

Religio-Cultural ‘Clamps’ on Female Leadership in Zimbabwe: Towards a Liberating Hermeneutic in Mainline Churches and African Initiated Churches (AICs)

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Abstract

In taking stock of where the nation of Zimbabwe started off during the olden days pertaining the inclusion of women in leadership up to where we are now, more than forty years after independence, one can just but marvel at the various twists and turns that have been encountered between then and now. Utilising the life course approach to human relations along gender lines, this chapter retraces the course of life that has characterised the gendered contours surrounding leadership dynamics in Zimbabwe. The chapter mainly interrogates the various aspirations of Zimbabwean women to take up leadership positions in the church circles where women generally have a dominance in terms of numbers. Given, however, that religion and culture are widely recognised as some of the chief culprits inhibiting women from attaining their aspirations, the chapter calls for a liberating hermeneutic that sets women free from the religio-cultural clamps that barricade them from taking up leadership. Focus here will be on women in Zimbabwe’s mainline churches and African Initiated Churches (AICs). The underlying argument in this chapter is that the biblical interpretation in churches should not be done in such a way that it promotes misogyny, hatred and patriarchally based injustice. Rather, the chapter argues for a liberating hermeneutic which is tailored towards setting women free from the clutches of an androcentric world. Such a hermeneutic is intended to usher in egalitarianism, particularly in gender-related issues, as well as to ignite hope and love for all regardless of gender.

Keywords: African Initiated Churches AICs, Female leadership, Life course approach, Mainline churches, Sexual scripting, The Bible