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**Gender Equality in Gal 3:26-28 and its Implications for the 21st Century
Nigerian Women**

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ABSTRACT

Gender discourse has attracted global interest considering the place of women in politics, church, academics, education and the socio-economic sphere of life. This is because these endeavors are pillars that uphold any society as an act of governance. However, African men hold positions of power and in the house, they often hold the purse strings too. This is because African society is patriarchal where men feel they must control everything and always dominate. The objective of the paper was to x-ray the gender equality in the Bible and Nigerian society. Historical, sociological and exegetical methods were adopted and data were gathered through primary, (Bible) and secondary sources. This paper found out that the use of 'uĩhos', son, in Gal 3:26-28) is not a reference to gender distinguishing males from females. Rather, it includes all persons of either sex who enjoy the freedom of maturity in Christ as distinguished from the Jews' status under the Law of Moses. Again, the middle aorist second plural enedúsasthe expresses the truth that the baptized are clothed in Christ. They do not wear the garb of slaves, minors, foreigners, or inferior people; a woman is man's counterpart rather than his inferior. The paper recommended that equal access for women should not be taken as a Utopian dream.

Keyword: Gal 3:26-28, gender equality, fundamental rights, church, politics, academics.

Introduction

Gender discourse has attracted global interest considering the place of women in politics, church, academic and in the socio-economic spheres of life. Customary practices across Africa generally hold that the man is the head of the house and has absolute control in the decision-making process of the home. Nigeria too is a patriarchal society that reinforces a norm that views men as

leaders and women as followers.¹ In other words, Nigeria is a highly patriarchal society, where men dominate all spheres of women's lives. Women are in the subordinate and male children are preferred over the female.² The practice of bride price has led to the idea of ownership of the woman, the exchange of bride price being evidenced by a commercial transaction. The bride price is understood by many to symbolize the sale of the girl and ownership by her husband and family.³ This has contributed in no small measure to the repression of the aspirations of women, as permission would have to be taken from her 'owner' before she embarks on pursuing any endeavor in life. It is on record that many husbands have stopped their wives (properties) from working or seeking employment. That is why in most African settings, every time women try to challenge the status quo, to take up a 'man's role' they are accused of being stubborn, insubordinate and unwomanly. Men who support this 'insubordination' are thought to be unmanly or even bewitched.

Still, the 21st century has seen more and more women becoming educated and therefore more independent and patriarchal African society is threatened by this turn of events. Men are fighting hard to keep women 'in their place.' This gender disparity was based on cultural beliefs, economic conditions, the distance of the school from home and child labor. The current wave of globalization has greatly improved the lives of women worldwide, particularly the lives of women in the developing world. Nevertheless, women remain disadvantaged in many areas of life, including church ministry, politics, education, employment, health, and civil rights. Hence, this paper offers an overview of gender equality in the Bible and its benefits to women, families and the contemporary Nigerian society as a whole. It highlights the ongoing concerns about women's marginalization in Nigeria and the efforts of government and non-governmental organizations to bridge the gap. Historical, sociological and exegetical methods were adopted in the paper, and data were gathered through a primary source which is the Bible and secondary source.

Introduction to Galatians 3:26-28

The entire passage of Gal 3:23-29 centers on being "in Christ" and the status obtained through being in Christ. In the first phrase of verse 26, the apostle compares the condition under the law and the condition reached through faith in Christ. He then goes on to discuss how this status is given. Through baptism, the believer is one with Christ. The theme of this passage may be stated as follows: Faith in Christ makes possible the original relationship which God intended

¹ J. Belknap, and H. Porter, "Intimate Partner Abuse." In *Rethinking Gender, Crime, and Justice*, ed. C. Renzetti, L. Goodstein, & S. L. Miller. (California: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2006).

² World Bank, *Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal Year 2007-2010)*, (Washington DC., 2005).

³ I. Eze-Annaba, *Domestic Violence and Legal Reforms in Nigeria: Prospects and Challenges*, (London: Berkeley Electronic Press, 2006)

in the creation of the human race.⁴ Furthermore, the historical context of Galatians 3:28 is the false teaching of the Judaizers concerning the nature of salvation; the issue thus is how to be saved. The Judaizers were teaching the necessity of circumcision for Gentile converts. Galatians is written mainly to deny such a necessity: Gentiles do not have to be circumcised to be saved. According to Betz, scholars view the Epistle to the Galatians as a first systematic apology of Christianity. As such, it is not directed to outsiders but rather to Christians themselves. In it Paul defends "the truth of the gospel." He further adds that the concept of "freedom" seems to best sum up their basic self-understanding. To them, this concept meant liberation from this evil world with its repressive social and cultural laws and conventions⁵. Consequently, they were opinionated toward the abolition of cultural and social distinctions between Greeks and non-Greeks, Jews and non-Jews, as well as the social system of slavery and the subordination of women. One can now infer from the text a biblical support that further strengthen gender equality. With this general picture in mind, the paper will now focus on the scholars' views on the passage.

