



Christianity, Women and the Nigerian Commonwealth

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Abstract

It is obvious in Nigeria that Nigeria's economy has since its inception been under siege and under control by a few rich Nigerians who find themselves in governance and in positions of power. This set of opportunists have for years cornered the Nigerian commonwealth for purposes of enriching themselves. Consequently, majority of Nigerians now suffer hunger, deprivation and discrimination. In particular the women gender, who are often than not seen by society as not being good enough to man major positions of power and governance, seem to be the worst-hit victims in the sharing of the country's commonwealth. Most scholars are of the opinion that ethnic sentiments lies at the centre and it is the rallying point in the distribution of the Nigerian commonwealth, this paper sees gender inequality as key. This, rather than be a service to Nigeria, the current paper argues that gender inequality regarding the sharing of Nigeria's commonwealth is instead, a disservice which is also counter-productive to the development of the country as a whole. From the findings of the paper, women are the ones who experience greater discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, oppression and all kinds of violence and deprivation. This implies that women hardly benefit if at all they do benefit from the commonwealth of Nigeria. The paper therefore, call attention to Christianity is a religion which can better guide Nigerians towards ensuring that all citizens, irrespective of ethnic origin, political class or gender, can benefit maximally from the nation's commonwealth. This, in the view of this paper, can be achieved through the religious tool of conceptualization. The methods used to gather material are qualitative and survey methods. The M.L.A. style of documentation is adopted throughout this paper.

Keywords: Commonwealth, gender inequality, discrimination, marginalization, oppression, exploitation, violence, conscientization, feminization of poverty, patriarchy, inheritance, colonialism.

Introduction

The quest for sustainable development, for peace and for mutual co-existence amongst ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, is indispensable if the nation's wealth must be properly harnessed and harmoniously shared for the speedy development of the nation. If any speedy development of Nigeria must be achieved, women must be seen as *bonafide* beneficiaries of the Nigerian common wealth. They must not be discriminated, oppressed or marginalized as it is the case with contemporary Nigeria. The dream of everyone is for Nigeria to be a society free from oppression, exploitation, and marginalization and from all forms of injustices. Senator Adesanya rightly declares, thus as his dream for Nigeria:

I have a dream of a nation where no man is oppressed, an egalitarian society, that is what we are working towards. We desire a nation, a true federal state where all the nationalities will have equal access to political power, where justice, equity and the rule of law operate... (qtd in Okoro 81).

But given the current realities in Nigeria, can this dream be actualized in Nigeria where there is currently no equal access to political power and no justice and equity in the distribution of the nation's wealth? Can Adesanya's dream quoted here be realized in a country like contemporary Nigeria where there is high level of gender discrimination? Clearly, the response is a resounding 'no'. Following from this, the current paper is set to answer the following questions: what is common wealth of Nigeria? What role do women play in the Nigerian economy? Do women have any significant role to play in the development of the Nigerian nation? Do women benefit from the wealth of the Nigerian nation and to what extent does this happen? What are the actual experiences of women in relation to the sharing

of Nigeria's commonwealth? With the recent fight against women oppression and contemporary struggle for women's liberation, it looks like religion, most precisely Christianity, has the best strategies for improving the lot of women not only in Nigeria but globally. Religion and Christianity in particular is seen as the hope of women due to the fact that Christianity has acted as a tool for the eradication of all forms of injustice against women, ranging from female genital mutilation, widowhood rites, oppressions, exploitations and other forms of violence.

The paper discusses the tools which Christianity adopts to achieve this for women. The Christian response is necessary because quite recently, the quest for resource control has been more vigorous than ever and the overt injustices inherent in the sharing of the national cake, and unfortunately women are the most affected in the society. For instance, women are denied the inheritance of property, land, houses and so on. If a man dies without a male child, his daughters cannot inherit his farmland, rather his brothers do. Apart from denied inheritance, women experience exploitation in the society, they are used to maintain the farms of their husband; they are used as baby making machines to produce enough children in the family. Women are used as campaign tools during political electioneering, they are regarded as people who do not have the capacity to vie for elections into positions that would have enabled them enjoy the national cake. Even some women who courageously come out for elective position are denied strong support needed for them to win. The guideline provided in the constitution on the issue of inheritance is ignored by the society, what is the hope of women? This and others are the issues this paper set to address.

