

## **Social Context of Biblical Feminism in African Igbo Christology**

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### **Abstract**

Biblical context of feminism has been criticised by some scholars as measures of aiding women subjugation. But the progressiveness of divine revelation which determines and defines biblical position seems to be set aside for the preparatory provisions of God in the gender issue. With the rise of women liberation movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there has been a rapid upsurge in the consciousness of the rights of women in biblical studies and in the ecclesia. This long neglected area of status of women has received attention and the issue of women relegation, whether in religious or socio-cultural, political and leadership positions, has received a wide range of criticism. This paper examines, from Christocentric approach, how Igbo traditional society, like the Jewish society at the time of Jesus, looked down on the status of women because of cultural adulteration. The African Igbo society had a lot of respect for the woman and never in the origin considered her an inferior human being but lost grip of this feminine heritage along the line. With the abuse of the sacred institution by the introduction of western Christianity the subjugation of women was highlighted. But recent experiences and expression of 'positive feminism' by Christian men and women has opened a new way of understanding salvation and ministry of women in Christ's model of offering his life to all. Current feminist movements among the Igbo of Nigeria have challenged both men and women to see Christ's salvation for all as 'holistic' and non-segregational. Women are seen in the Church as 'full human,' and members who should occupy any position irrespective of gender, status or race. Women are no longer seen and treated like second class personalities in the Church and Society. There is more on the liberation of women in the New Testament theology than the subjugation disposition of some exegetes.

### **Introduction**

African Igbo Christology examines the biblical Christology from African perspective. It does not connote a Christology developed by the African and different from the Christology of the New Testament. Afro Igbo Christology is interpretational tool that examines biblical feminism from the standpoint of Afro Christian heritage in search of cultural identity and distinctiveness in a sea of Afro-Western aversive society. Biblical feminism takes cognisance of the cultural milieu it originated from. Examining feminism from its cultural milieu brings to the fore the subjugating nature of the Jewish cultural position on women and the value of

Christ's liberating and redemptive work. Without acknowledging the fact that Jewish culture did not favour women it will be difficult to see the enormity of the salvific acts of Christ. Jesus was Jewish and needed to be Jewish to fulfil God's Law thereby bringing God's liberating love that transcends Jewish culture. Therefore it was Jewish that Jesus did not include a woman in the appointment of the twelve disciples. But it was Christlike and divine, but anti-Jewish, that he included women in his ministry. He could not have posed a personality problem as divine and at the same time human without posing conflicting praxis in a nation so made up with subjugating attitude against women. The enigmatic life of Christ, notwithstanding, it was clear and well understood that the liberating love expressed on the cross was for the man and woman.

It will therefore be eisegetical<sup>1</sup> to declare a disjunctive account of Judeo-Christian approach to women from the standpoint of Pauline-Corinthian position alone (I Cor 14:34-35) when, in fact, a holistic approach which includes the Synoptic disposition would have been appropriate. In the first place Corinth was a Gentile city and not Jewish. Paul, in his ministry, spent most of the time addressing Gentile problems and not Jewish, as an apostle to the Gentiles. A number of biblical feminist exponents address biblical position from a premise that gives women a favourable position as if the Jewish Old Testament culture had regard for women worthy of emulation. Here is a case in question

Compared to other cultures of the time, Jewish women enjoyed great liberty and esteem, and many women distinguished themselves as prophetesses and leaders in Jewish society. Women such as Deborah, Esther, Hannah, Huldah, Jochebed, Miriam, Noadiah, Rachel, Rebekah, Rahab, Ruth and Sarah played important and decisive roles in Israel's history. As evidence of the equality of men and women, the Ten Commandments require children to honor both their father and mother.<sup>2</sup>

This author does not see any feminine subjugation in the Old Testament from the texts. It is his effort to discourage feminine subjugation, which is good, but forgot that proper biblical hermeneutics is still very necessary.

