dealing with theological challenges.

This chapter reveals that while Zimbabwe may be regarded as a Christian nation, many Zimbabweans still subscribe to traditional customs. The potent interaction of gender, religion and culture, therefore, poses many challenges – particularly with regards to issues of gender. Women make up the majority of the church, yet they do not hold significant leadership positions within Southern African main line churches. This chapter also highlighted the notion that concept of female submission as literally interpreted by some churches is not correctly understood and further demeans an already oppressed group in society. Although God had been always portrayed as male it is also clear that there is no adequate image that could be used to describe God, however in many church liturgy and prayers; God is referred to as father which although not wrong in itself often excludes the feminine images of God in the biblical text. This chapter also identifies how conservative and literal readings of the creation stories have viewed women as outside of the original plan of God, which has distorted an understanding of women being made in the image of God. The chapter, furthermore, explored examples in the text where women agreed portrays women as leaders, vulnerable and equal with men within the early church. *Finally, the chapter argues that the he church's understanding of salvation should be holistic and include liberation from religious superstition, giving attention to human welfare and moral improvement of humanity. Salvation should include economic justice against exploitation, human dignity against oppression, solidarity against alienation and hope against despair in personal life.* The death of Christ brings hope. It restores our relationships with God, with each other and with nature. The original plan of God that people have life in abundance through social justice, economic justice, human dignity, solidarity and hope are realised in Christ and we as agents of the Kingdom are to play role in this.

Chapter 5 reports on qualitative interviews conducted with religious leaders in the Eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. It uses a qualitative method which seeks to describe and attach meaning to phenomena. The purposive sampling of interviewees was based on enculturation, current involvement and adequate time.). I have, therefore, interviewed church leaders from three African initiated churches namely; Jekenisheni, Johane Marange and Zion, and two 'mission churches'/mainline namely the United Methodist and United Baptist to identify if there are any differences in opinion between the AICs and mainline churches. The interviewing of leaders from each church was done, because they are custodians of their doctrines and are the most prominent in this context. Since most of their beliefs and practices are communicated orally by elderly people according to their gender, I have in addition also interviewed 3 elderly women who are in charge of the girls in the African Initiated Churches in order to understand their perception of a "well mannered" girl child. This is done, because it may be argued that the teaching the girl child receives from females informs her world view. It was proposed that this would also help in determining whether this contributes to the present situation of the girl child. Apart from the church leaders interviewed, I have also interviewed the police and one NGO that deals with children to discover whether the suffering of the girl child is also observed in the country outside the church as evidenced by cases reported to the police and cases dealt with by NGOs.

The empirical study, much like the literature study, shows that the challenges of the girl child are influenced by religious beliefs, gender roles, and cultural practices such as virginity testing, child marriage, avenging spirits, polygamy, resistance to social change and the church's silence in issues of social justice. The role of women in the church and community is influenced by cultural beliefs and the patriarchal nature of the Shona society and it is clear that key cultural practices have found their way into the AIC's.

Shona culture and the bible are used as major sources in determining the role of women in the church, marriage and in the community and there appears to be. There is no uniformity concerning the role of women in the church among mission churches. What is clearly revealed through the findings is that the patriarchal nature of t Shona society defines the role of women in marriage, community and has infiltrated the church. Cultural and societal norms shape people's theological understanding and beliefs as evidenced by their response to social transformation, social justice and their view of salvation.

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6.3. Recommendations

6.3.1. Evaluation of relevance of models of intervention

In an attempt to answer the question: *How best can Zimbabwean churches conscientise and facilitate in the alleviation of the repressive challenges of the girl child?* There are several models of intervention which may be used in this regard. Cooper & White (1994:30-35) highlight four models of intervention in the lives of young people who are facing challenging circumstances which are: the treatment, reform, advocacy and empowerment models. The treatment model is used when dealing with young people who are considered as a societal threat due to their behaviour. This model is meant to protect the community from young people who are potentially dangerous.