Exegesis of Gal 3: 26-28

According to Aland, The Greek New Testament of Gal 3: 26-28 says:

26 Πάντες γάρ huioί Θεού este διά teés písteoos en Christoó Ieesoú 27 hósoi γάρ eis Christón ebaptístheete Christón enedúsasthe 28 Ouk éni Ioudaíos oudé Helleen ouk éni d oúlos oudé eleútheros ouk éni ársen kaí theélu pántes γάρ humeís heís este en Christoó Ieesoú.⁶

The same passage in the American Standard Version of the Bible (ASV) says: 26 For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. 28 There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye, all are one man in Christ Jesus.

The section of the letter in which the passage under discussion appears in the section on justification or freedom from the law. *gár*, in verse 26 may be understood as either explaining or confirming the statement of verse 25. The confirmatory use seems more natural here: "Yes, indeed" or "in fact."⁷ The second person *este* marks a shift in the subject from Old Testament believers (1st person plural in vv.23-25) to New Testament believers. Its subject is *pántes*, in emphatic position.

⁴ Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in the Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*, 141-42.

⁵ H. D, Betz, "In Defense of the Spirit: Paul's Letter to the Galatians as a Document of Early Christian Apologetics," in *Aspects of Religious Propaganda in Judaism and Early Christianity*, by Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1976), 99-114.

⁶ B. Aland, et.al., *The UBS Greek New Testament*, (Germany: Deutsche Biblegesellschaft, 2007), 555.

⁷ W.E. Vine, 'Gár' in *A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers* (McLean: MacDonald Publishing Company, 2001), 595.

"All" allows no distinction, such as the Law made and the Judaizers were demanding.⁸ "All" are *huioí tou Theou*. *Huioí* says more than *tekna* would. *Huioí* signifies sons of full age.⁹ Believers under the restriction of the Law were God's dear children, but they had been treated like minors under guardianship who could not order their lives in responsible freedom. Now that Christ has come, believers are all treated as mature heirs. They no longer require the disciplining of the Mosaic guardian. Just as the *pántes* includes Jews and non-Jews, so the *huioí* includes men and women. *Huioí* is not a reference to gender, distinguishing sons from daughters. Rather, it includes all persons of either sex who enjoy the freedom of maturity in Christ as distinguished from the Jews' status under the Law of Moses.¹⁰ Although the *pántes* [refers to Galatian Christians] includes every kind of people [Jew, non-Jew, men, and women]. Justification is universal but it is not universally apprehended. *Pántes huioí* are defined and narrowed by *diá teés pisteos en Christoó Ieesou* (through faith, in Christ Jesus). There is some disagreement among commentators and translators as to whether the "in Christ Jesus" modifies *pántes* (all you, who are in Christ Jesus) or *pisteos* (faith in Christ Jesus). In either, understanding the point here is that sonship with God is apprehended by faith. In the context of this epistle and Paul's argument, that means by faith alone because it excludes all legal considerations or qualifications.

Paul further adds *hósoi gár eis Christón ebaptítheete Christón enedúsasthe*. The *gár* is explanatory. Verse 27 explains the truth of the previous statement and restates it in a way that deepens the impression by stressing the objective blessing and result of baptism. *Hósoi ebaptítheete* further defines the *pántes* of verse 26. The "all" who are sons of God through faith are "as many as" have been baptized *eis Christón*. Whether *eis* is rendered "into" or "in" (for *eis* and *en* were becoming synonymous in Hellenistic Greek) does not affect the objective truth that the baptized have "put on Christ." Whether we understand the *eis* as "into union with" or "in the sphere of" Christ, the blessed truth is that in baptism we have "put on Christ."¹¹ In other words, when a person is baptized, he becomes so thoroughly identified with Christ that it is no longer he

⁸ Kenneth L. Barker, John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: New Testament abridged edition* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 727.

