

Pauline Perspective on the Role of Women as It Relates to Yoruba Culture in Nigeria

Ikechi Chidi Ekpendu¹, PhD, Ayeni, Folorunsho² M. & Chintuwa Sydney Nnaemeka³, MA

This study examines the perception of Paul on the role of the women in the Yoruba cultural context. This study does in the attempt to address the issue by considering the double backgrounds (Jewish and Hellenistic) of Apostle Paul as it influences his understanding of the role of women in the Church and applying it to the context of the Yoruba culture. The study considers also, the role, position and importance of women in the Yoruba culture and concludes that the women could play roles as men in the society, but on men are placed the role of supervision.⁴

Introduction

According to Peter in his epistle, the writings of Paul is not what could be interpreted on the surface level without an in-depth search, lest one becomes one of the 'untaught and unstable persons who 'twist the scripture to their own destruction' (2 Pet. 3:15-16). James E. Toews in his word posited concerning Pauline Epistles that: The storm center in New Testament interpretation is the Apostle Paul. He is claimed by many but also maligned by many. The debate about the meaning of his words raises large questions for the church, especially questions of biblical authority and interpretation, and also questions of church and family order.⁵ Therefore, the study takes an in-depth study on the Pauline Epistles in order to bring to bear unbiased and objective view(s) on the role of women with emphasis on the Yoruba culture, as it addresses some of the questions that beg for answers such as: 1. what are those roles that are meant only for the men? 2. What are those roles meant only for the women? 3. What might be the implication of crossing these gender boundaries, if there is any? Lastly, the study concentrates on what had been written both in the scriptures as the internal evidence and the writing of scholars on the subject of the Pauline perspectives on the role of women to arrive at conclusion on the roles of the women as it regards the Yoruba culture.

The influence of Paul's double background

It is no doubt that the life and theology of Apostle Paul was influenced by so many factors which among them were his Jewish (Pharisaic and Rabbinical) Background and his Gentile (Hellenistic) background.⁶ Although his insight into the mystery of Christ on the road of Damascus transformed and shaped his inherited Jewish and contacted Hellenistic backgrounds, the derived tradition of the early Church and his missionary experiences, yet, his background and experiences in life were counted in his ministry and also influenced his theology and understanding.⁷

Paul's Jewish (Pharisaic and Rabbinical) Background

The Christian Paul we know who was so passionate about the grace of God through what Jesus has done and his sacrifice of cross of Calvary, can also look back with pride on life as a Jew of the Pharisaic tradition, trained in Jerusalem and not just that but circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin.

¹Department of Religious Studies, Babcock University, Ilisan Remo Ogun State, ekpendui@babcock.edu.ng

²Department of Religious Studies, Babcock University, Ilisan Remo Ogun State

³Center for Foundation Studies, Babcock University Ilisan Remo Ogun State

⁴E.D. Babatunde

⁵John E. Toews, "Direction: The Role of Women in the Church: The Pauline Perspective," accessed September 26, 2017, <http://www.directionjournal.org/9/1/role-of-women-in-church-pauline.html>

⁶Joseph A. Fitzmyer. *Pauline Theology: A Brief Sketch (2nd ed.)*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.1989. PP, 801,802

⁷Ibid.

An Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless,(Phil 3:5-6; Gal 1:14; 2Cor 11:22)⁸. As a strong Jew, he thinks and expressed himself in OT categories and images (Hab. 2: 4 in Rom 1:17; Gen 12:7 in Gal 3:16). His teaching on the unity of God's actions in both dispensations, his theology (teaching about God) and his anthropology (teaching about man) reveal his Jewish background.⁹ According to Diessmann, Paul as a Jew who also studied Judaism under Gamaliel, inherited some basic beliefs in Judaism (Phil 3:5-6; Gal 1:14; 2 Cor. 11:22) which showed in his ancestral values.¹⁰ Such beliefs in Judaism may include the position of women as helpmates, second class citizens, property etc, which Paul was probably aware of. All of these and more influenced the understanding of Paul about the role of the women in the Church.