The author wants to advance the equality of men and women from biblical perspective but not balancing his exegesis. From Moses' statement, "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you" (Exodus 20:12) it is difficult to see the equality of men and women when the entire culture of the people puts women in a position that is very degrading. The emphasis of this text is found in the command to children not on gender equality. Among the women mentioned above only Deborah operated within a context that posed a challenge to masculine superiority position of Judaism. The rest operated within the feminine subjugation but, within the context, became a channel for community survival. The subjugating culture of the Jewish society did not give way even in the circumstances of the input of these women. Take the case of Esther, for example, she was a "Queen." Yes, a queen in the sense that she was the wife of a King not because she had the power to govern the kingdom. In fact, the king had other wives and they came in to see him according to a drawn schedule. That Esther was not free to see her husband except on the permission of the husband-king is a sign of grave subjugation. In fact,

she risked her life by going to the king when it was not her turn to see the king. Her punishment for that act would have been death. If a woman could be killed just for coming to see her husband without permission then one sees the height of subjugation. That her brevity brought hope to a Jewish race was an act of God. Yes, it was a necessary risk that eventually produced positive results, yet should not be cited as a case for women freedom or equality with men because gender equality offered nothing in this achievement. It had already been decreed that all Jews should be killed. As a Jew, Esther stood at the precipice of death. Also as a wife who had not yet been scheduled to see her husband she also stood at the corridors of death. Seeing the king and dying by policy or obtaining mercy, perhaps by her beauty, was an option. Pretending that nothing was wrong in the society and remaining silently in the palace as a Queen, then die eventually as a Jew when the decree matures was another option. She took the first option and that gave her what she wanted. That was a wise option. In this context it was God's favour that made her to excel and not the Jewish culture. The cases of Hannah, Huldah, Jochebed and the rest of the women mentioned above could be examined in the light of women subjugation in Jewish culture.

It is not overstatement to observe that every page in the Old Testament bears marks of feminine subjugation. "Even a perfunctory reading makes it clear that, with rare exceptions, women were regarded and treated as inferior, subsidiary creatures, often as little more than chattels."<sup>3</sup>

In support of the above position The Bible UFO Connection presents a striking picture of Old Testament thus:

Women in ancient Israel had their position in society defined in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the interpretation of those scriptures. Their status and freedoms were severely limited by Jewish law and custom in ancient Israel:

- ◆ Women were restricted to roles of little or no authority.
- ◆ Women were confined to the homes of their fathers or husbands.
- ◆ Women were to be inferior to men, under the direct authority of men, their fathers before marriage, or their husband after.
- ◆ Women were not allowed to testify in court trials.
- ◆ Women could not appear in public venues.
- ◆ Women could not talk to strangers.
- ◆ Women were required to be doubly veiled when they ventured outside of their homes.

The Glaring Truth

Women in ancient Israel had a status, not unlike that of women in Afghanistan, during the grossly oppressive rule of the Taliban.<sup>4</sup>

Advancing equality of men and women from biblical standpoint requires a position that examines Jewish cultural milieu and then interpreting Jesus' salvific sacrifice that brings liberation. Even in the activities of Jesus he did not deviate from Jewish cultural standpoint though he laid the foundation that brought about the liberating effect. It only requires a good

exegetical application of the New Testament writings to show how Jesus needed to be a typical Jew to fulfil the Law of God thereby bringing liberation to human race which also means liberation to the women race. Women subordination is clearly observable in the Old Testament. This refers to “cultural claims and customs, which maintain that men are primary and pre-eminent, and that women are secondary and, subordinate and under men.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Western initiative in women liberation**

“Forty years ago American women launched a liberation movement for freedom and equality.”<sup>5</sup> Though women liberation movement is a western initiative it has become a universal issue. As a result of this initiative it has become obvious that western culture is recently giving more serious attention to feminine issues. This approach is very necessary to break the masculine hegemony that eroded feminine freedom over the years. Interestingly, however, it is becoming easier for a man to go to jail in western culture for assaulting a woman than for a woman to go to jail for committing similar offence against the opposite sex. It is conventional in western culture for the man to offer a seat to the woman in a function before taking his. There are many constitutional rights protecting the position of women in western countries compared to what obtains in the developing and African countries.