⁹ Biblesoft Inc., "*Huioí*" in *Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament*, Electronic Database, 2006

¹⁰ Verlyn. D. Verbrugge ed 'Huioí' in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* abridged edition, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 569.

¹¹ Verbrugge 'εις' in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 167.

who lives, but it is Christ who lives in him.¹² Thus men and women are indeed the sons and daughters of Christ.¹³

The middle aorist second plural *enedúsasthe* expresses the truth that the baptized are clothed in Christ.¹⁴ They do not wear the garb of slaves, minors, foreigners, or inferior people. They "wear" the Son of God and God regards them in that garb as His *huioí*. To put on Christ as a garment does not mean to imitate him. Rather it means to be seen as he is seen: holy, righteous, acceptable to God and beloved by the Father. In verse 27, in the context of this epistle, "You have put on Christ" really means, "You are justified." Verse 28 does not have a connective or presumptive particle, but it is related to and dependent upon the statements that precede it. It restates the truths of verses 26 and 27 as verse 27 had restated the truth of verse 26. It does so by drawing the practical conclusion: *Ouk éni Ioudaíos oudé Helleen ouk éni doúlos oudé eleútheros ouk éni ársen kaí theélu pántes gár humeís heís este en Christoó Ieesoú*.¹⁵ The modern grammars and lexica are generally agreed that *éni* is an abbreviated form of *énestin*, accent on the first syllable, not used as a copulative but to denote existence: "there is." The preposition *en* that is still there finds its object at the end of the sentence in *Christoó Ieesoú*. We could translate: "In Christ Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Again, the phrase "there is no male and female" is believed to have a bearing on the contemporary issue of gender equality of men and women in the church and state. This phrase seems to imply that from henceforth in the Christian church the sex distinctions between men and women have lost their significance.¹⁶ As Clark has pointed out, there are indeed many who understand this text in the sense that ideally in Christ there are no role differences between men and women. As compared with other texts in the Pauline writings that assert such a difference, Gal 3:28 is viewed as a "great breakthrough." Some, as Clark has observed, hold that this text is the locus classicus in Paul's teaching about the role of men and women in the church.¹⁷ This position is strongly disputed by those who are convinced that the passage under consideration does not

¹² Ragnor Bring, *Commentary on Galatians* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 180-181.

¹³ Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 141.

¹⁴ Vine, 'enedúsasthe' in *A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers*, 357.

¹⁵ Vine, 'enedúsasthe' in *A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words*, 357.

¹⁶ Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 195.

¹⁷ Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 138, 150, 688.

represent a major biblical statement on men's and women's roles.¹⁸ Other scholars, in search of the origin or life setting of our passage, have pointed to the relationship of our passage and the breakout opening of the Jewish morning prayers. In this context, the Jew gives thanks to God that he did not create him a Gentile, an ignorant person, a slave, or a woman.¹⁹ Some go so far as to suggest that Gal 3:28 is based upon that prayer.²⁰ On the other hand, analogous statements of gratitude are not unique with the Jews but are known among the ancient Greeks and Persians, for example.²¹ Consequently, one must seek to understand Paul's message within the context of his overall theological argument and based on a careful exegesis of the text as well as in the light of some key texts found in his other epistles.

Therefore, Paul is not saying that there should be no more racial or national distinctions in the world, no more slave-master relationships, no more recognition that God created male and female. He is saying that as God regards baptized believers in Christ Jesus, all have the status of *huioi*. All are children of Abraham. All are justified. Where the Mosaic Law made distinctions for disciplinary and tutelary purposes, the Gospel declares that in Christ those distinctions do not exist. He supports and explains his statement with *pántes gár humeís heís este en Christoó Ieesou* (for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus). Those who are included in the *pántes* (all) of verse 26 and the *hósoi* (as many) of verse 27 are not diverse and divided. They are no longer under the Law that emphasized and enforced divisions. They are *heís*, one person in Christ. That is how God regards them. Not law not works, not ancestral claims; but baptism and faith and Christ Jesus have constituted them as one. It is not simply *en*, one entity, but *heís*, one person. "It is as if it were always the same person reappearing before him."²² This passage shows that for in Christ Jesus all social stations, even those that were divinely ordained, are nothing. Male, female, slave, free, Jew, Gentile, king, subject - these are, of course, good creatures of God. But in Christ, that is, in the matter of salvation, they amount to nothing, for all their wisdom, righteousness, devotion, and authority."²³

¹⁸Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ*, 138, 150, 688.

