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The Role of Women in the Old Testament

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role of women in the Old Testament in spite of the patriarchy of their time. Generally, Jewish women had no legal rights as free persons and are always subject to men, either their fathers or husbands. Their inferior position to men is second to none. As the property of the men, they may use them in their defence (Gen 12:12-20; 20:2; 19:8; Judges 19:24-27). In one version of the decalogue, the wife is enumerated with the property (Exod 20:17). Women apparently did not usually eat with men (Gen 18:9; Ruth 2:14) and were not accorded as much freedom as they enjoy in modern western society. Yet, several verses in the Old Testament have given guidelines on the significant role of women to the Jewish society. This paper exegetically and contextually studies the contributions of some women in the Bible. It also proffers possible lessons on why Christian women must jettison their stereotyped status as mere observers, and passive participants in the daily activities of their immediate churches and the society at large. But then, a closer examination of the women's activities in Israel demonstrates that some were saddled with the religious, political, socio-economic and family development of Israel. Thus, this paper strongly recommends that despite the seeming and over-bloated patriarchal influence on women, as subordinate to men, the participatory role of women to serve in the church and society should be given to them, to bring the feminine touch, as exemplified by some Jewish women and Wisdom Literature.

Keywords: Role, Women, Patriarchy.

Introduction

The Old Testament is indeed the Bible of the Jews, being the religious-historical record of the very lengthy divine-human interaction between God (Yahweh) and the ancient people of Israel. It is a truism that Jewish society has always been known to be patriarchal (Brenner, 1994, p.20). The common trait in the Jewish society was that of subordination and submission of women to men. The only exception to this stance had to do with well-to-do women who enjoyed some freedom regarding their legal rights and financial independence (Krister, 1974, p.78). In the

Roman times, women were regarded as chattels-things that could be bought and sold like other valuable materials. They were treated any how like property owned by the master and can be disposed off, depending on his whims and caprices. Thus, women enjoyed fewer rights than their male counterparts. In the European tradition, women were originally over-protected and consequently became almost wholly dependent on their men. This projected them as weaker sex with physical fragility unlike men imbued with stronger body mechanisms. The idea of womanhood syndrome in Europe, as x-rayed by the Victorian concept, portrayed women as merely the property of their husbands. They are at their beck and call. Indeed, they were meant to be seen and not to be heard in the society.

Not everyone knows that women were prominent in the Ancient Near East as prophetesses, mediators of oracles and in dreams. In most cases, they functioned outside official religious life. The general picture of the place and status of women in the Ancient Near East served as a background for the role of women in the Jewish society in the Old Testament. Accordingly, some women are important stakeholders in the evolution of the active participation in the church and society. Thus, using the role of some women in the Old Testament, the paper is timely and fitting to the role of women in our time, crying for redress and reorientation from the dangers of misconceptions and biases especially as it pertains to the participatory role of women. In the words of Pope Francis, “But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church. Because “the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society, the presence of women must also be guaranteed in the workplace” and in other settings where important decisions are made, both in the church and in social structures” (2/12/23).

Dialectics on Role

By Role we mean the actor’s part in a play. Hence, Google English dictionary defines Role as the function assumed, or part played by a person or thing in a particular situation. Accordingly, this definition underscores a set of responsibilities, expectations and behaviours associated with a particular position, function or social status in an organization or group or society. It defines specific duties and task that an individual is expected to perform as well as the way they should

interact with each other and contribute to a particular goal or objective. A role can be formal or informal, temporary, or permanent and can be assigned or assumed. In the context of this paper, it is applied to the role of women in the Old Testament.

Etymology and the Nature of Women

The English noun 'women' is derived from the plural expression of the Hebrew and Greek singular nouns, '*isha*' and '*gune*' respectively. They are generally regarded as belonging to the group of feminine gender. The uniqueness in the physique of women is however found in their biological structure wherein they are fitted for childbearing and nursing, though their roles are not limited to those duties. According to the Old Testament, the understanding of woman is introduced as a 'helpmate' for the man (Gen 2:20), and one 'taken out of man' (Gen 2:23), 'bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh,' for whom man leaves his parents and lives with his wife. St. Peter describes women as "the weaker sex" (1 Pet 3:7).