Because many feminists read Christianity from Judeo-centric as against reading from Christo-centric missionary reforms they see subjugation from the New Testament pages. To such persons Christianity becomes the totality of religion and *freedom of religion* means *freedom from religion*. As a result of this “freedom” the Christian religion is seen as patriarchal and therefore male-oriented. Being male-oriented requires that feminists either pool away from its dogmas or re-translate sections it considers pro-masculine. By doing so, such Western feminists put themselves above the Apostles and over above the Bible itself. While women subjugation must be opposed and also bearing in mind that the Bible bears clear marks of women subjugation, it will be proper to define methodologies while examining women subjugation.

### **Hypocultural Approach**

One major defect of the practice of modern feminism method is the hypocultural approach. Here, some authors and feminine activists work under a doctrine that all cultures are subsumed in the socio-cultural standpoint of the author. Their ill-judged feminism is the beginning of gross error that undermines human natural interdependency and existence in a series of integrated relationship. Human culture is indeed dynamic as against that of the animal kingdom. Secular approach should be defined against religious approach. Secular approach must take into cognisance the legal definitions of the society. Legal standpoint of the society is influenced by the primal religion stipulations. The primal religion shapes people’s mental perspective, and in turn defines the way the people perceive women. The multi-religious standpoints and levels must also be religiously defined, bearing in mind the cultural bedrock of every religion. Every religion exists in a culture and every culture defines a people’s approach to feminism. It is very doubtful that there are religions that do not give room for progressive revelation, not Judeo-Christian, for sure. If religion is to be considered in feminism subjugation it should be considered from the progressiveness of divine revelation. One must appreciate the distinctiveness of the context that gave rise to the

religious standpoint rather than arriving at conclusions based on one's preconceived socio-cultural standpoint. According to Judith Soares,

It has often been argued that religion is a repressive force in women's lives, and religious texts advise on and justify the inferiority and subordination of women in societies across the globe. Foundations for freedom from religion as well as some feminists and women's activists all hold the view that organised religion is the greatest enemy of women and women's rights.<sup>6</sup>

Some have suggested that Christianity makes women second class citizens in response to Pauline statement, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:11-14): "If you believe in a "literal" translation of the bible then yes women are second class citizens, Christianity is a very male oriented religion."<sup>7</sup> When Paul's writings are taken holistically it becomes very necessary to see how Paul needed to apply the principles of situational ethics to solve a problem in a society that had cultural subjugation for women, without promoting women subjugation.

#### **The Judeo-Christian Dynamic Approach**

It is an absurdity and an error to present biblical Christianity as a male chauvinism and male-oriented. That expositors can explain biblical passages to suit and support their cultural chauvinistic standpoint does not remove the truth and strength of orthodox Christian belief. The first exegetical inaptitude arises when naïve expositors fail to appreciate the Judo-cultural standpoint that received appreciable changes in the orthodox Christianity arising from Jesus claim of superiority over Moses. The second exegetical inaptitude is inability to see christo-cultural progressiveness in progressive revelation. As a result of these two exegetical blunders some expositors lose sight of the dynamic and refining nature of biblical Christianity on culture. If all was that conclusive then Jesus will not have said, "But the helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26). While the personality of Jesus was the focus in this text his activities cannot be divorced from His personality. His liberating mission must be taken alongside his personality. Women liberation is in the liberation of the human race and that must be taken holistically. Pauline statements must be taken in the light of this liberating mission otherwise the mind of the author will be misconstrued.

One of the differences between Judaism and Christianity must be understood in terms of approach to feminism. Jesus' revolutionary mission must also be understood from a christo-biblical standpoint of his Jewishness in obedience to the Law and the changes that took place as a result of *salvific* sacrifice that climaxed his existence as redeemer. Jewish religion approached feminism from male oriented culture as a result of a fallen and depraved human race. Jesus needed to be a Jew to universalize redemption and thereby bringing about the emancipation of women. Emancipation of women must be understood from the christo-biblical context.

