

## Gender, Religion And Patriarchy: A Sociological Analysis Of Catholicism And Pentecostalism In Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The paper interrogates the nexus between gender, religion and patriarchy in a context where the marginalization of the female gender is continuous in spite of the strides in female education. The tension between religion and gender equality is a pervasive problem for orthodox Christianity despite its cardinal doctrine of equality of all beings before God. From the theistic doctrine the female gender is considered unequal, inferior and subordinate to the male gender and this is demonstrated in the roles assigned to the female gender in orthodox denominations. For instance in Catholicism, women cannot aspire to the position of the clergy but can join the religious order as reverend sisters or nuns. However, Pentecostalism has shown a remarkable reformation from orthodoxy by elevating women to the clergy as pastors and even bishops. Using data generated from a total of 15 key informants and deploying Karl Marx's and Feminists postulations on religion the paper argues that Catholicism reinforces patriarchy through its role differentiation and complete closure to the female gender in the Church's hierarchy. Pentecostalism on the other hand encourages female participation as clergy but there exists subtle reinforcement of patriarchy as no woman has ever held the position of General overseer within the top Pentecostal Churches.

**Key Words:** Catholicism, Pentecostalism, Patriarchy, Gender and Religion.

### INTRODUCTION

Gender, simply defined, is the social construction of the expectations, behavior, privileges and constraints associated with those identified as male or female. Gender has become significant in the understanding of development and social phenomena especially in developing nations in view of the inequitable participation of men and women in the social organization of society. Rohrbaugh captured this significance in his description of gender as "the most important determinant of any individual's life experience, as he observed that in many areas of life, no experience can be called a truly human experience (Rohrbaugh, 1981:3).

Gender, religion and patriarchy are foundational social constructs operating at the basis of social organization of society. The three social constructs are inter-woven in the Nigerian society. Gender is an important determinant of an individual's life experience in Nigeria both in the public and domestic spheres. The social conception of the roles, expectations, opportunities and privileges attached to being a member of a particular sex is so strong that upon ascertaining the sex of a baby, it is always possible to predict the child's life chances. For Kornblum cited in Ekiran, gender is the distinctive qualities of men and women or masculinity and femininity that are culturally created (Ekiran, 2011: 91). Ekiran further asserts that the historicity of gender inequality could be traced to a dualistic moral philosophy and deistic doctrine where the female is viewed as being unequal, inferior and subordinate to the male. According to him even the great Aristotle affirmed the inherent inferiority of woman to man.

Religion is a part of culture in its wider sense and a creation of society. Burkert comments that there has never been a society without religion. In contemporary Nigeria, there exist three main religions namely: Christianity, Islam and traditional religion. The early European missionaries who came around the 15<sup>th</sup> century introduced Christianity while the Arab and Tuareg traders, who had commercial transactions with the Northern part of the country during the Trans-Sahara trade era, introduced Islam. Though both religions are external in origin, they now constitute the two most powerful religions in the country. In Nigeria, religion is an instrument of female oppression and marginalization despite the fact that many of the religious beliefs and traditions are derived from cultural beliefs (Burkert, 1985). Religion supports the patriarchal society along with the private property and class society. Religion had influenced the relationship between men and women for centuries and entrenched male domination into the social structure of society thus helping to reinforce patriarchy. Many of the practices portrayed as part of culture or religion which impinge on human rights, such as the notion of monogamy with its attendant female subordination and domestication, are gender specific and they preserve patriarchy at the expense of women's rights. Such patriarchal practices include a preference for male children leading to female infanticide through abortion by those desirous of having male children especially in some parts of the country where the girl child cannot inherit from her family of orientation and women are considered as chattels of their husbands. Others include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), sale of daughters in marriage through the collection of bride price, including giving them in forced marriage as child brides; bride gifts to men of power and influence, paying to acquire husbands for daughters through the dowry system, patriarchal marriage arrangements, allowing men control over lands, finances, freedom of movement, husband's right to obedience and power to discipline or commit act of violence against his wife etc.