¹⁹ David Kaufmann, "Das Alter der drei Benediktionen von Israel, vom Frelen and vom Mann," *MGWJ* 37 (1893), 14-18.

²⁰ J. J. Meuzelaar (*Der Leib des Messias: Eine exegetische Studie Über den Gedanken vom Leib Christi in den Paulus briefen* (Assen: Van Goreum, 1961), 84-85.

²¹ Betz, *Galatians*, 185.

²² Paul King Jewett, *Man As Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 37.

²³ Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today*, (College Press, 2002), 432-434.

Fundamental Human Rights and Women Participation in Nigeria

Fundamental human rights are usually defined as the absolute rights that a citizen of a country possesses that cannot, under the majority of circumstances, be taken from the citizen. Sometimes, the term is used more loosely with a suggestion that all people have basic or human rights to which they should be entitled. From a legal standpoint, these rights are mainly those stated in legal rulings or region laws, though sometimes certain rights are thought so basic they are inferred.²⁴ Every citizen of a state has several legal claims over the state he belongs to. It is these claims that are referred to as rights. A right is thus a privilege conferred by law upon a person or group of persons. Rights are claims, which citizens have over the state, and they are guaranteed, recognized and enforced by the state. Encyclopedia Britannica defines human rights as “Rights that belong to an individual or group of individuals as a consequence of being human”.²⁵ Umzurike states that human rights are “those rights which the international community recognizes as belonging to all individuals by every facet of their community”²⁶. Human rights are those rights that all human beings enjoy by simple virtue of their humanity, the deprivation of which would constitute a grave affront to one’s natural sense of justice. What is more, although the female gender factor is based on religious beliefs and cultural dependency of women on their husbands, it is worthy of note that a few women have come out as pace-setters in Nigeria both in church ministry, politics and in academics respectively. Each of these areas would be discussed below: first, women in the Church ministry

Women in the church ministry:

The basic foundation of the partnership of women and men in God’s creation and the Church and its ministry is given in the opening chapter of Genesis. Here are found two fundamental perspectives, which should inform our thinking about persons and mutual relationships. First, man (‘Adam), a generic term meaning the “human person,” is created in God’s very own image (Gen 1:26–27; 5:1–2). This creation in God’s image includes the identification of persons as male and female. This mutuality of women and men carries no suggestion of male headship or female submission. Second, this mutuality is confirmed by the fact that both the man and the woman together, without distinction, are charged with responsibility for all of God’s creation (Gen 1:26, 28). This equal partnership between man and woman is also present in the retelling of the creation story in Gen 2. Here the man is found in need of a companion, but none of the creatures God has created qualify (Gen 2:18–20). Thus, God differentiates man (‘Adam) into man (‘ish) and woman (‘ishshah), persons of separate male and female gender identity. The point of such a provision of companionship is to relate the male and female persons as equals, indicated by the common

²⁴ What are fundamental rights <http://www.wisegeek.org>. Accessed, 02/12/16.

²⁵ "Human Rights." *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009)

²⁶ U.O. Umzurike, *Introduction to International Law* (3rd ed.) (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 2005), 34.

designations ('ish/'ishshah; the same word root) and the common identity of bone and flesh (Gen 2:23). This is climaxed with the concept of mutuality expressed in the "one flesh" language (Gen 2:24).

The Book of Acts shows clearly that women were part of the first church in Jerusalem and were included as the church grew and spread. The group of 120 disciples (Acts 1:15) who waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit included women such as those previously mentioned in Luke as disciples who followed Jesus and Mary the mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14). That women continued as part of the growing church in Jerusalem is attested by Luke's comments that "more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to the number" (Acts 5:14), and that Saul, in his persecution of the Jerusalem church, "dragged off men and women and put them in prison" (Acts 8:3; see also 22:4). Women are frequently mentioned in Acts as the account of the spread of the church is given, including the widows in Joppa, Timothy's mother in Lystra, the women in Philippi, the prominent women who joined the church in Thessalonica, the prominent women in Berea who believed, Damaris in Athens, Priscilla in Corinth, the wives in Tyre, and Philip the evangelist's four daughters who had the gift of prophecy in Caesarea. Apart from documenting the widespread presence of women in the early church, the account in Acts presents us with three additional items of importance.