When Christians fail to see the difference between Christian feminism and secular feminism they create confusion in Christian community. Localization of Christianity must not be subsumed to cultural assimilation. God is above the human culture. God's word is above man's word. God reveals himself in the human cultural settings in part but in full in the incarnate Son of God, as the Christian believes. For a Christian, therefore, Christianity takes precedence over all cultural standpoints. This is standpoint that requires Christianity to be approached from the Christo-centric missionary perspective otherwise the truth is lost.

### **Freedom within Control**

The emancipation that Christ brings is not only for women but also for men. Yet, it is freedom within control. It is even natural that the fundamental human right of an individual ends where the fundamental human right of another individual begins. This is a clear principle of freedom within control. "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Corinthians. 3.17). This truth is applicable to both men and women. In every Christian freedom there is caution. There is limitation as the natural course of order requires: "Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (Gal. 5:13). This injunction applies to both genders as well as to all socio-ethnic behaviours. "Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor" (1 Peter 2:16-17).

Christians are required to be subject to one another. In Christian marriage the man is the head of the wife. He is required to love his wife and both are required to submit one to another. This is a divine order that makes room for peace. Where two or three are gathered there must be a leader otherwise there will be anarchy. Two persons cannot work together if they don't agree (Amos 3:3). To agree, there must be submission and consideration. God has made a man to be a man, with masculine qualities, and a woman to be a woman, with feminine qualities. Each complements the other. Family or leadership does not in any way connote gender superiority. The issue of leadership may however, be interpreted differently by different individuals based on some preconceived motif. The President of the United States is not a more superior human being than the rest of the Americans neither are the subjects of his leadership second class human beings or citizens. Somebody must lead for there to be peace. But in Christianity the issue is even more appreciative because Pauline injunction is "submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21).

### **Feminism from Christo-Centric Redemption**

African Christian theology is a theological reflection of Jesus and his works against the backdrop of the historical and current realities on the African continent. This theology sees Christ as the initiator of a new order. When feminism is studied from this standpoint it enables the sincere enquirer to see the stark realities of Jewish subjugation of women in the standpoint of Afro redemptive and accomplished work of Christ which is the crux of the incarnation. Jesus came to restore the order that was intended by God at creation. As a result of this position proper biblical feminism presents the human being in a fallen social order that degenerates continuously to the coming of Jesus Christ to a liberated and reconstituted social order. In the fallen social order the man is a despot and the woman is a slave. In the fallen social order human beings (whether men or women) are hopeless but in the reconstituted social order there is hope in Christ.

In the Old Testament Jewish culture human beings are represented in the hopelessness of human order. It is for this purpose that Jesus Christ came. It is anachronistic to represent Christian feminism from Jewish cultural standpoint. Yet, Jewish socio-cultural standpoint highlights the importance of the redemptive work of Christ which must be emphasized. Christian redemptive history begins from the Edenic fall which is preserved in Jewish cultural milieu and progresses to the salvific sacrificial offer of Christ on the Judeo-Roman cross. It brings liberation to both man and woman. It assumes that the old order is defective and humans are depraved. Conn has made a very factual summary of it thus, “in Christ the curse of marriage is lifted and complementarily restored (1 Corinthians. 11:11). The husband’s role of headship (1 Corinthians 11:3; Eph. 5:23) and the wife’s role of submission are reaffirmed but radically altered. Submission becomes a mutual calling (Eph. 5:21), transforming male headship from authoritative control to responsible care.”<sup>8</sup> While emphasizing the redemption that was brought about in Christianity by Jesus, Ruether observed that “According to Jewish Law, one was never to look at or talk to a woman who was not one’s wife; a rule Jesus broke to the astonishment of the disciples. To be touched by a woman with a flow of blood was to suffer instant contamination; an idea Jesus also rejects.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Jesus and Womanhood at the Resurrection (Matthew 22: 30)**

Christian theology rests on the platform that human culture is depraved and needs the redemption of God. Human culture is therefore to be judged by the Christian cultural redemption that prescribes divine standard. God’s standard is the ideal standard and Jesus is the incarnate Son revealing the eternal Father. Every feminist position that assumes Christian and does not see this redemptive approach is defective.