Conceptual clarification

Common wealth of Nigeria

Originally, common wealth is an organization consisting of the United Kingdom and the countries that used to be part of the British colonies. It is used in the names of some groups of countries or states that have chosen to be politically linked with each other (Sally Wehmeier 291).

Commonwealth is a form of government named for the concept that everything that is not owned by specific individuals or groups are owned collectively by everyone in the society, government unit as opposed to a state when state itself own such things (Android English Software). The Nigerian common wealth therefore is the realization and awareness that the entire wealth of Nigeria which includes; land, mineral resources, oil wells, monies, should be jointly owned by all, irrespective of age, gender and ethnic diversities. A particular ethnic group should not have exclusive power over others, gender or sex should not be the criterion for the sharing of the wealth of the nation. My views and submissions are based on customary and traditions of the people.

Women and Economic Development in Nigeria

Economic development refers to the sustained concerted actions of policy makers and communities to promote the standard of living and economic, health of a specific area (Peter Burnell Retrieved 6/6/2012).The contributions of women to economic development in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Ekong argues that women are indispensable when it comes to economic development in Nigeria. According to her:

Women are the real engine driving the economy of this country and are the key to development and therefore crucial to the goal of sustainable development. In 1975 FAO reported that 70% of all the work in food processing and almost 100% of all domestic and household chores are performed by women (114).

Agbola is of the view that women are the operators of the economy and constitute a major arm of the labour force, and that Nigerian women are dynamic, industrious and resourceful (172). Ucheaga adds that, the activities of rural women in Nigeria is vital to the socio-economic survival of Nigeria as a nation. In their midst are farmers, food processors weavers and traders. The women who are traders undertake risks; they are seen in lorries or trucks, ignoring the dangers

of robbery, accidents and vehicle breakdown, transporting goods from one town to another. Through their effort basic commodities have been transported for consumption at various part of the country (332).

Eakin highlights that the domestic task women carry out daily ranging from cooking, taking care of babies, washing of dishes and clothes are all classified under economic development, according to him, if women as wives go on strike there would be disaster in the society (108). Esuku in an interview during my research points out that women in Cross River State are responsible for the transportation and distribution of food commodities in most part of the state. According to her view, women travel to the northern part of Nigeria to get commodities like: carrots, cabbage, lettuce, Irish potatoes and other similar products which are distributed to various partsof Cross River State. Women also process the best garri in the country which is distributed to other parts of the Nigerian society (personal interview 23/9/2018, Calabar).

Obono declares that, rural women present a great force which can be useful to the benefit and progress of the nation as they have exploited their environment for everybody's benefit and survival (140). According to Ukpong, women produce, process and market a large proportion of consumable food stuff in the state, women spend several hours of backbreaking labour in the farm, vegetable garden, yams, etc. (154). Nigeria is blessed not only with natural resources, but also with a workforce of immense economic potentials of which women form a greater percentage, especially the rural women. There is no doubt that Nigerian society in general is patriarchal and male dominated such that inspite of women's economic contributions, they are denied equitable access to land and other available resources that would have empowered them economically. The men are in-charge of the available resources, they control the farmlands and only give small portions for women to cultivate every year.

Women's Experiences in the Society

The African society generally is a man's world according to Mbon's observation. This implies that men rule and dominate every spheres

of life, while women are placed in subservient positions (10). In spite of the fact that women contribute to economic development they are subjected to negative experiences which this paper points out using the Yakurr society as a case.

i. Marginalization

This means to make someone feel as if he or she is not important and cannot influence decisions or events, to put people in a position in which they have no power (Hornby 901). Women in Nigerian generally experience marginalization in the home and the society. They are often excluded when it comes to taking crucial decisions in the family and the community they belong to, their opinion is never solicited for. James Bassey in an interview was asked why he takes decisions without consulting his wife declares “how can I consult with my wife before I take any decision, I am the head of the family” (Interviewed 14/8/2018, Ekorì) Mrs. Caroline Edet lamented in an interview how women are treated by their husbands and stated that as a wife she does not know the landed property own by her husband; she feels she is just a wife and nothing more than performing the role of precreation. When the community is about to take decisions, it is the men who are consulted, while the women are left out.

ii. Exploitation

An unfair treatment meted on someone, especially, to make money from his or her work without a commensurate benefit or reward (Hornby 515). It is taking advantage over someone, this are the experiences the rural African women go through in their societies. The farming and agricultural system in one are rural women are greatly exploited. They are used as labourers to maintain the farms owned by their husbands. Forde observes that the Yakurr men are polygynous due to the need for more women to work in their farms.