While socialist feminists see class as central to women's lives, yet they have not at the same time ignored the impact of patriarchy on their lives too. For them, women are victims of both the capitalist class and patriarchy. El Saadawi. She argued in her work "God Dies by the Nile," that the women in her study are victims of a patriarchal class system reinforced by politics, religion, and social customs. She avers that for patriarchal class ideology to survive as an oppressive system, brutal force is used to instill such ideology in society. For her, the impact of such ideology on women is manifested through rape, sexual exploitation, psychological instability, illegitimate children and violence. El Saadawi vividly captures the nexus between patriarchy, politics and religion through the victims' lenses (El Saadawi, 1980).

For Okpe patriarchy is a broad network or system of hierarchical organization that cuts across political, economic, social, religious, cultural, industrial and financial spheres, under which the overwhelming number of upper positions in society are either occupied or controlled and dominated by men (Okpe, 2005). Thus, any system that operationalizes an order that accords men undue advantage over women is considered patriarchal. Hartman avers that the crucial elements of patriarchy include heterosexual marriage, female child rearing and house work, women's economic dependence on men reinforced by arrangements in the labour market, numerous institutions based on social relations such as clubs, sports, professional organizations, universities, churches, corporations and the army (Hartman, 1997).

In contemporary Nigeria, gender roles are based on the socialization process and religion is used as an instrument to reinforce them with patriarchy as its major instrumentality.

Catholicism as a doctrine is closely related to the use of the form Catholic Church which is anchored on the institutional continuity of the early Church founded by Jesus Christ. The beliefs and practices of Catholicism include (a) the belief in the direct descent from the Church

founded by Jesus Christ, through St. Peter, one of the apostles, down to the present Pope; (b) the belief that Jesus Christ is divine and transubstantiation of the belief that the elements in the Eucharist become really and truly, the body, blood, soul and divinity of Christ at consecration, resulting in the real presence of Christ; and (c) the possession of the three-fold ordained ministers of Bishops, priests and deacons which forms the clergy. The Catholic Church also believes in the necessity and efficacy of the sacraments including the use of sacred images, candles, vestments and music, and the use of incense and water in worship. All ministers are ordained and subject to the Bishops in a hierarchical order that traces descent to the first bishop of Rome, (St. Peter, the apostle that denied Christ thrice during the passion).

Pentecostalism is a renewal movement within Protestant Christianity that emphasizes a personal experience with God through baptism with the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalism adheres strictly to the inerrancy of the Holy Scripture and the need to accept Christ as personal Lord and Saviour. It empowers a Christian to live a spirit-filled life using gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing. Pentecostalism emerged in the early 20th century among radical adherents of the Holiness movement who got energized by revivalism and expectation of the imminent coming of Jesus Christ. Pentecostals believe that baptism in the Holy Spirit is available to all Christians that repent from sin and have been born again.

It is pertinent to mention that unlike Catholicism, Pentecostalism is not a monolithic denomination but rather a movement comprising of various denominations whose teachings and mode of worship are anchored on the Pentecostal doctrines. Catholicism on its part is steeped in orthodoxy and as a result has not embraced the changing dynamics of gender roles. Pentecostalism has made some efforts in this regard by admitting women into the ranks of the clergy. Within the Pentecostal movement there are female pastors and few female bishops even though the number may be deemed insignificant given the giant strides by women, especially in education. It is against this background that the paper sought to ascertain the nexus between gender, religion and patriarchy by raising the following research questions:

- a. Are women free to aspire to any position in the Church?
- b. Why are women not found in top positions within the hierarchy of the Church?
- c. Is there equality of persons in the Church?
- d. Does gender play any role in the allocations of functions in the Church?
- e. How true is the assertion that Christianity reinforces patriarchy?