The struggle for equality of women will be justified when defined and approached from godly standpoint. In fact, at the beginning of the feminist movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the issue raised was obvious and well understood — “it focuses on de-Jure (officially mandated) inequalities, primarily on gaining women’s suffrage (the right to vote).”<sup>10</sup> It has also been observed that “whereas first wave feminism focused mainly on overturning legal (de jure) obstacles to equality (i.e. voting rights, property rights) Second-wave feminism addressed a wide range of issues, including unofficial (de facto) inequalities, official legal inequalities, sexuality, family, the workplace and perhaps most controversially, reproductive rights.”<sup>11</sup> One could see a widening range of interest. But the issues raised in recent times are far-reaching and becoming cumbersome to handle. Divyakohh has well observed that “over the years, the way we view that struggle has changed drastically and often for the worse. What once was seen as a noble fight for equality has of late been perverted by the idea that there exists only the status quo, and a sort of hyper-feminism which maintains that the only way to lift women up is to put men down.”<sup>12</sup> The method of correcting the human anomaly, subjugation of women, might be what Divyakohh refers to as “lifting women up by putting men down.” There are indications that some who want this problem to be solved are adopting methods that may not be christened. The concept of putting men down as the only way to lift women up is deepening its roots even inside the church. At the end of such method could be a more serious problem which has been created while solving another. Such important struggle need not be reduced into hyperfeminism.

According to Sean Conlon “If hyperreality can be thought of as a simulacrum which is so real that it is in fact unreal, then hyperfeminism is simply a form of female empowerment

that is so extreme that it is, in fact, disempowering or detrimental to the female subject”<sup>13</sup> Wendy insists that feminism is based on “a class analysis that makes men a separate and politically antagonistic group”.<sup>14</sup> Hyperfeminism is a doctrine that removes God from the struggle for gender equality. The struggle for liberation is biblical and that is the purpose of the mission of Jesus. However, when individuals advance their idea of liberation from secular standpoint it is allowed outside the Christian Faith provided it does not seek biblical support at some point. It is a movement that defines itself on the standpoint of human reason as against biblical standpoint. Jesus is a liberator and must be seen in that light.

### **The Feminine Potentialities**

Liberation outside godliness is the first step to bondage. Biblical godliness enables one to see the feminine power that is able to control any strong man like a hook pulls a helpless fish. The failure of the modern church is its inability to see divinely assigned roles in gender differences. God endowed the feminine species with such psychic potential that will melt down any strong man. It is all about ability to be feminine and not a godless struggle. The woman is already stronger than the man. Some feminists are yet to see this God-given positive potential.

It is this feminine force that, negatively directed, pulled down some strong men in the Bible like Sampson, David and so on. In fact, Paul said that Adam was not deceived. Adam was only helpless before the woman. He was quite conscious of what he was doing. He could not resist the feminine power, so he took the fruit from her and ate. Men are ready to spend everything to enjoy intimate relationship with a woman. There is a great influence in the woman which God has put inside her. In the same way that a nuclear reactor designed for constructive system could be re-directed to nuclear weapon for mass destruction so the positive potentialities in the woman can be redirected to pull down and destroy a man. The current hyperfeminism is an ideology against socio-cultural matrimony. There should therefore be a re-thing on the side of those who engage in a struggle outside God.

### **Purported Inherent Antagonism of Feminism**

**Anthropomorphic Expressions:** Using male features as pronoun for God is anthropomorphic expression. This is only a human way of communicating to human beings. God is neither man nor woman. God is a spirit. Just as human beings are relatively limited to God the anthropomorphic representation of God is a mark of language limitation. If there was a better language biblical writers would have used it. It is proper to see the human limitations at work here. The defect is not on the side of God neither does this language limitation thwart the salvation effort and purpose of God. God’s purpose is not defeated at all. Modern quest for inclusive language is a sign of theological crackdown and hermeneutical imbalance. It is a theological cacophonous representation of God as heterogeneous in gender when actually He is genderless. It is, in fact, forcing God into gender limitations.