Plural marriage is an undoubted advantage in maintaining a large farm every year, for weeding the farm, cultivating secondary crops and carrying the yam harvest, and

also in the preparation of oil-palm products for sale (88).

He further notes that the portions are shared to the wives by their husband, and a wife who, for any reason is unable to carry out the farm work that falls to her always, finds help among her age mates or her kin (89). By this the strength of the woman is exploited to maintain the farm lands which they do not own.

Secondly, women are exploited through child bearing. They are used as baby-making machines since the men are interested in large household. "Plural marriage is also valued as a means of rearing a large number of children, and of increasing the strength of a man's 'patrilineage' and of his own prestige within it" (Forde, 89). In Africa generally the overall concern for reproduction puts the women into the role of a garden which loses its value gradually, and once it does not bear fruits, it has to be replaced. The Yakurr women are easily replaced by their husbands with younger women who are addressed as "Obandi" meaning – my delight. Forde notes, in later marriages men often take women who differ widely from them in age, and the general tendency is to marry young women, there is a particular inducement to take a second wife..." (89). Majority of the women in Yakurr society understand marriage as a means of procreation and labour, and not for companionship, and the women outlive their usefulness at older ages, younger wives are married to replace them. Thirdly, women are exploited politically, they are used as campaign tools, during general elections because they are financially dependent on their husbands they do not have the resources to enable them via for election positions. The educated women on the other hand do not have access to the old boy's network or godfather's who help the men to access political positions. Women within child bearing age are limited from competing favourably with the men in the field of politics, academic, religion, etc.

Most people feel that women's roles should be limited to campaigning for the men. Thus, all they need are food condiments like; some few cups of rice, few tins of tomatoes, some cubes of

maggie, salts and sometimes wrappers or T-shirts. These items are used to induce them, and divert their attention from the interest of contesting for political positions. It is difficult for women to have a share in the national cake, except a few privileged, women, and power rotates around them. One cannot deny the fact that, the wealth of Nigeria is controlled within the political spheres, women are therefore excluded in the sharing of wealth due to their near-non representations.

iii. Discrimination

This is the practice of treating someone or a particular group in the society less fairly than others (Hornby 417). African society generally sees women as less important in the society; women are regarded as number two in the society. The experiences of discrimination start from birth, where preference is given to male children over female children. This belief is common in the society, so strongly that the births of male children are celebrated more than the birth of female children, especially in situations where there are other female children in the family. Chief Okoi Williams was asked how he would have felt without a male child and he commented that, “a man can be fulfilled without a female child, whereas, it is not the case if he does not have a male child because the male child bears his name and inherit his property” (interviewed 14/8/2018, Ekori). In most cases, female children do not have access to higher education due to mean resources available to the family. This discrimination affects the upbringing of female children; they are discriminated as girls and as wives. Thus, a woman experiences discrimination from birth to adulthood, and even when her husband dies she has no right to her inheritance.

iv. Denied inheritance

Inheritance is the act of receiving something passed-down from one’s parents. It is ownership by virtue of birthright, right to inherit (www.yourdictionary.com/inheritance. Retrieved 26 Aug., 2018). There is a gross inequality between men and women when comes to inheritance which directly have its roots in gender inequality in African traditional society, and Yakurr in particular.

The society perceives a woman as someone without a permanent place in her father's house and thus, transitional being that will sooner or later be taken to a different and new home when she is married. This is why daughters do not share inheritance with sons in the family. Wives do not inherit farm lands belonging to their husbands. Etim Bassey in an interview was asked why women are denied inheritance; his response was that inheritance is exclusively reserve for men, not women, for they are passengers who are waiting for the vehicle of marriage to take them" (Personal interview, 5th September, 2018, Afrikpe).

Consequently, women do not benefit from the wealth of the family and the community at large. In Yakurr a widow has no right to inherit her husband's wealth according to the position of Chief Okoi Williams in an interview. According to him, at death a man's brother inherits his wealth and takes responsibility of the man's children. His late brother's wife is given with just a little portion of farm land to sustain herself every farming season (Personal Interview, 5th September, 2018, Ugep).