The study adopted a qualitative research method. Fifteen respondents were purposively selected for the study. In-depth interviews were conducted with the respondents. The study population was the clergy and religious in the Catholic Church, the Pastors and lay faithful in the Pentecostal fold. And from this population a sample of fifteen was drawn comprising five Priests, three Reverend Sisters, two Pastors, a Bishop, two Deacons and two Reverends. The Priests and Reverend Sisters were selected from the Catholic Church while the Pastors, Deacons, Bishops and Reverends were selected from different Pentecostal churches. Responses from the respondents were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using content analysis.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Marxist and feminist theories of religion form the theoretical framework of this paper and provide insights on how religion and culture are deployed as instrumental to reinforce patriarchy. Marx's theory of religion needs to be seen in the context of his general view of a capitalist society and the oppression of the working class. Marxism sees religion as a feature of a class- divided society, since a classless society will have no need for it. Marx, sees religion as an ideology, he refers to religion as the opiate of the people and posits that religious ideology changes the people's perception of reality in ways that serve the interests of the ruling class.<sup>7</sup>

He argues that the class that controls economic production also controls the production and distribution of ideas in society through institutions such as the church, the education system and the media. In Marx's view, religion operates as an ideological weapon used by the ruling class to justify the suffering of the poor as something inevitable and God-given. Religion misleads the poor into believing that their suffering is virtuous and that they will be favoured in the transcendental. Religion therefore legitimizes the power dynamics between the privileged and dominant class by making their position appear to be divinely ordained. Marx's postulation on alienation shows a separation from or losing control over something that one has produced or created. For him alienation is inherent in all class societies, but is more predominant under capitalism where workers are alienated because they do not own what they produce, and have no control over the production process. , They thus lack the freedom to express their true nature detailed under division of labour in the capitalist factory, where the worker endlessly repeats the same tasks. Religion therefore is an instrument of alienation which numbs the pain of exploitation. But just as opium masks pain rather than treating its cause, so religion masks the underlying problem of exploitation that creates the need for it. Because religion is a distorted view of the world, it can offer no solution to earthly misery instead; its promises of the afterlife create an illusory happiness that distracts attention from the true source of the suffering, namely capitalism (Ritzer, 2008).

Feminists see society as patriarchal- based on male domination. Many feminists regard religion as a patriarchal institution that reflects and perpetuates this inequality. Religious beliefs function as a patriarchal ideology that legitimizes female subordination. Evidence of patriarchy can be seen in religious organisations, places of worship, sacred texts and religious laws and customs. Religious organisations show that they are mainly dominated by the male despite the fact that women often participate more than men in such organisations. Also, in some places of worship segregation of the sexes exists, e.g. seating in different pews or sections during worship. Women's participation may be restricted, for example, not being able to preach or to read from sacred texts or aspire to become priests or pastors. Taboos that regard menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth as polluting may also prevent participation.

Patriarchy is further seen in religious laws and customs which may give women fewer rights than men, e.g. in access to divorce, how many spouses they may marry, decision making, dress codes etc. Religious influences on cultural norms may also lead to unequal treatment, such as genital mutilation or punishments for sexual transgressions. Many religions legitimize and regulate women's traditional domestic and reproductive role. For example, the Catholic Church does not support abortion and the use of artificial contraception. Woodhead argues that the exclusion of women from the Catholic priesthood is evidence of the Church's deep unease about the freedom of women in an ever changing world (Woodhead, 2007). Feminists further argue that women have not always been subordinate to men within religion. Armstrong posits that early religion often placed women at the centre. For example, earth mother goddess, fertility cults and female priesthoods ((see ancient Greek mythology and the cults worshipping Hera, Artemis, Athena, Hestia, and Aphrodite etc...)) were found throughout the Middle East until about 6,000 years ago. Armstrong avers that in early history "women were considered central to the spiritual quest". In his words: "The Earth produced plants and nourished them in rather the same way as a woman gave birth to a child and fed it from her own body. The magical power of the earth seemed vitally interconnected with the mysterious creativity of the female sex (Armstrong, 1993).. However, from about 4,000 years ago, the rise of monotheistic religions saw the establishment of a single, all-powerful male God, such as the Hebrew's Jehovah, and male prophets such as Abraham/Ibrahim, the first prophet of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. While religion may be used to oppress women, Nawal El Saadawi argues that this is not the direct cause of their subordination. Rather, this is the result of

patriarchal forms of society coming into existence in the last few thousand years. However, once in existence, patriarchy began to influence and re-shape religion. For example, men reinterpreted religious beliefs in ways that favoured their dominance thus religion now contributes to women's oppression (El Saadawi, 2008).