Yet this does not imply demeaning the status of women; hence, St. Peter appeals that this weakness be honoured. Man and woman are meant to complement each other. There should be no exploitative headship and leadership by the man (1 Cor 11:13, Eph 5:23) with the claim to dominant role, while the woman is relegated to the subservient role. To underscore the equality of the image and complementarity of man and woman, Stott (1990, p.262), while quoting . Yoder, noted that "equality of worth is not identity of role" (1. It means that together they complement each other.

Background to the Subordinate Role of Women to Men

As recorded in the Bible, the Jewish tradition maintained that God created the universe out of nothing in six days. In the second account, He fashioned the first man, Adam, from dust, and the first woman, Eve, from Adam's rib, and He gave them dominion over all things. The Islamic story of creation in Koran is generally similar. Allah is the creator and Adam is His viceroy on earth. Some Jews and Christians have held that the Biblical account of a single act of creation is not to be taken literally. Instead, it symbolizes the spiritual truth that all things come from one good God.

Many Muslims hold a view that is essentially similar. However, Mouiren, (1921) commenting on the importance and need of this biblical account of creation, states that:

The first verses of the Bible tell us the story of the creation. This is a reasonable point at which to begin any teaching, the beginning of the whole story, the “beginning” of time. There is nothing more logical than that. Yet, those verses are relatively late (1921, p. 30). It is an incontrovertible fact from the second creation account that in the Jewish society, women were considered inferior to men.

Some scholars like Philo of Alexandria, as well as Josephus, opined that the Old Testament supports the eminence of men over women in all spheres of leadership role. Women’s role was strictly secondary to men’s, inferior and subordinate rather than as complements and helpers of men. Accordingly, these scholars note that in the account of Genesis, it reads, “he shall rule over you” (Gen 1:28). For these scholars, the emphasis is on “he shall rule” *mashal* which is also used in the Bible to address the civil authority (Eccl 4:13).

Von- Rad (1961) also submits that Adam was created *bara* first. Accordingly, the author submits that Adam was created to have dominion, supremacy, leadership as well as authority over Eve. Nonetheless, Genesis 1:26-27 gives a contrary view to the above submission of the scholar. ‘God said, “let us make man in our own image and likeness.” “Man” as used here is in the generic sense; the word used for man here is “Adam” for mankind, and not ‘*ish*’ for male. Consequently, both male and female reflect God’s image (*imago Dei*) and likeness. There is no more or less of this image found in either male or female.”

The text captures the fact that both men and women are created in the image of God, and therefore, they are partners in working out God’s purposes on earth. One should be cautious in drawing too many inferences from this text. However, there are, at least four points to note:

1. Humanity, as male and female, fully bears the image and likeness of God. The male is not more like God and the female less. Instead, as one, in partnership together, they are both needed to reflect the divine nature.
2. It is divine image imparted to humanity which distinguishes humanity from all other living things.

3. The male/female distinction is introduced primarily to affirm the power of procreation. Procreative ability distinguishes humanity from inanimate creation.

4. In the first creation account, there is no order of creation mentioned. Who comes, or who has priority is not the point of the text. The point is that humanity is the pinnacle of God's creation, different from all other living beings.

The implication drawn in Genesis 2 from the woman's being "taken out of man" is that of subordination and submission. The fact that woman comes from man (Gen 2:21) serves to highlight her likeness to him. This process of creation also serves to show how male and female belong together (Westermann, 1984, p. 60). They are of the same substance and flesh. That woman is taken from man's side entails the union of man and woman and signifies she is his companion and partner.

Admittedly, the working relationship between a man and woman should be that of mutual understanding. God gave the two sexes identical responsibilities, that is, to procreate, to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth. It is certainly correct to agree with Claus Westermann, (1984) who used "helper" *ezer*, as used in Genesis 2:18, to indicate that Eve was inferior to Adam. When referring to woman as a suitable helper, God is not positioning woman below man, nor is He implying that woman is secondary. Instead, it refers to the benevolent assistance of a stronger party to a weaker party. The idea is that one could not do without the other (Haubert, 1993 p. 14). The term 'helper' is significant because it does not carry with it the idea of submission. F. Delitzsch (1980, p.89) translates "help" as a "help of his like" and Speiser (1964, p.17) as "alongside", "corresponding to". Accordingly, being a suitable help shows that woman is a helper who is equal to man. There is no hint of a subservient role in this description of woman. Hence, these arguments support the fact that women cannot be overlooked in the service of God and humanity.