Factors responsible for women's limitations

There are several factors responsible for the negative experiences of women in African societies. This paper will discuss a few of them.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the systematic structures that institutionalise male physical, social and economic power over women (Reeves and Baden 28). Patriarchy has some implications for women's status in the society, one of such implications is that, it restricts their access to material resources. While inheritance laws favour the male offspring, the females are not favoured in any way. It reinforces the social norm which discriminates against women in the public and private domain. It institutes a social norm which puts economic and social advantage on male children and therefore institutes the culture of a general preference for male children over female children

Patriarchy prevails so strongly in African societies, such that, the society is seen as a man's world in spite of the fact that women

liberation movements have brought a lot of changes in the society. Mbon further observes, “the world is still to a greater extent a man’s world in the sense that woman’s position in the society is still largely subservient” (10). The men feel they own the world, consequently, the land and other resource are exclusively reserved for the men to determine what to do with them. Patriarchy, thus, has serious limitations on women in African society. Patriarchy is a social norm which reinforces social inequality across age grade and gender groups.

The impact of colonial heritage/internal colonialism/neo-colonialism

Colonialism is a situation where a powerful country controls another country economically, politically and socially. Nigeria was subjected to colonial rule by the British government as far back as the 18th century, colonialism introduced capitalism with its concomitant values of private property and the exploiter and exploited classes (Orugbani 115). The experiences of oppression, marginalization, discrimination and exploitation in Nigerian society are directly as a result of the past negative and destructive effects of European colonialism. Nigeria is still undergoing a painful experience of colonialism which is known as internal colonialism (the ceasing of power and political domination by the local powerful few in the country). “A small group of rich and powerful few Nigerians hold its power and wealth at the expense of the misery billions the population (Uchegbue 4)”. Women were the most affected by western colonialism as Orugbani rightly points. “Colonial rule did not improve the status of women. In some respect their status or position worsened... It was colonialism which introduced capitalism together with its concomitant values of private property, hence, the exploiter and the exploited classes” (119).

Women belong to the category of the exploited class, this is why they experience exploitations at all levels, since Nigeria still operate a capitalist economic system which allows the rich to get richer and the poor, poorer. Ekong supports Orugbani’s position and states that, the earlier contact with the colonial work system put men in an advantageous position to acquire all the relevant skills to manage the wealth of the nation than women (114). Eme shares his views on the effects of internal colonialism as follows:

In contemporary Nigeria, the capitalist system, urbanization and individualism have displaced the communalistic way of living. Today, most Nigerians hardly share their wealth with their extended relations and brethren. If one is poor, he would remain poor without any reliable helper (66).

The negative effect of internal colonialism in Nigeria lingers on and it has created an obstacle to women's development and makes it difficult for them to compete favourably with the men.

Gender inequality

Gender inequality is defined as a social order in which women and men, masculine and feminine genders are not given equal opportunities in the society. Women experience constraint of full participation in both the public and domestic spheres (Lotte Beilyn 28).

Gender inequality manifest a hierarchical gender relations, with men, above women, and women being regarded as inferior and less valuable solely by virtue of their sex (Miles and Mikkola 6). According to them, this hierarchy is manifested in family relationships, inheritance laws and customs, valuation of women's work, the power to make decisions in the society, the family work place and so on. Uchem observes that gender inequality exist in the society through the unequal treatment given to the masculine and feminine genders. According to her, men and women, masculine and feminine are treated differently. The society sees the males as number "one" and females as number "two" (50-51).

Critically analyzing the definitions from the different scholars, gender inequality can be defined as the judgement, conclusion and awareness in a given society that the masculine gender and the feminine gender are not created with equal potentials. The masculine gender is created to rule and dominate, while the feminine gender is created to serve, the family and the society. Men regarded as

masculine, have advantage over women in all spheres of life. Thus, women are denied inheritance, discriminated against marginalized, oppressed and exploited. In the Nigeria society, especially Yakurr in Cross River State, gender inequality prevails so strongly that it manifest in male superiority and female inferiority. This results to the preference for male children over inheritance of property. It denies women access to resources like: land, houses, and other economic benefits.