### **WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH**

In the Catholic Church, women are allowed to participate fully in church roles except from priestly roles. However, their exclusion from priestly roles was not considered a form of discrimination as respondents asserted that it is the men that were called to priesthood and not women. However, they acknowledged the important role played by women in the church. For example, a respondent who was a priest in a Catholic church spoke about women and leadership in the church;

I will speak for the Catholic Church. In the Catholic Church, as we speak, women cannot be ordained as priests. I mean you have them as lay faithful. They can also work in the altar but they cannot be ordained as priests because when Jesus chose his disciples, he chose 12 men and at the last supper when he was commissioning them, he commissioned 12 men. So it's scriptural. That's why women are not considered. Apart from the Priesthood, they are allowed to participate and can be anything in the church. They can occupy other positions in the church. In the Catholic Church, the hierarchy is the Pope, the Bishops, the Priests, and the Deacons. The women don't even function there. It's not because they are discriminated against, it's because it just doesn't arise. There is no aspect of discrimination that has to do with only men or women. We have societies in the church that only men belong to, I mean by the name, for example, catholic men organization; you don't expect to find women in there. So also do you have catholic women organization but in terms of functions there is no function per se that a woman is discriminated from partaking in neither is a man discriminated from partaking in. Again the functions are well defined; its either you are a man and you function in those roles assigned to men. This is because of the hierarchy in the Catholic Church. I mean you don't have women in there and it's not because they are discriminated against, it's just that they are not called to be priests. Discrimination by my understanding will be that they are qualified, they can and they are prevented from it, just that they are not supposed to so it's not as if they can and they are not allowed to, so there is no discrimination in that sense. We have a woman in our finance committee here. A woman has been the head of the thanksgiving committee.

Another respondent stated that the fact that some women are not allowed to participate in some roles is not a form of discrimination;

It depends on what aspect you mean, because in the church there is what we call division of labour; there are some things that women do and men do and just as we have division of labour. We also have hierarchy in the church. For example, women are not priests and they can't do the work of priests and there are many functions in the church that they can do that priests would not do.

A respondent who participated in the study stated that women do not have to be the head of the church to take up position of responsibilities. In whatever position they hold, they can be relevant and contribute significantly to the growth of the church.

There may be some lapses here and there but it is like people are agitating to become priests and also women wanting to become priests. In fact, you don't have to be a priest to be a leader in the church. So many women have taken

leadership positions in the church. They don't have to be priests to do that. A woman can carry out other functions aside from the function of being a minister of the Eucharistic. When it comes to preaching, when it comes to proclaiming the word of God, a woman can do that and when it comes to every other function like in our liturgical worship, we have so many roles a woman can also participate but cannot do the specific work of a priest.

Furthermore, another respondent expressed a similar view;

Women are already leaders and don't need to be more leaders. God has given everyone different responsibility as was clearly stated when he created both man and woman and we are all to serve in those various responsibilities he has assigned to us. The same thing applies in the church. The women have the roles they play and we all appreciate and respect them for it but as far as the Catholic Church is concerned, they are not allowed to play every role in the church. The church has the hierarchical position which span from the pope who is the head of the church down to the priest and deacon. Hierarchically, the women are not there because they do have other roles that they play in the church.

In the same vein, a respondent's view revealed that the hierarchy in the Catholic Church is not a form of discrimination;

The women are allowed and encouraged to aspire to position of leadership that is within their domain. It must be noted that women can do a lot of things to propagate the gospel of Christ. But they are not ordained priests and this is because the law of the church doesn't permit the ordination of women as priests but this doesn't mean they can't help in preaching the gospel which is a responsibility that they carry out. The reverend sisters also assist in this area especially in the educational aspect of the church.