Three women are known as leaders of house churches (the only type of church there was in the first century!): Chloe (1 Cor 1:11), Nympha (Col 4:15) and Apphia (Philm 2). To this group, we can add Lydia, a Pauline house church leader known from Acts 16. Paul stated that four women—Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Rom 16:6, 12)—had worked very hard in the Lord. The Greek word translated "work very hard" was used very regularly by Paul to refer to the special work of the gospel ministry, including his own apostolic ministry (1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Tim 4:10; see also Acts 20:35) as well as the work of others in the ministry, leaders and persons of authority in each case (1 Cor 16:15–16; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17). Thus, for Paul, the term "work very hard" was not a casual term referring to menial tasks. In Rom 16:3–4 Paul greeted Priscilla and Aquila. This husband and wife team is mentioned six times elsewhere in the New Testament. Significantly, Priscilla is usually mentioned first, since the cultural pattern would be to name the husband first. This may indicate that Priscilla was the more important or visible leader and may suggest that she had a higher social status and/or more wealth than Aquila. Paul indicated that he and all the Gentile churches were indebted to both of them. Paul designated Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, "fellow workers in Christ Jesus," a term used regularly for other leaders in the gospel ministry: Urbanus (Rom 16:9), Timothy (Rom 16:21), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Clement (Phil 4:3), Philemon (Philm 1), Demas and Luke (Philm 24), Apollos and himself (1 Cor 3:9), and several others (Col 4:11). In Phil 4:2–3. Paul mentioned two women, Euodia and Syntyche, whom he also classed "along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers," and noted that these two women fellow workers "contended at my side in the cause of the gospel," an expression similar to the "worked very hard in the Lord" phrase applied to the four women noted in Rom 16. Because of Acts 16:11–40 it is not surprising that two such women leaders emerged in the Philippian church. Phoebe usually assumed to have

been the one to deliver Paul's letter to Rome, is warmly commended by Paul to the Roman church (Rom 16:1-2). Phoebe is designated as "a servant of the church in Cenchrea." These women provide clear evidence from Paul that women did participate in the gospel ministry, as did men. House adds that the NT, portrays women as valuable to Paul in his ministry, supporting him and laboring with him, in fact, they could be called the chief supporters of the churches he founded (Phil. 4:2-3). Our Lord Jesus Christ also gave a woman (Mary Magdalene) the responsibility to deliver the report of his resurrection to men (John 20:11-17).²⁷

Women have contributed much to the ministry of the Church throughout its history. The physical, mental, social and psychological value of a woman makes her an integral part of the creation. These same values make her indispensable in the church ministry. Before Christ events, women's membership was not recognized in the Jewish Synagogues. They could not follow the rabbis. "Detachment of women from the rabbi was Jewish common practice, he well-known first-century Jewish historian Josephus made his case early in his polemic work, *Against Apion*: "A woman, it says, is inferior to a man in all respects. So, let her obey, not that she may be abused, but that she may be ruled; for God has given power to the man."²⁸ Women had no legal status and their testimony was inadmissible in court: "But let not the testimony of women be admitted, on account of the levity and boldness of their sex."²⁹ Women were put in the same category as slaves, who were not allowed to testify due to the "ignobility of their soul."³⁰ Reinforced at multiple levels of Hellenistic Jewish culture, women were regarded as socially dependent, a status which is seated in the very nature of her gender, anchored in the order of creation. But it was not the case with Christ. He ministers to women and let them minister to Him"³¹ Women were present during the crucifixion and the first to see the risen Lord and were charged with the message of "go and tell". The giving of spiritual gifts is not gender bias, which implies that women serve him in various capacities by their spiritually given gifts. On several occasions, Jesus commended their faith, boldness, and piety over and above those of their male counterparts. However, their role in this area has never been free from controversy. Williams concludes that the identity of the Christian woman goes beyond sexual and cultural identity. The Christian woman is called by Christ and she finds a new role in Christ. She is a sister in the Lord to the men, helper, a deaconess, fellow worker

²⁷ Wayne House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1990), 76.