The reformed model is premised in the notion that young people are disadvantaged by their "environment and upbringing" (Cooper & White 1994:30). This, in turn, makes them social outcasts and causes them to develop a dependency syndrome. In order to avoid this, the reform model seeks to intervene in the societal practices that promulgate such behaviour. This model does not seek to attack the social values *per se,* but bring reformation to some incompatible values that perpetuate the suffering of the young people. There are long lasting positive outcomes to the welfare of the girl child in this model in the sense that if the societal values are transformed, then there is safety for the girl child. More so, the reformed approach is good in that it confronts some practices that are ethically unacceptable even though they may be deeply entrenched and of long standing in some cultures and customs. This approach has a long term positive impact in that when the community develops change of perception on some customarily accepted but unethical practices with regards to the girl child, the environment becomes friendly and supportive of the welfare of the girl child. The major setback of this model is the time it takes to a bring change of perception. For that reason, effectiveness of this model takes place when it works together with the advocacy model which may be more prompt to pressing issues such as reported cases of child abuse and the like.

The advocacy approach deals with the marginalised young people who are either ill informed about their rights or have realised that they are being deprived or abused. As has been highlighted in this study, some church movements deceive, manipulate and misguide young girls into polygamous marriage in which they will not find good support from their husbands who normally go on to get other young wives despite the dreadful HIV/AIDS pandemic. These girls have to be informed that refusing such marriage arrangements is not sin. More so, they

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are to be informed that they can legally challenge such religious systems should they be forced to such marriages. The limitation of the advocacy model is that the Shona communities are generally closed to outsiders in terms of sharing their family matters. One cannot easily enter other people's family matters and enquire their plans with their daughters, unless one is summoned by court of law. In this case it is the policemen or any other law enforcing agent that have to do that. Having more people participating in abatement of the girl child challenges makes it better. It is even more effective when the girl children are empowered with the knowledge of what abuse is, the precautions and legal recourse they can take if abused.

The empowerment model focuses on helping disadvantaged young people so that they may be able to effectively manage their skills, educational and economic challenges. Given that most girls drop out of school during challenging economic times, there is need for a girl child intervention approach that enables the girl children to get an education. Even still, girls who go to universities continue on with the vulnerability and marginalisation.

As has been highlighted already in this study, many girls lapse into prostitution in order to obtain t accommodation as they study at universities. This discussion shows that these distinct models of intervention are valuable, however, it also illustrates that there is no particular model which can address the numerous challenges of the girl child.

6.3.2. Proposed Model for addressing girl child challenges

My proposed model in this study may be called a "biblically-informed eclectic intervention network" model. The Biblically-informed Eclectic Intervention Network (BEIN) model arises from an observation that there are limitations to existing divergent models in addressing the girl child challenges and that by networking with practitioners of other models, the girl child challenges may be addressed more effectively. The approach is governed by a biblical Christian ethics of justice, the gospel of the grace of God and the value of human life. It, therefore, relates to the spiritual challenges of the Shona African Traditional Religions (ATRs) world view from an Evangelical perspective of the spiritual world. The models discussed above do not mention or emphasise this dimension of encountering the spiritual challenges posed by spiritism in Africa (c.f. section 5.6.8). Since it has been observed in this study that one of the major challenges to girl child welfare is influenced by the spiritual experiences of the Shona people, there is need to additionally emphasise the spiritual dimension in the emancipation of the girl child from these challenges. BEIN, therefore, incorporates the biblical perspective into the already existing models discussed above. To that end, the BEIN model utilises formal and non-

formal institutions such as family, the churches, traditional leadership, police, legal practitioners, legislature, Non Government Organisations (NGOs) and networks with them in order to facilitate prompt responses to the girl child challenges.

The BEIN model may be regarded eclectic because its objectives interface and integrate with the distinct approaches of several models such as the following:

a) Identifying the stakeholders within the community, from which the girl child comes, and asking them to help by confronting the cultural and religious practices that are oppressive to the girl child (Reform model)

b) Identifying vulnerable and marginalised girl children who are failing to go on with their education and mobilizing financial and material resources for the girl children to realise their full potential (Empowerment model)

c) Providing moral and spiritual guidance to girl children in order to mitigate abuse and empower them to achieve their academic prospects (Advocacy and Empowerment models)

d) Providing a friendly and conducive accommodation environment for vulnerable high school, college and university girl students in order to lessen vulnerability (Reform and Empowerment model)

e) Providing advocacy on behalf of the girl children who encounter abuse and deprivation of their rights (Advocacy model).