Apart from the Catholic Church, the qualitative study found that although women are allowed to aspire to the highest leadership position in the Pentecostal Churches, majority of the leaders are men. A respondent made this observation:

Now we have female pastors in our church; we have females that head departments in the church. We have females who are members of the pastorate in our church but the key leaders are men. You may now want to say do women preach? Yes, there are instances when women preach; women can share the word but when it comes to the positions of main leadership in the church, they are men.

Another respondent gave his view on women occupation of leadership roles in the church;

I am a reverend and the general overseer of our movement, foursquare gospel church, who is a man, is a reverend, and you cannot go beyond that. He is reverend Felix Med... Med..., I am a reverend too and I am a woman. So, women play very important roles in the church. I don't know of other places, but here I see young women aspiring also to come up. If you come in here and see me on the pulpit preaching, as I have listened to people before, you would say if this woman can do this I think I can also do it.

### **MALE DOMINANCE IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

In churches where women are allowed to rise to the highest position in the church, men continue to dominate the leadership. Factors identified by respondents as responsible for this ranges from women's domestic responsibilities to commitment to their husbands, which limits

their ability to aspire to such demanding positions in the church. Also, it was found that women need to develop their skills and prove the capability to handle leadership positions. One of respondents has this to say:

*You know what I see about a position is whether you are able to deliver either as a woman or man and when it comes to religious positions if your life matches your position in term of your personality, then there is no problem in that. It does not matter if you are a man and your life doesn't match the responsibility or you are not up to the task. Then it might be ok to put somebody who would be responsible there. It is about being responsible and representing Christ as much as you can.*

Another respondent noted that women's encumbrances with domestic responsibilities hinder them from active participation in leadership roles in the church:

*Well, it only starts from their own households. How does the husband see his wife that is holding an important position in the church; how husbands and wives see leaving their houses for church at odd hours and going back home at odd hours. These are things that restrict what a woman can do in the church. At times, you know men, when they see women in top positions, unless they see signs or wonders, they don't usually respect them.* A similar view was given by another respondent;

As much as you want to give them responsibilities, you also don't want to destroy their homes; you don't want to upturn the balance in their homes. So, to that extent, you have a limit to how much you can push them; you don't want to push them to a situation that their husbands would start complaining and now start affecting their homes. A man can leave home and come back the next morning. But when a woman leaves the home especially with little children, you expect that the husband would not be happy with that. That is the main reason why there is not much progression for women in the church of God. As long as women are not independent of their men, their husbands; there is limit to how much you can push them. If you find a situation where a woman heads a church, her husband must be an integral part of the church or else the man would be a threat to that woman. There are churches where women are the heads, they may have husbands, but the real heads are the women. Well they must find a suitable position for the husband, whether the head or whatever position for him in the church so that he would not feel too subservient to his wife. You know only few women have the understanding of what it takes for a wife to be the head and you, the husband, are an ordinary member of the church or just a church worker. It depends on church to church. In some, the men become the head of group; some the husbands are just ordinary members of the church and some they are ministers. So it depends. There is even a case where a man is transferred out of the country and the wife remains in the country, but those are exceptional cases. The limiting factor is the husband. As long as the husband does not have the kind of understanding that can carry such things, we can't promote them to the level of authority that the man begins to feel threatened.

### **GENDER EQUALITY IN THE CHURCH**

Findings from the qualitative study revealed that equality of persons in the church is a work in progress that is yet to be fully achieved. Although some respondents were of the view that there is equality in the church, others held a contrary opinion. Those who believe that gender equality has been achieved note that the ascription of roles does not imply any form of discrimination in the church. Some of the responses like the following were diplomatic in balancing the difference in perspectives:

*I would say yes (there is equality), I would also say no (there is no equality). I would say yes because we believe there should be equality, just as you said, we are preaching about equality because that's what Jesus taught us, but because we are human, I would not say we have arrived at that but an aim and objective we are pursuing which we have not arrived at yet'. I would not say there is none (equality) totally, but I would not say there is totally, it's a process, it's a journey that the church is making as men and women continue to embrace the dynamics of social change.*