Paul's Gentile (Hellenistic) background

Although brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel, Paul was born in Tarsus a city under the heavy influence of Hellenism.¹¹ His use of Aramaic and Greek languages testify that Aramaic he was brought up with while Greek he learnt. There is no doubt Paul had a sort of Greek and Hellenistic training because of his use of LXX, Cynic-Stoic mode of argumentation called *diatribe* in addition to his literary antithesis which he himself testified to in the scripture as he proudly declared his Romans citizenship and quoted stoic poetry as seen in Acts 16:37-38; 17:28, all played out in his theology.¹² Therefore, Paul with these Hellenistic influences was not ignorant of the general beliefs that women are inferior to man in status and are regarded as fickle and unreliable with no claim to culture.¹³

Pauline Perspective on Gender demarcation

Having in mind that gender could refer to defined capacity and attribute of individuals based on their supposed sexual trait or peculiarity,¹⁴ it is germane to say that out of the thirteen epistles credited Paul as the author, reference to women were made in about six.¹⁵ In all, only nineteen references to women were made compared to about eighty-eight references to men.¹⁶ With this, it appears that Paul concentrated and talks more in relation to men's roles than that of the women. Craig S. Keener said in his own word that "increasingly, secular thinkers attack Christianity as being against women and thus irrelevant to the modern world."¹⁷

However, that Paul spoke less about women do not suggest that women were less important to Paul, as he mentioned some notable women who participated prominently in the work and ministry of Paul,¹⁸ which made it only appears that more emphasis is placed on the role of the men than that of the women. This is because, according to Craig, "the ancient Near Eastern world, of which Israel was a part, was a man's world."¹⁹

But considering the salutation of Paul in Roman 16, Paul did not overlook greeting various women of note who contributed to the work of the gospel of Christ in Rome. Some of these women were referred to as co-laborer (*συνεργούς*) with Paul (Rom. 16:3). Looking at the arrangement of the greetings, Paul mentioned the women (wife) with the men (supposed husband); Priscilla and Aquila, Andronicus and Junia, which were useful in the ministry (cf. Rom. 16:3, 7).

⁸G. Ebeling, "The Meaning of Biblical Theology," JTS 6, 1955, PP 210-225.

⁹ W. D Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* 2nd ed. London, 1958.

¹⁰ Adolf Diessmann, *A Study of Social Religious History of St Paul*, London: Hodder & Stoughton 1998 edition. PP.3ff

¹¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer. *Pauline Theology: A Brief Sketch (2nd ed.)*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.1989. PP, 801,802

¹² R. Bultmann "Paulus und der Hellenismus," TLZ 72, 1947, pp. 77-80.

¹³O.O. Obijole, "St Paul on the Position of Women in the Church: Paradox or a Change?" Orita Vol. XIX/1, June 1987, Ibadan: Journal of Religious Studies 1987, pp. 57- 60.

¹⁴ Thomson Gale, "Gender and Religion: Gender and African Religious Traditions," 2005,

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/gender-and-religion-gender-and-african-religious-traditions>.

¹⁵Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson. ed, "Women in the Pauline Mission," *CBMW*, 2000, <https://cbmw.org/uncategorized/women-in-the-pauline-mission/>.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Craig S. Keener, "Was Paul For or Against Women in Ministry?" 2017, accessed September 27, 2017, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/082_paul.cfm.

¹⁸Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson. ed, "Women in the Pauline Mission."

¹⁹Craig S. Keener, "Was Paul For or Against Women in Ministry?"