Importance and Relevance of Women in the Jewish Society

From the Old Testament narratives, men as well as women are partners in working out God's purpose on earth. Accordingly, in marriage (Gen 1:24), we read that man must leave his house and cleave to his wife and they will become one flesh. Similarly, in God's dealing with the

nation of Israel, several covenants were made with the people, demanding their faithfulness and complete obedience. The covenant God made with them involved both genders (Deut 29: 1-11).

Usually, scholars noticed the role played by some important women in the Old Testament. For instance, Olajubu (1991, p.49) reiterates the leadership roles of women in her article titled: "Christian Women Leaders in Contemporary Nigerian Church Polity: The Challenges." Olajubu maintains that women ministered at the tabernacle door (Exod 8:8; 1 Sam 2:22); they offered sacrifices (1 Sam 2:19; Lev 15:19-30); they could become Nazirites devoted to God; prophetesses, wise women, judges. Alana(1992, p.93) does not only recognize the leadership roles of women, but in fact, concludes that Paul's injunction does not find antecedent in the Old Testament . In the same vein, Ogunkunle, (2003) subscribes to the fact that "there were women prophetess who had prophetic gifts, and the gift of prophecy was equally exercised in the early church by various Christians irrespective of sex" (Ogunkunle, 2003, pp. 60-61).

Undoubtedly, the Old Testament seems to emphasize more the leadership or headship of men than that of women, especially in priesthood. The Nazirite vow in the Old Testament was an act of appointment and consecration or commissioning of persons to the service of God. In the Nazirite vow a person was separated and consecrated to Yahweh. The Lord gave this commandment to Moses:

Speak to the Israelites and say to them, when either man or woman make a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite to separate themselves from wine and strong drink. They will drink no wine or vinegar and will not drink any grape juice or eat grape, fresh or dry (Num 6:15).

The intention of the text is to emphasise that both male and female were allowed to participate in Nazirite vow making. Therefore, the Nazirite qualifications, described above, are the same qualifications required of male and female in their services to God.

Women's Contribution to the Nation Building of Israel

Good women in the Jewish society were usually known to exhibit such qualities as beauty, intelligence, silence, discipline, modesty, and diligence as housekeepers which are translated into the society. Hence, a thorough examination of the women's activities in Israel will show that some

were saddled with the religious, political, socio-economic and family development of Israel (Jegade, 2013, p. 210).

Religious Contribution

Some wisdom literature would depict a good wife as good fortune and a gift of Yahweh and a crown to her husband (Proverbs 18: 22; 19:14; 12:4) and her qualities include good works, practical assistance, charismatically inspired speech, and diligence as a housekeeper which are attributes needed in religion. Indeed, some women had a firm grasp and sound understanding of the law of Judaism. They were able to instruct their people from the Law of Moses. For instance, Deborah was known and understood God's divine purpose except through reading the Pentateuch:

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was leading Israel at that time. She held court under the palm of Deborah...and the Israelites come to her to have their disputes decided. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam...and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you... (Judges 4:4-6).

A closer examination of the text shows that Deborah was a prophetess and manifestly spoke for God, passing commands to others. She instilled faith in the lives of people around her. The contagious effect of her faith was very visible in the lives of her people especially when faced with oppression from Jabin, the king of Canaan.

Political Contribution

In Jewish history, at times, the nation had to grapple with external attacks from the surrounding nations. During the time of Deborah, it was an era of successive foreign oppression. It was a time of menacing enemies in the land of Palestine like Jabin, king of Canaan with the able assistant of his commander Sisera, were able to dominate Israel for twenty years. Accordingly, Deborah operated as a Judge in this situation of chaos and anarchy in Israel. Wood (1970, p.204) states that foreign oppressors were used by God as instruments of punishment. The Israelites were warned before: "You shall not walk in their status; you shall do my ordinances...and walk in them...by so doing shall a man live" (Lev 18: 3-5). They displeased God by falling short of this injunction. Many of them adopted the Canaanites' religious practices owing to its attraction for prosperous agricultural yields. Although Deborah's behaviour was contrary to what some men

expected; yet we cannot ignore the positive reactions brought to her people. Under her leadership, the Israelites were delivered from twenty years of oppression from their enemies, and they enjoyed forty years of peace following her political contribution (Jegade, 2013, p. 212).