²⁸ Josephus, Flavius, *The WorksofFlaviusJosephus*, trans. WilliamWhiston, (AuburnandBuffalo, NY: JohnE. Beardsley, 1895), 18-41

²⁹ Flavius, *TheWorksofFlaviusJosephus*, 119

³⁰ Flavius, *TheWorksofFlaviusJosephus*, 119

³¹ Eunice Oluwaseun Abogunrin, "The Gender of Biblical Yahweh" in *Biblical Studies and Women Issues in Africa Biblical Studies Series*. (2003) 1:102.

and even perhaps an apostle” (Rom. 16:7). The restriction of women from full ministry today, therefore, has no basis in the scriptures.³²

Duewel makes references to Mrs. Finney’s prayer meetings where at least one million people were converted in the 1857-1858 awakening.³³ In Korea, the majority of house churches have women leaders and women play a key role in the churches in Philipians.³⁴ According to Oyibo, in the contemporary church, some women are actively involved in the ministry. They include Arch. Bishop (Mrs.) Margaret Idahosa who took over the ministry of her late husband, Prophetess Deborah Aboyin of the Peace and Righteousness of God Ministries, Okene. Within Ilorin alone, we have different churches and ministries founded and led by women apart from yearly turn out of ladies from UMCA, ECWA and Baptist Theological Schools within and outside Ilorin. It may be right to support Alli’s claim that: “the Great Commission does not exempt anyone. Every Christian, whether male or female, should work together without restraint by every possible means to become active witness, confessor, testifier or proclaimer of the good news to every creature.³⁵

Women in Politics

It has been established that the development of any country requires the participation of both men and women. There is global recognition that gender equality in political participation is a fundamental aspect of modern democratic governance.³⁶ It is expected that both men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to participate fully in all aspects and at all levels of political processes. Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. It could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. This means freedom of association and expression on one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand. In other words, both genders should have a voice in decision-making.³⁷ Historically, women have been discriminated against either in the participation of the election of political leaders or emerging as political leaders. This is as a result of the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian society and discrimination against women due to gender stereotypes that are deeply rooted in

³² Don Williams, *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church*, (Glendale: Regal Books, 1977), 34.

³³ Wesley L. Duewel, *Revival Fire*, (Wheaton: Crossway Book, 1995), 121.

³⁴ Lorry Lutz, *Women as Risk-Takers for God*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 232.

³⁵ Oyibo Godwin “*The Role of Women in the Ministry of the Church*” in *Biblical Studies and Women Issues in Africa Biblical Studies Series*, (2012) (1):198.

³⁶Fund, Ukrainian Women’s, "Women's Participation in Politics and Decision Making in Ukraine: Strategy Paper." *Ukrainian Women's Fund*, 2011.

³⁷ Richard McMinn, (ed.) *Religion in Politics*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1996), 126.

culture and religion in Nigerian society. There is huge gender inequality in political leadership. Meanwhile, it has been established that gender inequality is a constraint to growth and poverty reduction while a more equitable gender relation is an accelerator of poverty reduction. In the old traditional setting among the Yoruba, there were traditional councils. In these councils, women representation is usually not more than one or two in the cabinet. The function of these women was to take care of the interest of women. The women representative is the Iyalode, representative of women in general, and Iyaloja, the head of the market women. Historical shreds of evidence are available to prove that the Nigerian women have for long been playing a crucial role in the political life of the country, and this has contributed in no small measure in shaping the political system of the nation. At the same time, the social functions of women cannot be overemphasized as well.³⁸ Gender inequality remains present in societies in general and workplaces in particular.³⁹ In Nigeria, about 51 percent of women are involved in voting during elections. Despite these, women are still underrepresented in both elective and appointive positions. Available statistics revealed that overall political representation in the government of Nigeria is less than 7 percent.⁴⁰ This shows that Nigeria has not attained 30 percent affirmative as prescribed by the Beijing Platform of Action.

An observation in Nigerian Women in Government shows that they have not been effectively empowered to take leadership roles until now, and these are women who have been appointed into key positions in government and politics. As a rider to this statement, Jonathan administration took off in 2010 with the appointment of 13 female Cabinet Ministers, 5 female Special Advisers, 10 female Ambassadors, 16 female Judges of the Court of Appeal; 11 female Permanent Secretaries, 16 female Judges of the Federal High Court, 3 female Judges of the Supreme Court, 6 female Judges of the National Industrial Court; a female Acting President, Court of Appeal and The Chief Justice of the Federation as female. By this, the Ex-president had made good his campaign promises by raising the number of women in decision-making positions to an unprecedented level⁴¹. According to Ajah, Nigerian women have never enjoyed a pride of place like they did in Jonathan's government. The first government in Nigeria to appoint a woman Chief Justice of Nigeria since independence, first woman Petroleum Minister and too many other firsts attributed to Nigerian women since the country's leadership history. Jonathan's leadership is the most gender-sensitive administration so far in the country. It is in his government that the best of

³⁸ M. Mba, *Nigerian Women Mobilized: Women's Political Activity in Southern Nigerian 1900-1965*, (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1982), 67.

