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FEMINISM IN PAULINE THEOLOGY
VIS-A-VIS THE
NIGERIAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN

An Essay Presented
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by

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ABSTRACT OF THE ARGUMENT

The writer has sought in this thesis to examine an eternal partnership of sexes as the Christian ideal for all times. The study therefore, shows how this ideal may be adequately achieved in the Church of Christ.

The bottom line of the study is that, the Nigerian Christian woman, as the man's equal spiritually, should share with him in all aspects of the church's life and mission. In other words, that she should have full access to the privileges and responsibilities of the Christian ministry. For ". . . in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27b).

For the purpose of clarity in the study and for the avoidance of ambiguity, the key terms used were defined. The purpose, significance, and the methodology of the essay were also examined.

In order to give a relevant background to the issue at stake, a presentation of the African Traditional Religion was made with a view to determining the role(s) and status ascribed to female worshippers and devotees which either enhance or relegate their womanhood.

Similarly, a biblical perspective of the role women play in Judeo-Christianity is presented with the aim of seeing the exemplary role-model women in the Bible played.

Thereupon, the study uses Apostle Paul's diverse experiences in I Corinthians and Galatians as looking glasses

through which an active uninhibited Christian participation of the Nigerian women is advocated as sacred joint responsibilities with their male counterparts.

CONCLUSION

A. CURRENT TRENDS IN NIGERIAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN

In this concluding chapter, the efforts of the Nigerian Christian women in their involvement in church and related activities shall be critically examined. This examination shall be made against the backdrop of feminism in Pauline teaching. The exercise shall consider rather objectively the possibility or otherwise of the Nigerian Christian women to conform to the Pauline order on women.

B. WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ROLE IN NIGERIAN CHURCHES

1. The Mainline Churches

By the term mainline churches it is meant churches other than Roman Catholic which were founded primarily by the white missionaries. Examples include: Baptist, Anglican, Methodist, etc. A close examination of these churches in Nigeria will show that women have not been playing a second fiddle to their men counterparts. Women in most of these mainline churches form a respectable and formidable number of the congregation.

As a result, they do not sit at the back pews and watch with idle gazes, the men to control the affairs of the church. In many of the Nigerian Baptist churches

for instance, women of valour have always been parts and parcels of the local church yearly officers.

Women have performed creditably and they will continue to perform in all of the offices in the local church. Women have served as Sunday school superintendents, Sunday school teachers and Women Missionary Union presidents.

There are numerous women who have been elected as deaconesses, especially in Baptist churches. In all of the offices they hold women have not been found wanting, not even as a result of their feminism.

But the issue of women ordination has remained a thorn in the flesh of most of the Nigerian mainline churches, for example the Nigerian Baptist Convention.¹

2. The Nigerian Emerging Churches

By the Nigerian emerging churches in this essay, it is meant churches founded and established primarily by the pioneer efforts of the indigenous Christians themselves. Examples include: Christ Apostolic Church (C.A.C.), The Apostolic Church, Cherubim and Seraphim Church, the Assembly of God Church, Foursquare, and a host of others. In most of these pentecostal churches, women's issue as officers or ordained leaders has not been a matter of controversy.

Women along with their men counterparts, have been elected, appointed, and ordained as the case may be into positions of leadership in their various pentecostal churches. "The Power Pentecostal Church yesterday in

¹"Women Ordination," in Nigerian Baptist Convention Book of Reports, 19 , p.

Lagos recorded Rev. Dr. Margaret Bola Odeleke Salau as the first female bishop in the country."²

Judging from this writer's personal experience and knowledge of the pentecostal churches in the country, it will certainly not be an over-statement to say that there are as many female church officers as there are males in those churches.

C. THE ORDINATION OF WOMEN: VARIOUS VIEWS

There have been numerous controversies on whether or not women should be ordained in the mainline churches in Nigeria, including churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention.

Among the Southern Baptists for instance, ordination of women has met with stiff resistance. The issue was kicked against in 1983.

An advocate of ordination of women, J. A. Clauten declared that between 1983 and 1988, the number of ordained women has risen to 500.³ in the Southern Baptist Convention. The ordination of women is also creating ripples among the Anglican Communion of Britain. It is being received with mixed feelings.⁴

²Sunday Sketch (Ibadan), 30 July 1995, p. 3.

³J. A. Clauten, "Why I Believe Southern Baptist Churches Should Ordain Women," Baptist History and Heritage, Vol. 22, July 1988, p. 50.

⁴"A Critical Evaluation of Ordination of Women," Paper Presented by RCT 442 Class to Rev. Safo Oladejo, Ogbomoso: Baptist Seminary, 1995, p. 8.