Socio-economic Contribution

Women contributed to the socio-economic development of their time since their work was long and hard. They engaged in milling, baking, procuring fuel and water, spinning, weaving, sewing, above all, they also take care of the house. In nomadic life, they engaged in the care and pitching of the tent as well as its manufacture (which contributed economically to the family), and also the care of children. McKenzie, (1996) avers that “The responsibilities of Hebrew woman, however, were partly compensated by the freedom of movement which they enjoyed within the community, whether she was a wife or an unmarried daughter (Gen 24:13 ff; Exod 2:16; Deut 12:12; Judges 21:21; 2 Sam 6), [1996, 936].

Nonetheless, the tendency to discriminate against women was so rampant in the Jewish society where women existed. Granted that within the household, the woman had a happy and respected position, but outside that she had an unfavourable position as rabbinic regulations stipulated that women were expected to play second fiddle to their men folk. They were not able to take part in public life. Daughters were second to sons and were totally dependent on their fathers till they are married. Legally, the woman was ill-privileged. She could not be taught the Torah. In the words of Oepke (1972), the wish of some rabbis was that “the words of the Torah be burnt, they should not be handed over to women, and the man who teaches his daughters the Torah teaches her extravagance” (1972, p. 777). It means that education was not made available to women or girls. Accordingly, “males were taught to thank God daily that they were male. Boys were regarded as a sign of God’s favour. Men avoided speaking to women in public, because of the tradition that a woman’s voice was sexual enticement”, (Richard and Boldrey, 1976, p.72). Nevertheless, some women like Deborah’s behaviour and activities defied the order of her time. She was not only educated but she also had sound knowledge and understanding of the Torah, without which she would not have been able to teach her people the Pentateuch. Again, she

publicly offered herself for service. According to the Book of Judges, we understand that many people followed the road to the Palm tree where Deborah dispensed righteous justice and gave directions to the lives of her people.

Family Contribution

As the family is the first society in which the child finds himself/herself, one's upbringing starts at the family level. A virtuous woman is a woman of strength. Though weaker vessel, as Jewish society established; yet she is made strong by wisdom and grace, and the fear of God. It is the same word that is used in the character of good judges (Exod 18:21), that they are able men, men qualified for the business to which they are called, men of truth, fearing God. A virtuous woman is a woman of resolution who, having espoused good principles, holds firmly and steadily to them, and will not be frightened with winds and clouds from any part of her duty. In Judaism, the virtuous woman as exemplified in Proverbs 31, enhanced and upheld family values.

Undisputedly, quarrels, misunderstandings, and disputes are bound to come especially from in-laws. Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:16-17) show a paradigm for relationship in contemporary family life. Ruth and Naomi, strong and resourceful women, whose mutual love enabled them to survive in a dire situation offer insight that can be appropriate for women relationship in marriage. Self-giving in friendship catapulted Ruth into fame and etched her name permanently in Israel's history. Ruth is mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus as the grandmother of Israel's greatest king, David (Matt 1:5). Often, the relationship between mothers-and-daughters-in-law is described in less than positive terms and has made some women to approach marital state with fear and trembling. Nonetheless, positive images of relationship between in-laws, which can be appropriated for contemporary family life, abound in the narrative of Ruth and Naomi (Mbonu, 2019, p. 99). On a positive relationship within a family is a great contribution for life-giving in the service of the family. The book of Ruth remains a challenge to modern women, particularly female in-laws, in forging enduring constructive relationships in the contemporary family life.

Lessons for Christian Women in Nigeria

In the light of the above concerning the role of women, it is appropriate to note some achievements of women, in spite of the patriarchy of the Old Testament era. Accordingly, the Christian women in Nigeria can chart a new way forward for themselves in spite of discrimination, subordination and relegation. This can be realized when women jettison their passivity as mere observers and passive participants in the daily activities of their immediate churches and the society at large.

Today, women's leadership role in the church, politics and socio-economy is generally improving. Women find solace in a society where they are appreciated and not side-tracked because of their sex. In the religious sphere, women are in the majority in church attendance in most Christian churches. But they need a lot of encouragement from their male counterparts. Male counterparts in Nigeria should not view the Christian women as "opportunists", or as a people who have nothing else to do but who choose ministry as an easy alternative. Nonetheless, Nigerian women should draw inspiration and moral strength from the lifestyle of some notable women of Old Testament era to leave their footprints on the sand of time.