³⁹ G. Kathleen, *Unequal Pay: The Role of Gender*. Honors Theses. Paper (2014), 205.

⁴⁰ D.T. Agbalajobi, "Women's participation and the political process in Nigeria: Problems and Prospects." *A publication of African Journal of Political Science and International Relations* 4(2), (2009), 75-82.

⁴¹ N. Iheuwa, "At Policy Levels of Nigeria's Administration, Women Did Not Have It So Good until Now." July 13, 2013 <http://fmi.gov.ng> . Accessed on 02/12/16 2013.

Nigerian women in leadership responsibilities have been most showcased even for future administration in the country.⁴² Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions this is a growing concern to many Nigerians. Despite the challenges women are facing, interest of women to participate in politics is getting a lot of positive energy. Therefore, the stakeholders are advised to advocate for the protection of women from abuse, empower them economically and politically and review the necessary legislations to accommodate the growing interest of women in politics both elective and appointive positions.

Women in Academics

Education helps men and women claim their rights and realize their potential in economic, political and social arenas. It is also the single most powerful way to lift people out of poverty. Generally speaking, improving access to and the quality of education is the most rewarding investment a country can make. Investing in female education will accelerate Nigeria's economic and social development by enhancing human capital, slowing population growth, and alleviating poverty. According to Agbakwuru education equips one with marketable skills thereby lifting the possessor from the poverty arena. Essentially, through education, the individual learns good health habits, principles, and practices that promote healthy living and longevity as well as acquire marketable skills that confer economic power on the educated. Yet, many people — especially women — are still excluded from education in Nigeria. Nigeria has performed poorly in terms of gender equality.⁴³

At present, the forces which combine to hamper women education, family stability and sustainable development in Nigeria could be viewed broadly to include denial of equitable access to and participation to functional education, early marriage, confinement to solitary living, subjugation by culture to accept choices forced on women, discrimination and harassment at work, political disenfranchisement from elective and political appointment and exposure to cruel mourning rites upon the death of their husband.⁴⁴ These cultural barriers and environmental manipulation create an inferiority complex in many Nigerian women. Oniye further ascertained that through the traditional socialization process of our cultural society, women tend to accept negative self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotyping and stigmatization. All these predispositions

⁴² C. Ajah, The Other Side of Goodluck Jonathan. <http://reubenabati.com.ng>. Accessed, 28/06/ 2014.

⁴³ C. Agbakwuru, 'The role of primary education in the promotion of national integration and cohesion'. *Knowledge Review* 1(2), (2002), 15-23.

⁴⁴ A. O. Oniye, 'Cross-ethnic Study of Stress Levels, Support Systems and Adjustment Strategies among Nigeria Widows'. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Department of Educational Guidance and Counseling, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, 2000.

transmit negatively on the family role and responsibilities, which invariably interplay adversely on the national agenda.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the gender disparity is exacerbated by the powerful economic and social rationale for investing in the education of sons rather than daughters, as daughters are perceived to be less valuable once educated, and less likely to abide by the will of the father, brother or husband. The plight of women, in terms of education is compounded by this negative attitude of parents toward female education.⁴⁶ Another implication for poor educational opportunities for women is involvement in low paying ventures. It has been noted by Oladunni that because of societal stereotype and stigmatization on certain professions and subjects as the exclusive preserve of men and or women most Nigerian women have been forced into less paid jobs (teaching, nursing services, agriculture, small scale food processing, secretarial duties, clerical duties, note- counting in banks, cleaners and middle level professional occupations).⁴⁷

Comparatively, only a very small percentage of women have acquired the level of education that is necessary for the attainment of purely academic and administrative academic positions in the Universities. It is ironic that the University which is expected to play a proactive role in achieving the goals of equality of opportunity in the society, is itself, facing the acute problem of gender inequity in respect of overall representation of women in academic and administrative academic positions in the system. In Nigeria, the University of Benin is the only University that has experienced having a female Vice-Chancellor, Professor Grace Alele-Williams.⁴⁸ According to Alemma-Ozioruva Aliu, Thirty-four years after the University of Benin got the first female Vice-Chancellor, another female, Professor (Mrs.) Lillian Salami, who is the first alumna of the University, has been appointed Vice-Chancellor on December 2nd, 2019.⁴⁹

According to Egunjobi, Women have somewhat experienced gender opportunity restrictions and ceiling across societies down the ages, and that academic profession, like any other profession at the beginning of time was a single-sex profession. But today in the Commonwealth nations, the situation of women in academics has improved. The percentage of women employed as full-time academic staff ranges from the highest of 50% in Jamaica to the least of 9.5% in

⁴⁵ Oniye, 'Women Education: Problems and Implications for Family Responsibility'. *The Nigerian Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 9 (1). 2010:12.