This shows that there appeared no gender discrimination or demarcation to what a woman or a man could do or where doing. Nancy Vyhmeister argued that Junia mentioned here was a woman and a notable apostle.²⁰ John Toews posited that Phoebe was a noble worker in the church with a noticeable role: It seems clear that Phoebe is a minister in the church in Cenchreae. Because her title is in the masculine there seem no linguistic or theological grounds to distinguish between her and other male “ministers.” She is to be honored and helped by the Romans. Apparently they will have no problems welcoming her. Furthermore, she has a ministry recognized for its fruit; “she has been a helper of many.” This is evidence of God’s call and blessing on her.²¹ From these scholars’ interpretation of Paul’s dealings with women’s how that women’s role within the community of faith is prominent and women were never segregated from their men counterpart in the religious sphere. Likewise, the team that was made and portrayed by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18; 1 Cor. 16:19) seems not to put any demarcation between the roles of the women and that of the men, yet, Paul ordered the Corinthian women not to speak in the church and that they must cover their head as the glory of the man (1 Cor. 11:6; 14:34, 35). For Obijole, Paul’s position is in two ways and simple. Firstly, on the account of salvation which he believes that “the event of Christ forms the basis of the dissolution of all human discriminations including sexual discrimination”, and lastly on the account of creation order in Gen. 1:27 and 2:22-23, which he believes that man was created first in the image of God, hence he is the *doxa* of the divine majesty.²² The *doxa* here, he argued, is the reflection of divine majesty which refers to man as a representative of God having superiority and god-like attributes among other created things (Ps. 8:6). But the woman, God formed from the man to be a help mate.²³ He also added, if Christ is the head of the man then, the man is the head of the woman by creation order.²⁴ This by implication means that, although Paul, in Christ places no demarcation on gender, since everyone has equal right to salvation, yet he believes that the physical distinction and the human differences still exist.²⁵

Women Roles in Pauline Epistles

The culture where Paul was coming from saw women from the odd and negative perspective. From a traditional Jewish prayer; the following expression appeared: “Blessed are you, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe who has not created me a woman.”²⁶ Though Paul wanted to be balance on gender issue on their role in the community of faith when he emphasized that “there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal.3:28). But it appears that he was still being pressed by the weight of his cultural background when he told the Corinthian church that “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.” (1 Cor. 14:34). The scenario here, which also feature in the epistle to Timothy (1 Tim 2:12) seems to say that women should not be part of church life that revolves around teaching, preaching and praying. It also opposed to women having authority over the men. But the main issue to contend with; is it on Paul saying that women must keep silent or women having authority over the men? However different from what was spoken of the Corinthian women, the epistle to the Philippians gave a strong indication that the women mentioned (Euodia and Syntyche) were workers who struggled alongside with Paul in the ministry due to the Greek “συνήθλησάν” word used, which means “to contend or struggle along with.”²⁷ This implies that they were co-workers who struggle or contend alongside with Paul in the work of the gospel. Therefore, the expression used in the epistle to the Corinthians and Timothy might suggest a different episode from the issue of women’s role in the community of faith/Church, for women in the book of Philippians seem to be actively involved with Paul in the mission field.

²⁰Nancy Vyhmeister, “Ministry: International Journal for Pastors,” *Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist*, Junia the Apostle, 85, no. 7 (2013): 6–9.

²¹John E. Toews, “Direction: The Role of Women in the Church: The Pauline Perspective.”

²²O.O. Obijole, “St Paul on the Position of Women in the Church: Paradox or a Change?” *Orita* Vol. XIX/1, June 1987, Ibadan: Journal of Religious Studies 1987, pp. 60- 62.

²³Ibid, 60-62.

²⁴Ibid, 60-62.

²⁵Ibid 59, 63

²⁶Eliezer Segal, “Who Has Not Made Me a Woman,” *My Jewish Learning*, accessed September 27, 2017, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Liturgy_and_Prayers/Siddur_Prayer_Book/Preliminary_Readings/Who_Has_Not_Made_Me_a_Woman.shtm

²⁷Wesley J. Perschbacher, *Refresh Your Greek: Practical Helps for Reading the New Testament* (Chicago, USA: Moody Press, 1989), 759.

Also, the epistles of Paul on the subject of Spiritual gifts presented that the gifts from the Holy Spirit are meant for the edification of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12) which attest to the role of individual members of the church without any gender demarcation. And in the epistle to the Corinthians, Paul made it clear that women can prophesy (1 Cor. 11:5) and prophecy is for the edification, exhortation and comfort to men (1 Cor. 14:3 NKJV).