**Marriage:** Christianity has been challenged as promoting enslavement of women in marriage by promoting female subjugation. It should be noted that Jesus did not only challenge polygamy but remarked that “at the resurrection we shall neither marry nor be given to marriage.” Marriage is earthly and transient. “We shall all be spirits.” There will be no *superiority* of the man over the woman. Even the family headship is only earthly and does

not go beyond the earthly. At the resurrection the woman shall not be considered on the basis of her marriage. She shall be considered on the basis of her believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps those Christians who perpetuate the subjugation of women have to be told this gospel truth.

**Equality in public Ministry:** In the Christian ministry there is no superiority of the man over the woman. Both are filled with the Holy Spirit without discrimination and equally participate in the prophetic ministry of the kingdom of God. Both are priests in the priesthood of all believers. Any human institution that precludes the priesthood of women in the present order is outside biblical Christianity (1 Peter 2:9). Pauline statements that seem to promote gender inequality must be taken in context; Paul never meant to be understood the way some modern readers want him to be understood. Exclusion of women in the Christian ministry, in some denominations, is a human interpolation that allows local cultures to transcend over biblical culture of Christianity. It is man made and is already fizzling out.

### **African Feminism and Ancestorhood**

In African cultural humanhood the greatest attainment of the individual is the ancestorhood. It is a life position every African aspires to. It informs the effort and prayer to live a good, ripe age with befitting burial rites at death. These will usually translate the individual into ancestorhood. Interestingly both the woman and the man are equally translatable into this highly esteemed status. None depends on the recommendation of the other to get translated. None is denied this position based on gender. It is an individual affair. If the female gender is not considered in the ancestorhood then the feminine inferiority and subjugation will be understood. The different African societies where women are subjugated and put in a second class position cannot explain their act, from the Ancestor perspective. From this standpoint it is argued that women subjugation in African cultural society was a misnomer and a conflict of ideology and praxis. Women subjugation is alien to the African and came in between by cultural assimilation. Africans have in the past respected women. The same way the Lord's resurrection theory explains Christianity gender equality so the African ancestorhood theory explains African Igbo gender equality. It is the selfish man at some point in history that will want to promote his masculine ego against the woman by introducing and perpetuating developments in culture that will position man in conflict with the woman in terms of women subjugation. That this is alien to the African Igbo is shown in the way these ancient Igbo subjugating practices are rapidly giving way to the freedom assumed in the ancestorhood theory.

### **Womanhood in Igbo land before the coming of Christianity**

While it should be stressed that Africans respected women as part of her ancient culture it is important to note that developments even before the advent of Christianity had started playing down on the respect and dignity of women. As a result of cultural adulteration womanhood became hazy in many African societies relatively early. The coming of Western culture through Christian missionaries made Africans to disregard the sacred and consequently subjugated women. Some may want to argue that polygamy in Africa is a sign of subjugation. It is sign of women subjugation in the modern society because of cultural adulteration. Polygamy, in the ancient African Igbo society did not connote subjugation. It rather established the compatibility and indispensability of the woman to the man. A man is

not complete in the African culture without the woman. A man's status was considered from the perspective of marriage. So also the woman's status was considered in her marriage. Some African societies may have subjugated women but that is quite recent and alien to the traditional culture. This position could be explained from the traditional names of Igbo society of Nigeria. In fact, some of these names show the highly esteemed position of women in the African Igbo society. *Ugwudiya* (honour of the husband) means that the man has honour based on his marriage with the woman. *Odoziaku* (preserver of wealth) does not only establish a woman as one who is prudent and expert in management it presents the man as one who is incapacitated in the midst of affluence without the woman. Oduyoye has rightly observed, "There is a myth in Christian circles that the church brought liberation to the African woman. Indeed, this is a myth, a claim glibly made and difficult to illustrate with concrete or continuing examples."<sup>15</sup> One should rather argue that it was the western Christianity that highlighted the subjugation of women. No doubt the subjugation of women may have been latent but mild. The African Igbo society had a lot of respect for the woman and protected her interest.