Although the above response reflects aspects of inequality in the church, most respondents were of the view that people are treated equally in the church;

Generally, I think people are treated the same. People are at the helm of affairs; even before the pastors they give opportunity to everyone. So I will say that there is a degree of fairness to all. Here, we see ourselves as one, as a family. Nobody is superior to others. Everybody is equal before God. Your asset is the access you have to God. It is about the way, you know, how you can play your part, your position. It is the way of worship. It is how you see yourself before God. In the denomination I belong to, a woman can also rise to the highest level in the church which is to be a pastor. We have female pastors and we also have females that are leading our provincial parishes, zonal level. And we also have female as assistant general overseer. So, there is equality in the church.

Some respondents alluded to the Holy Bible where women were enjoined to be quiet in the synagogue, and instead to be responsible to their husbands at home. This part of scripture was cited as responsible for exclusion of women in leadership roles in church;

*I will not say there is marginalization or gender inequality. But only few women head the church. The belief is from the Bible where it states that a woman should be quiet in the synagogue. That was the belief. They expect them to keep quiet. That is the belief of many people. In some churches you can't see female pastors; you can only see male pastors. Like in Deeper Life Church, you can't see female pastors while in some other churches you can see female pastors and you know it will affect during the choice of leaders; if they want to choose leaders in church, it will be mostly men.*

Responding to the question of equality of persons in the Church, a respondent remarked:

In the Catholic Church all humans are equal and we respect this because we are all made in the image and likeness of God. So human being has the attribute of God in them so the human value and dignity is respected in all men. By men here we mean all mankind. Women are active members of the church, they join the choir and sing during our liturgical celebrations, in some places women assist on the altar as altar servers and also in some places as well women also assist the priest in the distribution of Holy Communion just like the Reverend Sisters do as well. Women are lectors: those that proclaim the word of God on the altar. So we practically have women in every aspect of our worship. The hierarchy of the church is the leadership of the church and as I said the leaders of the church from the Pope down to the deacons are men and so you may not find women in this hierarchy that may explain why there are fewer women. But in other leadership roles in the church that assumption may be wrong because we have women in almost every other area in the church.



## GENDER AND GENDER ROLES IN THE CHURCH

From the qualitative data gathered, it was found that the allocation of roles based on gender is majorly with respect to priestly functions in the Catholic Church alone. Women are not allowed to carry out priestly roles; however, this is not a form of marginalization or gender inequality as espoused by the respondents. In the Pentecostal and Orthodox churches, women are allowed to take up any role as men. However, responses from respondents revealed that women have to prove their ability to take up important roles before they can be considered; According to one of the respondents'

*I think in the church most of the time, majority of the positions are held by men so I think because of the way we have been taught to give those in authority respect regardless of whether they are men or women. We are taught to respect our pastor, so the respect is there. If we translate it to the larger society, we could consider different churches where a woman is talking. People could listen but they may not put much weight because it is a woman that is talking. I am talking about the larger religious society. That could be the way they see it, well I would rather prefer a man to speak with me than to listen to a woman. Because we have been taught the importance of pastors as the shepherds of the flock. So whether you are a male or female, at least within my church we respect them. Because for you to even mount that pulpit as a woman, you would have gone through so much training, it's not just anybody that will go there, and whoever is going to go there is going to be someone worthy of respect. Maybe at the larger society there are some people who think that some things should be left for the men; but that doesn't happen here.*

It was also discovered that the patriarchal nature of men sometimes influences their perception of women in leadership positions in the church;

It is a natural phenomenon. You understand the man is the head of the family, head of the Church. That is why men perceive themselves as being above women but of course, there are certain departments that are being led by women and the men folk in those departments respect them.