The importance and roles of women in the family as well as in the society cannot be ignored. They are key life-wires in the home and the society. Their influence is a vital contribution to the actual picture she wants her home to be, which invariably affects the society. The virtues in the woman in Proverbs 31:10-33 which describe an ideal woman, if emulated by Christian women will in no small way benefit home, society, and the church.

Meanwhile, in socio-economy, more Nigerian Christian women are actively participating in the economic mainstream, at the professional, skilled, semi-skilled and non-skilled levels. Today, Nigerian society has witnessed such colossus like Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala, Dora Nkem Akunyili, Justice Aloma M. Murktar, among others as shining examples of performing women. Women can do more and should rise to their responsibilities, using their God-given talents. We need to support them.

In Nigeria, despite the fact that women are engaging in income generating activities such as crop farming, livestock rearing, petty trading, selling of agricultural products, selling of cooked

foods or snacks, these financial activities were tagged “petty trading.” Granted that those who occupy what seems to be the higher echelons of social, economic and educational attainment and thus hold job in academia, police, military, para-military, etc have not established themselves. This is because they have not been given fuller opportunities to blossom (Jegade, 2013, p. 215).

Politically, the role of some women (like Deborah and Miriam) in leadership in Israel against the backdrop of Jewish patriarchy has significant lessons for the Christian women in Nigeria. The fact that some of them were able to break through the domineering patriarchal structure of their time should serve as a source of encouragement to Christian women in Nigeria.

Admittedly, women who went into politics often find that the political, public, cultural, and social environments are unfriendly or even hostile to them. A cursory glance at the current composition of political decision makers in the nation provides evidence that women still face numerous obstacles in articulating and shaping their interests. It must be stated clearly that often women’s ambition meets with stiff opposition, more especially from the male counterparts who believe that it is impossible for a woman to rule over them.

These women from the Jewish culture remained undaunted by the limitations imposed upon them by the patriarchal structure of Israel. They became the liberators of their people in a society dominated by men, thereby becoming a pacesetter for the Christian women in Nigeria. Women can equally work for a change in the society full of hunger, poverty, exploitation, and corruption. Women should always realise that their actions and inactions can make or mar their family and the society at large. Thus, some Israelites women liberated their people from oppressive rule and charted a new course for their nation building. After all, no nation with a goal for democracy can afford to have as her citizens passive, dormant, indifferent, ignorant, and idle subjects. No wonder, the under-current working principle for an average American is “Think not what America can do for you, but what you can do for America.” The members of the democratic society must be citizens and the ideal of citizenship can only be achieved if and only if everyone is armed with the requisite knowledge of the nature and functions of the state working of the democratic machinery. Effective political participation and the possibility of achieving a

democratic nation imply that everybody must participate in process of ensuring that good governance is enthroned and maintained. It is not men's affair only. It is a collective responsibility thrown upon everyone to ensure that social regeneration is achieved in the society.

Practical Recommendations on the Way Forward

If some women in the Old Testament era were effectively allowed to achieve the desired result, the Nigerian Christian women can equally compliment their male counterparts, if properly motivated in all spheres of human endeavour. Against this background, the writer would recommend that for the Christian women in Nigeria to have a fair level playing ground like their male counterparts, the church and the society at large must embrace the following principles:

Firstly, there must be equal opportunities for them to perform and exhibit their God-given talents, they must be elevated from the shackles of traditional view that places women at the background to a position of equality with men both in the church leadership and the society. Increasing the number of women in leadership positions will be of great importance to the church and the society. It will diversify the leadership style. Diversity, in terms of leadership styles, makes structures and its institutions more effective. Effective leadership is the one that equally combines masculine and feminine qualities. As more women enter leadership positions, they enrich the church and the society with interpersonal and communication skills. In the Catholic Church, for instance, women must be included in all ministries whenever possible, as they will bring their feminine touch to the liturgical celebrations.

The possibility of the lay faithful (women included) to address the congregation in the Church is already recommended by the reformed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council after the Post-Communion Prayer. In that regard, lay scholars, religious experts and theologians like Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA), Nairobi, Kenya and Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt, Nigeria, students (theologians) could also be used in our parishes, institutions and chaplaincies to complement on the homilies/sermons on Sundays during some important celebrations like the Mothering Sunday or the feast of St. Joseph the husband of the

Blessed Virgin Mary. They will bring in their lay (women in this context) perspective to embellish what the priest has already given in the homily.