Masculinization of Property

Masculinization of property is dominantly African in origin. It is a concept or term whose root stems from the word masculinity, which means “male”. Impliedly, the concept of masculinization of property therefore refers to the ownership of property of various types to the men as their exclusive rights. It is the men that own landed property, they are owners of businesses and captains of industries at the expense of the women. Amongst the Igbo people of the South Eastern Nigeria and the Yakurr people of Cross River State, the ownership of property remains the right of the man. Emeka Obioha highlights the situation of masculinization of property amongst the Igbo people as follows:

The problem in the most parochial society including the Igbos of South East Nigeria has been the unequal positioning of male and female offsprings to inheritance. While the males are regarded as heirs and apparent successor to economic and social owners, the right of females in this regard is relegated to the background. (www.reserachgate.net.retrieved 28/1/2019).

The female children are mostly denied any inheritance for being a sex other than a male. This is one major injustice the female child suffers from the sharing of the inheritance of the one who is rightly and naturally her father. The qualification of the male offspring over the female offspring to the right of inheritance of the property of a deceased father is a prominent customary feature amongst the Yakurr people of Cross River in the South-South Nigeria. The fortunes of a

male can change automatically against that of his sister after taking possession of his deceased father's assets, his birth position notwithstanding. Chief Williams Okoi speaking in an interview with us on why Yakurr people do not reserve inheritance to their female children has this to say;

The one who succeeds the father is the son. The female child will be married afterwards and will bear another man's name and will share in what her husband has. It will be injustice to the boy who only has what his father has to share with his sister who is married out of the family. Besides, it is the male child that carries on the name of the family that's all (interview, 11/8/2018, Ekori).

When he was further asked that such practice is faulty since a child is a child whether male or female. He simply dismissed us and declares; "You cannot fault our ancestors, have you ever seen a woman celebrating '*Ledu*', it is only men who do that". Amongst the Yakurr people, it is men who celebrate '*Ledu*', this is the highest yam title of over four hundred sticks of yam according to Chief William Okoi. From the foregoing, it is obvious that inheritance rules among Yakurr people just like the Igbo people confers the right to inheriting the property of the deceased as well as ownership of property to the male offspring over the female offspring.

This development has far reaching consequences on the female children who also are denied the inheritance of their husband's property. In the event of the death of their husbands, women suffer abject poverty as a result in the midst of abundance. They also suffer mental breakdown in some cases as a result of the denial, they suffer from sharing of wealth. It is commonly believed in most African societies that a woman is her husband's property, thus, the widow is denied inheritance because a bride price was paid on her head. Catherine Onyemelukwe has this to say; "The widowed woman cannot take possession of her late husband's land or belongings. 'How can a property inherit another property?'" (catherineonyelukwe.com/

publications, retrieved 24/1/2019). In spite of the development and breakthroughs currently seen over the world and Nigeria in particular, these practices still goes on in most African societies resulting in the impoverishment of women while the men prosper and swim in wealth and affluence.

Feminization of poverty

Feminization of poverty is awareness that poverty is an identity of feminism. "It means poverty is synonymous with feminism" (Eteng 74). Ruether observes that, poverty affects women more than men, women fall victims of the system of global impoverishment of the majority of the people in a given society. The International promotion of agriculture goes entirely to male farmers with large expense of lands, who are able to make use of the seeds, fertilizers and machinery from international agro-businesses (Qtd in Eteng 74-75).

The concept of feminization of poverty is an ideology, a belief system which has helped to place women as poor people in Nigeria due to their lack of economic power. The average Nigerian society believes that women are dependent and thus, cannot control wealth, neither are they given access to it.

"The relegation of women to lower paying employment sectors long accepted as more suited to women's feminine characteristics (such as teaching, nursing of babies, cleaning, cooking and typing) has contributed to women's disproportionate poverty in the society" (Calixte, Johnson and Motapanyane 16-17). It is difficult for a woman who spends her entire life doing household jobs to enjoy the wealth of the nation. We all know that household is devalued and not included into the official national labour-based calculations such as the GDP.

The Position of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Inheritance and health Sharing

The traditional African society is governed by rules, customs and oral traditions which among the Igbos is called "*Omenala*" and among the Yakurr people is "*Kenai*". These rules overtly favour the males and encourage patriarchal dominance over the female folk. However

strong these customs may be, they are subject to the established laws of the land as enshrined in the constitution of that land. The constitution of every country supersedes the traditional law of every other society within that country.