According to Heather – Dawn Small in Ministry Magazine, When the Bible list Spiritual gifts in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4, there is no gender discrimination. No limit exists to the gifts that God may bestow on men or women. The gifts needed to shepherd are given to both genders.²⁸ Since women could prophesy, and they were considered both as co-worker and co-contender alongside with Paul in the work of the ministry, therefore, there appears to be no limit to the role of the women from the perspective of the Pauline epistles, (except from what is said in the epistle to Corinthians and Timothy) and neither are the role of women different from that of men, with no disregard to God's established hierarchy in both the natural and spiritual spheres where the female is a subordinate to the male sex.²⁹

Paradoxically, if women were of equal role with men, then why is it that in the Pastoral Epistle to Timothy (Epistle to Timothy and Titus are considered as Pastoral Epistle), and the Epistle to the Corinthians (as epistle to the church), women were prevented from teaching and exercising authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12; 1 Cor. 14:34)? It appears that the issue that Paul addressed in his letters to Timothy and to the Corinthians church was somehow different from what he taught generally on women. Some scholars are of the opinion that the problem in question here has to do with the level of education on the part of the women. Keener while quoting G. Fee on his commentary on 1 Tim. 5:13 stated that "One of the Greek terms here indicates spreading nonsense" because "Women were the most susceptible to false teaching only because they had been granted the least education."³⁰ Therefore, women should rather learn in silence instead of spreading nonsense.

However, in the Adventist Affirm, it was argued that education can never be the point of Paul's stand or admonition to Timothy here for if lack of education had been the basis of Paul's prohibition, he would have prohibited both men and women to teach in the church if they were uneducated. But women as well as men could have been trained to become good teachers. Deaconesses and other female workers in apostolic teams must have received some training.³¹

Therefore, the issue is beyond educational status of the women. Considering the way Priscilla admonished Apollos, the Adventist Affirm stated that "Priscilla was well enough educated in the Christian faith to instruct an intellectual like Apollos, when he went to Ephesus (Act 18:26). All of this suggests that the reason for Paul's instruction was not that women were uneducated."³² But different from being uneducated, Obijole is of the opinion that the immorality level of Corinth and its cultural influence resulting from women emancipation which broke down genuine morality, allowing the women of nude dressing and smashing hair styles creeping in the Church necessitated Paul's order, which he was not ready to allow to becloud him.³³ He added that leadership roles should be permitted in the Church provided that the woman shows a "genuine pneumatic or spiritual endowment in line with the cultural background."³⁴ Coming to the church at Ephesus where Timothy was pastoring, it appears that there was an issue of who is in control; the men or the women.

²⁸Heather – Dawn Small, "Ministry: International Journal for Pastors," *Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh - day Adventist*, Pastor, you need to know, 89, no. 5 (2017): 17.

²⁹O.O. Obijole, "St Paul on the Position of Women in the Church: Paradox or a Change?" *Orita* Vol.XIX/1, June 1987, Ibadan: Journal of Religious Studies 1987, pp. 61

³⁰Craig S. Keener, "Was Paul For or Against Women in Ministry?"

³¹Adventist Affirm, "Pauline Passages about the Role of Women," accessed September 26, 2017, (<http://www.womenordination.com/background/pauline-passages-about-the-role-of-women/articletype/articleview/articleid/1114/is-it-true-that-pauls-argument-about-the-priority-of-adams-creation->).

³²Adventist Affirm, "Pauline Passages about the Role of Women," accessed September 26, 2017, (<http://www.womenordination.com/background/pauline-passages-about-the-role-of-women/articletype/articleview/articleid/1114/is-it-true-that-pauls-argument-about-the-priority-of-adams-creation->).

³³O.O. Obijole, "St Paul on the Position of Women in the Church: Paradox or a Change?" *Orita* Vol.XIX/1, June 1987, Ibadan: Journal of Religious Studies 1987, pp. 64.

³⁴Ibid.