6.3.3. The church as a haven for the challenged girls

The church should be able to mobilize resources to help the girls who have difficult circumstances. Within the church there could be people who work in such organizations that help the needy and they should be encouraged to put together ideas and available information and materials to help the girls. For example, it there are lawyers within the church then advocacy is covered. Each church member should avail whatever they have for the glory of God. The church must be reminded of its purpose of existence. It should collect money and other useful materials that could be of use to the needy.

The uniqueness of this approach is that it identifies the needs of the girl child and directs her to the institutions or organisations that may provide help accordingly. Most of the needy girl children may not have an idea of the organisations or ministries that may help them. The

network provided by this model is likely to enhance the efforts of the already existing models of intervention into the girl child life challenges. In addition, this model encourages churches to teach and disciple the girl child in the following manner:

- The church should teach and encourage the girls in their church to put their trust in God for protection. The girls should not solely depend upon pastors and church members for prayer and protection, since their absence could make her helpless and resort to traditional ways that are incompatible with biblical teaching. Bible passages that teach the omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience of God can help the girls to realise that God is always with them, that He knows what they are going through and that He is able to save and protect them. The church leaders should demonstrate trust in God in their daily living.

- The biblical teaching on the reality of Satan and demons is not a strange message to the Shona people since they believe in the existence of good and evil spirits (c.f. section 5.6.8). The girl child should be equipped in order to deal with the spiritual challenges. The girl child should be taught that God is greater than evil spirits.

- The church should promote gender equality through its teachings, preaching and assignment of roles and responsibilities within the church.

- The church should incorporate an information and awareness process among the community leaders such as chiefs, headmen, and councillors and ward coordinators through a non-confrontational approach. An awareness process is critical to make the people and structures sustaining the practices conscious of the weaknesses of their positions. The model should incorporate strengthening of the family and community environment to promote community buy-in and support for sustainability

- Women church groups may be the best place to start looking into the challenges of a girl child in their church. They may share with their families and bible study groups by highlighting passages which encourage Christians to take care of orphans particularly girls.

If biblical equality is taught in the church the next generation will not struggle with gender inequality. When the elders give responsibilities to the youths, they should promote gender equality by letting boys and girl work together. This would help them to realize that they are

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created in the same image of God and should work together as brothers and sisters at the same level. This would also build self confidence in girls and they will have better aspirations.

However, its weakness is that it overlooks a critical element, namely, a systemic intervention through awareness of all critical players (church leaders, family members, traditional leaders, politicians, etc). For practices that are socially ingrained like girl child practices, a confrontational approach may be ineffective as it is viewed as wanting to change people's culture, hence evoking resistance. Therefore, there is need to proceed from a non-confrontational awareness process to make the people (community) and structures that sustain the practices conscious of the weaknesses of their positions. Thus, strengthening the family and community environment to promote community buy-in, acceptance and support is critical for sustainable and long term change and care of the girl child.

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a summary of the findings and provides the conclusions drawn from literature review and empirical research. Recommendations are also made, based on the findings, on how the Zimbabwean churches could work as a community development locus in addressing the challenges of a girl child in the Eastern highlands of Zimbabwe. The study took an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach to gender, development and theology. It attempted to answer the study question how the churches in Zimbabwe could conscientize and facilitate in the alleviation of girl child challenges? It points out that the church is expected to continue with Christ's mission as stated in Luke 4:18, to help the poor and the oppressed. The church's mandate is to advocate for the rights of the vulnerable and the marginalised. In order to achieve this the church should be involved in community development programmes. This chapter provided a summary of the entire thesis. It summarised all the chapters and gave recommendations on what the church should do to assist in the alleviation of girl child challenges. Models of intervention were discussed and evaluated.

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