For instance, in Nigeria, the Supreme Court invalidated an Igbo customary law denying female descendants the right to inheritance, unanimous judgement confirming the decisions of two lower courts, which declared unconstitutional an Igbo customary law of success excluding the female offspring from eligibility to inherit the property of their fathers. The case originated at the Lagos High Court, when Lazarus Ogbonna Ukeje, a member of the Igbo ethnic group died intestate in Lagos in 1981. Gladys Ada Ukeje, his daughter sued Lois Chituru Ukeje, the deceased wife and the plaintiff's step mother and Enyimnaya Lazarus Ukeje (the deceased son and the plaintiff's step brother) before the Lagos High Court, seeking to be included among the persons to administer her late father's estate. The two defendants having lost at both the high Court and the Appeal Court to grant the pleadings of Gladys Ada Ukeje based on the Constitutional Provisions in section 42:1,2, which states;

A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion, political opinion shall not by reason, only that he is a person be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of any, in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restriction, to which citizens of Nigeria, of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex,, religion or political opinion . . .No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of birth.

The Supreme Court therefore declared "No matter the circumstance of the birth of a female child she is entitled to an inheritance from her late father's estate". Consequently, the Igbo Customary law which

disentitles a female child from partaking in the sharing of her deceased father's estate is a breach of Section 42 (1) and (2) of the constitution, a fundamental rights guaranteed every Nigeria, irrespective of sex and religion. Mojeku-Chikezie is of the view that, customary laws are subject to the constitution. She notes further that a constitutional guarantee cannot be overridden by custom, where a custom does not conform to the constitution that must go. According to her, "There is a lot of mix-up and contradiction between the constitutional provisions and customary practices, as such it is not clear what is legal and what is not, and where one stops and the other begins" (157). It is the confusion that results to the discrepancies between the customary laws and the constitution. There, Christianity need to play her prophetic role by creating an awareness that can bring about transformation in the society, especially on the discrimination against women when it comes to inheritance.

A Christian Response/Conclusion

Christianity from its origin is a religion that has a liberating and prophetic role towards the transformation of the society. Iwe observes that throughout the history of the world, the dignity of women has suffered exploitation, humiliation, degradation and inhibitions because of prejudice in the society. However, Christianity among all other factors is the major force that, has always recognized the personality of women and the human values they present (171). Christianity can use the tool of conscientization to enlighten the society of the fact that women have the capacity to acquire wealth and manage it judiciously. Conscientization is a social educational programme aimed at creating socio-political awareness among the people for an eventual peaceful transformation of the structures of oppression (Uchegbue 219).

The church should educate the society that God did not create two different worlds (men and women's worlds). He created just one world and place both man and woman to rule, dominate and replenish it.

So God created man in His own image... male and female He created them. Then God blessed them and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth (Gen 1:27-28).

If this awareness is created in the society, women would not be marginalized when the wealth is being shared; they would not be denied the inheritance of their father's and husband's property. God's command is for both men and women to be fruitful and multiply. Secondly, the church should educate the society that salvation in Christ means that the description of women in Genesis chapter three verse sixteen takes a new shape in Galatian three verse twenty eight.

I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you (Gen 3:16) There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

Man and woman covenant partnership is to be perfectly fulfilled in the final renewal of God's original purpose for man. Everyone whether male or female has the potentials needed to harness the wealth of a given society if given the opportunity to do so. The Nigerian society cannot experience development if the wealth is cornered by a few men. The task of building the home rest on the woman who is the home manager; thus, if she has access to resources the job will be easier, and when the home is built, the entire society will stand to benefit.

Thirdly, the church should educate the society on the Biblical injunction that sees marriage as a medium of partnership and companionship. As soon as they are married, the man and his wife becomes one flesh, no longer two different personalities. "Therefore

shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). The law of marriage was established by God and it points to a unity of the two persons involved. This implies that a man and his wife should jointly own the property; it should not belong to the man alone.

Fourthly, if the church creates awareness in the society that children, irrespective of sex are gifts and rewards from God, and should be treated equally irrespective of sex, parents will understand that female children are also entitled to inheritance of property. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward (Psalm 127:3). If God rewards a man with children, and he deprive them access to inheritance because they are females, he is ungrateful to his creator.

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