Secondly, the church and the society should put aside male chauvinistic tendencies and embrace the principle of mutuality since male and female are partners in working out God's purpose on earth. It would be an act of injustice to deny women the right to fully participate when occasion demands for it. They should not be condemned if and when there are lapses in their performances. Undoubtedly, the dignity and vocation of women are silent but very powerful elements in building up the church and the society. Women have a great capacity to love and give themselves selflessly without counting the cost. They demonstrate high enthusiasm towards the growth of anything entrusted to them by exhibiting multi-purpose tasks with great potentials for implanting deeply the seeds of motherly instinct. Consequently, women can become a veritable instrument to the development of the church and society. They can promote, support and preserve certain devotions and traditions. Women are pillars of faith in the church. They can serve as agents of some Christian virtues and societal values through their behaviours and acts.

Thirdly, we must work toward eliminating all sexist, non-inclusive language from our readings, documents, hymn books and educational curriculum. The leaders of the Church must always be conscious of the fact that the congregation is made up of both male and female. Anything that smacks of debasing the image of women as an inferior sex should be eschewed. The language and liturgical expressions in the prayer texts and hymns ought to reflect the reality that both women and men are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26). The good news is that the text of the New Order of Mass in the Roman Catholic Missal has taken care of these deficiencies; thus, we see expressions like 'Brethren' (Brothers and Sisters). The ministers of the Church must think along this observation even in their use of the vernacular expressions and songs.

Fourthly, there should be massive and aggressive enlightenment campaign on the participatory role of women to participate actively in the church and society. More women should be encouraged to join the leadership role in the church and community (as catechists, announcers,

security outfits, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, overseers of parishes, sacristans, local government councillors/chairpersons, governors, state and federal legislatures and others) to make their quota in the integral development of the church and nation. Accordingly, we suggest that women should be involved in the decision-making bodies of the church and state. But for harmony and order to abide, the womenfolk must aspire to work in close collaboration with the pastors, priests, and others responsible for the planning of its several parts to prepare and direct them.

Finally, the emphasis of the Beijing Conference in China was to lay emphasis on women emancipation and empowerment. This should be thoroughly implemented. Thuggery in Nigerian politics should be discouraged to motivate women participation, thereby creating an enabling environment for their involvement and participation. Those who participate in the political spheres must treat women as fellow compatriots in nation building. As such, those who lead in the church and the society must always have their interest and values at heart.

Conclusion

Our discussion above shows that the Old Testament bears witness to the importance and relevance of women in the society. We are one church and society of equal disciples unlike George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, where some animals are more equal than others. Also, women must rise and actively, fruitfully, and knowingly participate in the church and the society. Indeed, women should recognize their important role as stakeholders. Mark you, the paper is not advocating for competition or a war of attrition between both sexes leading to undue struggle for power and prominence but complementarity to the task of building up the church and state better in our time. The church and the society need to blend both female and male attributes in its leadership structures and institutions.

Having come thus far with the understanding of the role of women in the Old Testament, there is no sitting on the fence or be counted among the bystanders. All should put hands on deck for the fruitful and positive contribution of all and sundry especially the womenfolk to the church and the society. When we decide to be involved and committed in being disciples and living the

gospel values, the transformation of the society for God and the future of our children will be realised. Both sexes must work together, contributing their quota accordingly. A situation of male dominance places the women at disadvantage. Nigeria must let go of traditional notion of male dominance since nothing would change until men re-assess their traditional concept of masculinity to reap the benefits of the role of women as exemplified from the Old Testament era.

Recommendation for policy directions

A celebrated adage holds that “If you educate a woman, you have educated the nation.” Accordingly, better education will bring about improved status and further development for women. Women should be properly educated to face challenges that come their way in the church and the society. It has been observed that these cultural practices are thriving because women in turn do not know their rights. Educationally, the ignorance of their rights has impeded women participation. Ignorance, therefore, is the nest for hashing all forms of inequality especially which involves women participation in the economic, political and social development of self and the community. Education of the women comes to the fore if women are to participate in affairs of their lives and the development of the community. Education is a veritable strategy for the development of women. Education is the key to unlocking the potentials of all individuals, communities and societies. Education is a process of instilling, shaping and modifying the attitude, habits and behaviours of an individual for proper adjustments in the society. Thus, there should be law that every one must have access to education.

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