Another respondent reiterates the above view;

*I think it has to do with the way the society is. You cannot completely dissociate from the society and you cannot completely dissociate church from culture. Although we are changing that to make the church stand on its own without all that influence. In our society men are seen as a head, at home is the head we are just mere followers I think that is changing. Women are beginning to see that their contribution matters. But because we are in a society that men are seen as the head, women are just to tag along. That is like a foundation thing that some people believe is changing. Of course, when churches were set up men were at the forefront, women were meant to either be praying or singing. That was the mind set before, I want to believe, but now things are changing because men are beginning to think that women have something to offer, they execute things differently. They are now seeing that it will be nice to have women take top positions. And there are some females that are clergymen who have earned a lot of respect. Like I said its societal, there are even women who believe men are the head because of cultural and traditional mindset that is gradually going to an end. It is not an overnight thing that is why we still see more men in top positions. I think with time there will be an equal balance. And then another thing is that men have to encourage women to do these things.*

The traditional role of a woman in the family as being subordinate to the man was found to influence men's perception about women in leadership position in the church. A male respondent expressed this view;

There is no way there will not be issue of family, for example, if my wife and I worship in the same church and she happens to be the church treasurer. Sometimes, she might want to make a comment which I believe may lure her into trouble. Normally I should not say anything, but I can give her a sign "don't comment on that". She will decide to listen to me, not because I am a church member but because I am her husband. It means that within church members now, she has brought in family issues; the respect she gave me at home has been brought to church.

Also, it was found that men are not quick to subject to women's leadership unless they are sure they have what it takes to lead. A male respondent gave his opinion on allocation of roles to women in the church;

*It's true but the only clause is that they will try to check them to know if she has the ability. But if they see that she is indifferent to certain things.... I saw something in our leader yesterday. She said "please let us calm down". During my own time, I used patience too but sometimes, I used 'boldface' sometimes too". So she was being treated lightly and she was not going to do anything. Eventually she saw the need to stand her ground. When a woman goes firm, she can be more firm than a man*

Another respondent gave a similar submission;

'When it comes to positions, you pick people who can deliver. So you may have more men than women. I think women should be encouraged and allowed. Sometimes when you offer women some positions, they will rather not take it. They can say let the men do it. So there have to be some change in the mindset that those things are not just for men. So when we offer you a position, it means we believe in you. Women should also accept the position they are given because some women will rather not because they see such things as for men'.

The need for women to develop themselves and prepare themselves for leadership roles in the church was emphasized by another respondent;

*You know before appointment can come you must have proven yourself. Some women have this notion in their head that leadership position is supposed to be for men and therefore, lag behind in developing themselves, in presenting themselves for such opportunities. So, the only few ones that see themselves that they can do more than the people expect from them they are the ones occupying positions. For example, in RCCG, (Redeemed Christian Church of God) you go through believers' class, workers in training. After workers in training, you will go to School of Discipleship and you go to Bible College. In fact, when you have done Believers' Class, Workers in Training and School of Discipleship, you are qualified to be a minister. For example, now if you are just coming to the church and you have not gone to any of those schools, you cannot be appointed as a minister. That is number one. Or you stop at Workers in Training class, the best you can be is a church worker or to be a Sunday school teacher. You cannot be a minister. But if you have done School of Discipleship; that is one of the trainings that are given to the ministers in the church. When you have gone to the Bible College, you are qualified to be ordained as a full pastor in RCCG. So if a woman fails to go through*

*such trainings; even if they perceive that personally, her lifestyle is good enough to be a minister, she will not be appointed. So, it comes back to personal training for such positions.*

However, in the Catholic Church, it was found that due to the distinct division of roles, men do not have any issue with women in position of authority but no matter how brilliant or skilled a woman might be she can never become a priest and this is the grouse of feminists even among the religious.