### **Male ownership of Land**

Some have used the male ownership of landed property to explain women subjugation in Africa. They say that family properties are shared among male children of the family in total exclusion of the female. With this point it is said that male superiority was typical of African society. It is proper to put the record right, land ownership does not in any way connote superiority. If it does, then one should be talking about the superiority of women in many African societies. Among the Ohafia people and their neighbouring Cross River Igbo societies land ownership is the absolute right of the maternal kinship. This is an ancient tradition that still obtains till date. In fact, it is the maternal family that owns the individual and children belong to their maternal homes where they share in the inheritance of land property. When a man dies it is the maternal family that share the property of the man and not the paternal family; though few changes obtain in modern times. When a boy is unjustly treated it is the maternal family that challenges the ill treatment. This is a tradition that has been there over the years. It is western Christianity that rather adulterated the people's culture and this has given rise to so much discordant cultures among the people, yet maternal ownership of the individual still obtains.

### **Christianity and Womanhood in Modern African**

It is true that Christianity has influenced African societies a great deal. It is also true that Christianity came to Africa in the gab of Western culture and Africans were told that everything in them was barbaric, fetish and antihuman. With this, African culture was brutally fought against by both the Western missionary and the Colonial Master. Respect for sacredness was fought against by the White missionary very aggressively. Womanhood that was sacredly respected became an institution of dishonour and disrespect. Male domination of the modern approach became a novelty. If the African had not been forced to denounce and destroy her cultural base she would have still accepted the salvation of the soul in the Christian religion in such a manner that will sustain respect for total womanhood. In the modern African society the position of the woman in the society is still very hazy. It now depends on the political inclinations of those in local authority. Right wing or Left wing political affiliation is a decisive factor at the moment. It does appear that in many African

societies culture is amorphous. The only aspect of culture that seems resilient is the traditional masquerading which typifies ancestral heroism.

### **Conclusion**

This study does not in any way suggest that women subjugation is not a practice in African Igbo society but insists that it is a latter development in the African Igbo society and should be resisted, using godly methods rather than antagonising men to women. Presenting a situation that establishes the man as a superior creature to the woman was never intended in the African Igbo society and that can be explained from and ancient ancestorhood which predates the women subjugation. African Igbo Christology as a tool takes bearing from African Igbo ancestorhood concept in comparison to the statement of Jesus in Matthew 22: 30 “At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.” While it is true that in recent times western Christianity has helped in the fight against women subjugation it should also be noted that it was the same western Christianity that introduced the disregard of the African sacred institutions which in turn highlighted women subjugation and inferiority to men. Interpreting the Christian liberation must therefore recognise the feminine servitude of Jewish culture from which the Christ’s salvific sacrifice assumes prominence.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Eisegesis, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisegesis>, Accessed June 3, 2010

<sup>2</sup> What does the Bible say about Women’s rights?  
[http://twopaths.com/faq\\_womensrights.htm](http://twopaths.com/faq_womensrights.htm), Accessed May 5, 2010

<sup>3</sup> Jesus the Prophet, the Son of God, or God, the truth, the lies, the myth, the controversy [http://www.submission.org/christians/templeton\\_women2.html](http://www.submission.org/christians/templeton_women2.html), Accessed July 2, 2010

<sup>4</sup>“Women in the Bible,” *The Bible UFO Connection*,  
[www.bibleufo.com/anomwomen.htm](http://www.bibleufo.com/anomwomen.htm), Accessed August 18, 2010

<sup>5</sup>Rose Uchem, *Overcoming Women’s Subjugation – An Igbo African Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women* (Enugu: Snaap Press Ltd, 2001) p. 23

<sup>6</sup>Phyllis Chesler and Donna M. Hughes, *Feminism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, The Phyllis Chesler Organization, <http://www.phyllis-chesler.com/129/feminism-in-the-21st-century>, Accessed August 22, 2010

<sup>7</sup>“Do women need freedom from religion?” Abeng News Magazine, <http://www.abengnews.com/2009/02/05/do-women-need-freedom-from-religion/> Accessed August 2010

<sup>8</sup>“Are women supposed to be second class citizens in church”, <http://www.city-data.com/forum/christianity/571048-women-supposed-second-class-citizens-church-6.html>, Accessed May 2010

<sup>9</sup>H.M. Conn, “Feminist Theology” New Dictionary of Theology (England: Inter-  
varsity Press, 1998) p. 258

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