⁴⁶ Oniye, 'Women Education, 18

⁴⁷ E. B. I. Oladunni, 'The dimensions of poverty in Nigeria: spatial, sectoral, gender dimensions'. *Bullion: publication of the Central Bank of Nigeria* 23(4), 1999: 17-30.

⁴⁸ P. C. Onokala and F.O. Onah, *Women in Academic Positions In the Universities in Nigeria*, pdf December 12, 1998. <http://rc.aau.org>. Accessed October 15, 2019.

⁴⁹ Aliu, Alemma-Ozioruva *The First Alumna Second Female VC at Uniben*. October 10, 2009. <https://www.vanguardngr.com>. Accessed November 9, 2019.

Ghana, with a Commonwealth average of 24%. The smallest percentages were found in Ghana 9.5%, Nigeria 13.6%, Tanzania 11.0%, Zambia 10.9%, and Zimbabwe 9.8% all-in Africa⁵⁰.

In the opinion of Poole, the global picture is one of men outnumbering women in research and publication. Female Deans and Professors are a minority group, while female Vice-Chancellors are rare.⁵¹ Notwithstanding the challenges that women face in Nigeria's University system, Professor Aina admits that university education has recorded significant achievements for Nigerian women: "Today, educated Nigerian women are making strides in various professions, including non-traditional female professions such as engineering, aviation industry, extractive industry, architecture, computer science amongst others. More Nigerian women are also moving into the Board rooms, taking vital business decisions along-side their male counterparts because of their educational credentials. Expectedly, this number will continue to increase with the high wave of women now yearning for university education."⁵² Again, the legislative arm of government must be precise on the principle of gender equality in education by creating viable channels to the legal rights of women.

Conclusion

Galatians 3:28, however, forms the climax of Paul's argument in his dispute with the Judaizers. Because of this problem, Apostle Paul at once declares that through baptism the believer can experience a new relationship with Jesus Christ rather than through the observance of the Torah. Consequently, for men and women to have the same status before God was a point of great importance. Paul then assures his readers that in Christ all ethnic groups, slaves, men, and women could experience that equality. Since the principle of equal rights of men and women is enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution, and Article 42 guarantees the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sex, efforts should, therefore, be made by the government of Nigeria to improve on its implementation which in a way would increase the percentage of women in parliament in Nigeria. Researchers also recommends that the government should abrogate all laws that are discriminatory to women and are repugnant to natural justice. Media should stop the gender stereotyping of women as objects of pleasure.

⁵⁰ O. A. Egunjobi, "Women in Academics: The Untold Story of Gender Inequality and Discrimination against Women in the Ivory Tower." *A Lead Paper Presented at the Seminar Organized by the National Association of Women in Academics (NAWACS)*. Ado-Ekiti: University of Ado-Ekiti, 2008.

⁵¹ M. Poole, "Removing the Equality Barriers: Women as Senior Managers and Executives in the Universities ." *The International Association of University Presidents XIV Triennial Conference*,. Thailand: Bangkok, 2005.

⁵² O. Aina, "Two Halves Make A Whole: Gender at the Crossroad of Nigerian Development Agenda." *Inaugural Lecture Series 250*. Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University, 2014.

Educational Institutions should stop the discrimination against women, especially in the academia who uphold the citadel of learning and that gender sensitivity in appointments should be put at the front burner. Intentional analysis of gender perceptions, assumptions about what is “natural” to men and women are rationalizations of the status quo and need to be challenged. The implication of this is that for any church, educational sector or political structure to be in place, men and women should compete with one another equally. In our families, we should socialize boys and girls in such a way as to prevent gender stereotypes and produce the new man and woman with new and progressive conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Our civil society should continue advocacy for gender equality and women empowerment and involve men and boys in the struggle for gender equality and women empowerment. The paper concludes that the future of Nigeria may not come to fulfillment if capable Nigerian women are not allowed to display their God-given potentials in the Nigerian Government or occupy their rightful place.