The immediate context of 1 Timothy 2:12 focus on the question of women exercising control over men [**οὐδὲ ἀυθεντεῖν ἀνδρός** (1Ti 2:12 BGT): *nor to usurp authority over the man*, (1Ti 2:12 KJV)]. John Toews posited that the counsel from Paul for women to keep silent in the Church was never to all the women in Ephesus Church, but only to the married women that these married women did not only teach, “but also left their husband, indulged in costly attire and practiced immorality.”³⁵

Doug Batchelor agreed to this view when he stated that a woman with loose dress could signal a woman’s loose moral and independence from her husband based on the custom of the ancient world and this was one of the issues that Paul was addressing.³⁶ Doug on the other hand posited that from creation, women are created to be a support to their husband and therefore not to exert spiritual authority over the men and by making reference to 1 Cor. 14: 34, 35; he further stated that “Paul is here addressing the proper evaluation of prophecies.”³⁷ John Jefferson Davis on his own focused on the allusion of Paul to creation narrations both to the church in Corinth and Ephesus that as Eve was deceived, women in the church could easily be deceived and therefore should not be given the role of exercising ecclesiastical authority over men and thus should not be ordained.³⁸ Moving it a little further, Obijole maintains that the natural hierarchy according to the creation order which Paul himself in 1 Cor. 11:3, argued that the head of the woman is the man; the head of every man is Christ; and the head of Christ is God, which is in line with the physical distinctions that exists also in marriage where the woman is to submit to her husband not as a slave or servant but in love and where the man will love back as Christ loves His Church, a *mysterion* typology of church-Christ relationship where Christ, the church, the husband and wife have their definite roles.³⁹ Douglas Moo in his exegetical preview of 1 Timothy 2:8-15, agreed with Doug and Jefferson that though, Paul did not prohibit women from participating in the church life, but that their role should not include exercise authority over the men in the community of faith.⁴⁰ Furthermore, from Paul’s epistle to Timothy, Paul used of the Greek word *epi, skopon* (episkopon) in 1 Tim. 3:1, 2 which is translated as Bishop or Overseer and his qualification “the husband of one wife,” is another text that supports the leadership role of the men, a form of hierarchy as it regards to spiritual matters. Therefore, it appears that though the women could be involve in all the roles that their men counterpart could do, but their role should not include leadership role.

Women in Yoruba Culture

Culture as it is generally known, is a way of life of the people. In Evangelical Dictionary of World Mission, “culture refers to the common ideas, feelings, and values that guide community and personal behavior that organize and regulate what the group thinks, feels, and does about God, the world, and humanity.”⁴¹ Regarding the subject of women in Yoruba’s culture, based on the above statements, Odeyemi posited that “Yoruba culture does not place women at a lower pedestal to men.”⁴² Both are considered equal, but on men are placed the role of overall supervision.⁴³ With this background, let’s now consider the role of the women in the area of economic, political and religious sphere in Yoruba culture. Firstly, in the economic cycle, Llyod said this on the issue of women’s roles among the Yoruba’s that: Yoruba women are both autonomous and subordinate to men.

³⁵John E. Toews, “Direction: The Role of Women in the Church: The Pauline Perspective.”

³⁶Doug Batchelor, *God’s Role for Women in Ministry* (Roseville, CA.: Amazing Facts, inc., 2008), 16.

³⁷Ibid., 15, 17, 18.

³⁸John Jefferson Davis, “First Timothy 2:12, the Ordination of Women, and Paul’s Use of Creation Narratives,” *CBE International*, accessed October 11, 2017, <https://www.cbeinternational.org/resources/article/priscilla-papers/first-timothy-212-ordination-women-and-pauls-use-creation>.

³⁹O.O. Obijole, “St Paul on the Position of Women in the Church: Paradox or a Change?” *Orita* Vol. XIX/1, June 1987, Ibadan: Journal of Religious Studies 1987, pp. 64.

⁴⁰Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men (1 Timothy 2:11-15),” Bible.org, accessed October 11, 2017, <https://bible.org/seriespage/9-what-does-it-mean-not-teach-or-have-authority-over-men-1-timothy-211-15>.

⁴¹Havie M. Conn, “Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,” *Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 2000), 254.

⁴²John Segun Odeyemi, “Gender Issues Among the Yorubas,” *The International Journal of African Catholicism*, Winter 2013. 4, no. 1 (2013): 4, http://www.saintleo.edu/media/484382/gender_issues_among_the_yorubas_final.pdf.