### **REINFORCEMENT OF PATRIARCHY IN THE CHURCH**

Most of the respondents reported that there are aspects of Christianity, traceable to the Jewish tradition, which reinforces patriarchy:

*Even those who wrote the bible were particularly men; it's not just Africa and Nigeria. The Jews were highly patriarchal. It was Lord Jesus who came and changed the events. In fact, the problem they had with Jesus was mixing up with women, as a rabbi ought not to. So it's not peculiar to Africans. It has been there right from the word go. It has been corrected. Mostly it's due to cultural differences. In so many ways we see it. but it doesn't reflect in the modern church of today because women are encouraged to be where they are, just like the seven women who were ministering to Jesus for instance Mary Magdalene was the very first person to announce the resurrection of Jesus. She was given that grace by Jesus. In essence, Jesus Christ mainstreamed gender during his time.*

A similar view was expressed by another respondent;

It (patriarchy) is still in the church and I think it's not only from our culture. When you also go to the culture of the bible, I mean the culture of the bible, which is the Jewish culture, is male dominated and you know it's from the bible that the church has its foundation. But when Christ came he tried to bring value and dignity to women and it is what Christ brought we are trying to emulate. The kingdom of peace where everybody is given equal right; I think we can only arrive at that in heaven not here on earth.

Findings from the qualitative study also revealed that although there are aspects of patriarchy in the Holy Bible, it is not practiced in the church. A respondent stated that education and civilization has downplayed the issue of patriarchy in the church;

*This (patriarchy) is a traditional or cultural issue and not part of the church teachings. This may be noticed in some areas of some local churches but we cannot down play the culture of the people which the people themselves respect. But generally speaking patriarchy is not practiced in the church because we are all equal before God man or woman.*

Similarly, another respondent buttressed the non-practice of patriarchy in the church but asserted that there might be peculiar instances where patriarchy can be reflected;

The church is universal and welcomes all irrespective of gender, tribe or culture. There is no division whatsoever, whether between male and female. If people in some community now decide to bring in their culture which traces lineage from the men, that is for the local church, because the church also encourages enculturation so as to get the full participation of local people in the church. That's why masses can be said in local languages and also infuses some of the peoples' way of life into the liturgy but this doesn't change the substance of our

belief and worship style. So patriarchy in the church is not a universal term so I can't say it is reflected in the life of the church'

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results from the study showed that in both Catholicism and Pentecostalism that there exist some forms of patriarchy and gendering even though subtle. Pentecostalism due to its origin has been more dynamic in terms of mainstreaming gender even though the culture often hinders the extent to which it could embrace emerging changes in gender roles. Catholicism on the other hand is deeply steeped in orthodoxy due to its origin in Jewish culture which is anchored on patriarchy. Catholicism has consistently explained its position scripturally and as a result has been able to extricate itself from feminists' criticisms. These explanations were captured in the responses of the respondents who see nothing wrong in women being excluded from the priesthood. The implication of this study is that for society to achieve gender equality and mainstream women it should do away with patriarchy in all its ramifications. It is equally imperative to question traditional practices that discriminate and inferiorize women. Women can and have contributed immensely towards the development of society and thus should be encouraged to actualize their ambitions. Justice and equity demand that they be given equal opportunity to participate in every aspect of society. Gender discrimination should have no place in contemporary sensibility. Christianity ensures full emancipation of every human person, and wherever Christ is recognized as saviour and His truth is obeyed, the woman is esteemed in herontology. Her functions should be respected and fostered for a humanizing culture in the modern world. In the same vein allowing gender inequality into Christianity will negate the doctrine of the equality of the human person before God and relegate the giant strides made by the female gender in education and the public sphere which had contributed immensely to the development of Nigeria. In the light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

1. The leadership of the church should encourage more women to take up leadership positions in the church. This will send a positive message in the promotion of gender equality in the church in particular and in the society in general thus narrow the inequality gap between men and women.
2. Women should be encouraged to develop themselves and not shy away from taking up leadership roles especially in denominations where there exist no barriers.
3. Husbands should be implored to give their wives the opportunity to be actively involved in taking up leadership roles in the church. This could be achieved through seminars and enlightenment programmes to allay the fears of the men that their wives may become disrespectful.
4. The leadership of the church should enlighten religious adherents on the need to embrace gender equality and disabuse their mind from any misinterpretation of scripture that tends towards gender discrimination and oppression.
5. The leadership of the church should also encourage religious adherents to do away with customs and traditions that promote and encourage gender inequality.

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