⁴³Babatunde, E.D., “Strengthening the Family: Implications for International Development,” *The Yoruba Family*, 1995, <http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu13se/uu13se0e.htm>.

Autonomy arises through a fairly rigid sexual division of labour, which excludes women from most agricultural work, and means that traditional women work independently of their husbands and not jointly or cooperatively with them.⁴⁴ This shows a clear role division along gender line among the Yoruba people. For instance, the role of the women in farming system is clearly demarcated from the role of the men.

The men are to cultivate while the women's role is to assist in the harvest and the women's sole role is to carry the farm produce to the market.⁴⁵ Yoruba society offered the greatest opportunity for women to participate in economic activities such as manufacturing (for example, in textile industry) and trade. And among other role of the Yoruba women is for them to also provide care for their family.⁴⁶

Secondly, under women in the political sphere in the Yoruba culture: Tradition has it that even there were women rulers as the Queens of a communities. Recently, in Akure a woman was appointed as the regent after the demise of the city tradition ruler.⁴⁷ Fatai Olasupo did a comprehensive work on the political and religious role of the women in Nigeria and made it clear that places like Ondo in Ondo State, Ile-Ife (the believed cradle of Yoruba race) was at certain time ruled by women; also towns like Maya in Ogbomosho land was ruled by a female Baale, in the person of Chief Mary Igbayilola Alari who died in 1997.⁴⁸ Idowu and Ogunode submitted that ever before Efunsetan Aniwura was made the Iyalode of Ibadan land, she was made to be the Magaji of Oluyole's family despite the fact that there were other male members of the family.⁴⁹ This shows that there is no limit to the role of the women in the political sphere in Yoruba land.

Thirdly, religion is central to Yoruba's culture; Olajubu and Olupona posited that Yoruba culture and religion are closely intertwined; indeed, culture is a means of expressing religion, whereas religion is a part of culture in Yoruba land; any attempt to separate culture and religion among the Yoruba will therefore be futile.⁵⁰ Hence, on the religious sphere, women are not left out but are part of the religious life of the Yorubas. Tradition has it that of all the sixteen primordial divinities, a woman, named Osun was one of them and when she was ignored, she made the world uneasy.⁵¹ This shows that women are important in the religious circle in Yoruba land.

Uja is an annual festival in Akure that a woman, Erelu, is the dominant figure.⁵² Funso Afolayan argued that Contrary to the general assumption that women play only limited roles in Yoruba religious traditions, Olajubu argues that as the principal repositories of these traditions, Yoruba women are crucial to the conceptualization and practice of both indigenous religion and Christianity.⁵³

With all these unlimited roles of the women in the religious sphere among the Yoruba culture, however, there are taboos that forbid or regulate the presence or participation of the women in certain religion programs. For instance, menstruating women are forbidden to participate in the sacrifice to Obatala, the fertility divinity, for Obatala is known for whiteness.

⁴⁴Lloyd, P.C., *Power and Independence, Urban Africans' Perception of Social Inequality* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 37–38, accessed September 25, 2017, <http://unu.edu>.

⁴⁵Babatunde, E.D., "Strengthening the Family : Implications for International Development," Accessed 28/9/2017, <http://archive.unu.edu/unupress/unupbooks/uu13se/uu13se0e.htm>

⁴⁶Maria Rajas, "Women in Pre-Colonial Nigeria," 1994, <http://www.postcolonialweb.org/nigeria/precolwon.html>.

⁴⁷Abiodun Badejo, "New Regent Installed in Akure," *Daily Post Nigeria*, December 29, 2013, <http://dailypost.ng/2013/12/29/new-regent-installed-akure/>.

⁴⁸Fatai A. Olasupo, "Women and Religion in Nigeria," *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs*, 10, 2, no. 1 (2016): 3, 6, 7, <http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/jtb>.

⁴⁹Idowu, Olawale F. and Ogunode, Sunday A., "Gender and the Politics of Exclusion in Pre-Colonial Ibadan: The Case of Iyalode Efunsetan Aniwura," *The Journal of Traditions & Beliefs*, 21, 2, no. 1 (2016): 3, <http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/jtb>.

⁵⁰Oyeronke Olajubu and Jacob K. Olupona, *Women in the Yoruba Religious Sphere* (State University of New York Press, 2003), accessed 27/9/2017, <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/4731>.

⁵¹Thomson Gale, "Encyclopedia of Religion."

⁵²Tadaferua Ujorha, "FEATURES Uja, Hunters Festival in Which Women Play Leading Roles," *Daily Trust*, September 2017, <https://www.pressreader.com/nigeria/daily-trust/20170918/281779924298648>.

⁵³Funso Afolayan, "Woman in Yoruba Religious Tradition," accessed September 28, 2017, <https://www.abibitumikasa.com/forums/showthread.php/38375-woman-in-yoruba-religious-tradition>.

Women are also forbidden to see Oro and prevented from Egungun cult, the reason is that the secrets of Oro must not be known to the women.⁵⁴ If a woman should see Oro, Oro will deal with her (*b'obinrinbaf'ojuk'Oro, Oro a gbe*) and if a woman should know the secret of Egungun, she must never tell (*b'obinrinbam'avokogbodoni*).⁵⁵

The woman in Egungun cult is called Iyaagan who play roles like the other men in the cult, but all Egungun's secrets are secret⁵⁶ as alluded to by Familusi. Hassan further made a chant that "*awo Egungun'obinrin le se, awo Geledel'obinrin le mo, b'obinrinbaf'ojuk'Oro, Oro a gbe*"⁵⁷ (Egungun cult is what women could do, Geledecult is what women could know; but if a woman should see Oro, Oro will deal with her). This means that Oro cult is not for the women and if the women want to know, Oro will deal with them.

Conclusion

There seems to be a great concern for gender inequality in the society and especially in the area of socio-political and religious sphere: This work has looked at Pauline perspective on the role of women as it relate to Yoruba's culture. According to John Odeyemi cited earlier, "Yoruba culture does not place women at a lower pedestal to men."⁵⁸ However, like the culture of the ancient Near Eastern world, Yoruba's culture is patrilineal and patrilocal⁵⁹ and on men are placed the role of leadership.

The main stand or argument of Paul appears to be obscured in the fact that in some places Paul argued for women to be silence in the assembly of the believers (1 Cor. 14:34; 1Tim 2:11, 12) and in another place it was argued that women can prophesy if only she has her head covered (1 Cor. 11:5,6). According to Paul in another place prophecy is one of the gift of the Holy Spirit that is used to "speak comfort to men" (1 Cor. 14:4).

This work has made it clear, though not an exclusive work on its own on the subject that women has a role, but this role donot give them power to have controlling authority over men. From the account of Phillipian (4:2-3), Paul mentioned some women "who labored with me in the gospel" that they be cared for and he urged them (these women) to be of the same mind in the Lord. This further put to bear that though the women might be urged to keep silent in the church, they are still and can still be part of the religious activities.

While the women can perform their role as the Holy Spirit gives them power, the role of leadership in exercising authority belong to the men and this agrees with the Yoruba's culture that though women could play roles as men in the society, but on men are placed the role of supervision.⁶⁰ This according to Doug Batchelor do not jeopardize men to women equality because though, God and Jesus are equal, yet Jesus submits to God the Father, therefore submission is about order, not value.⁶¹ Hence, women can be a preacher, but not an ordained preacher as having or exercising ecclesiastical authority,⁶² they can teach, but not as a leader to the men, exercising authority over them.⁶³

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⁵⁴O.O. Familusi, "African Culture and the Status of Women: The Yoruba Example," *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 5, no. 1 (2012): 303.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Alh. O Hassan, The Role of women in Oro and Egungun cults, Oral Interview, October 13, 2017.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸John Segun Odeyemi, "Gender Issues Among the Yorubas," 4.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰E.D.Babatunde, "Strengthening the Family : Implications for International Development,."

⁶¹Doug Batchelor, *God's Role for Women in Ministry* (Roseville, CA: Amazing Facts, inc., 2008), 10, 30.

⁶²John Jefferson Davis, "First Timothy 2."

⁶³Doug Batchelor, *God's Role for Women in Ministry*, 27.

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