



AFRICAN CULTURE, CHRISTIANITY AND THE PARADOX OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION: A SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ENQUIRY

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Abstract

Scholars on Christianity and African women have different opinions about celebratory and condemnatory narratives, neither of which adequately captures the reality of African Christian women. This article, therefore, offers a socio-religious inquiry into the paradox to understand how women's liberation and restriction coexist within African Christianity. The article employs ethnographic methods and radical feminist theory, sees African society as patriarchal, and argues that women have always been exploited and that only revolutionary change can bring about women's liberation in all aspects of life. The work reveals that Pentecostalism and AICs have created opportunities for African women's liberation through organized spaces of women's fellowships and prophetic ministries. However, these positions are constrained by visible limits such as: subordinating women's authority, doctrinal teachings that subordinate women, placing responsibility for family breakthrough on women; emphasis on some biblical teachings that subordinate women; and the domestic sphere remains organized around male headship, rendering public spiritual authority inconvertible into private household power. Therefore, a genuinely African Christianity that accommodates women as leaders requires a theology of mutuality, institutional reforms granting women equal access to governance, economic justice addressing structural constraints, and a critical rethinking of domestic hierarchy. Hence, the saving grace of African Christianity for women is found not in the absence of patriarchy but in women's constant negotiation of power within restriction.

Keywords: African Christianity, Pentecostalism, women's liberation, socio-religious inquiry, paradox

Introduction

African culture is fundamentally religious, and religion is employed to justify, protect, sustain, and reproduce cultural structures. Gender sensitivity and equality are central in stimulating growth and development in all spheres of life, which would eventually lead to national development (Adedayo, Adabembe & Belo, 2022). Unfortunately, African society is patriarchal in settings; however, despite this, patriarchal structures, women still play vital roles; they are indispensable due to their impacts on families and society generally. There is a Yoruba adage that supports this. *Kosemani lobirin*, women are indispensable; their impacts were visible in the socio-economic, political, and religious lives of the people (Adabembe, 2019). In the political arena, women were active, relevant, and visible. African women were recognised through their involvement in political councils. This is because Africans have seen



the wisdom of healthy social organisations in which all the people are believed to be important channels for a healthy and harmonious society (Jegede, 2012).

Economically, traditional African women have the adequate knowledge of how to cultivate the land, use natural resources, and maintain its conservation. African women were known to spent most of their time on the farm land or in the field (Ojo, 2001). Furthermore, in African traditional religion, women's leadership is noticeable; they play the roles of native doctor, possessed with spirits, and as a deliverer of divine messages to the people. Some women were diviners and sorcerers, while others belonged to one secret society or the other (Kassian, 1992). Women such as Tinubu Efunroye were politically strong and contributed to Nigeria political and economic development in her time. Mrs Funmilayo Ransome Kuti was the second Iyalode of Ibadan, she was influential and wealthy. She contributed to socio-economic and political life of Ibadan and Nigeria as a whole. Equally, there were women chiefs and some who served as regents after the demise of their fathers who were kings (Adabembe, 2025).

Christianity emerged from male-dominated or patriarchal societies that placed men in positions of authority in all spheres of life. In Jewish culture, the status of women is portrayed clearly by the fact that women could not be counted to make up a quorum for public worship. Priesthood and leadership positions were mainly men's affairs (Fatokun, 2006). However, there were women leaders still in Jewish societies. Mariam, the first prophetess in the Bible, was an able leader in Israel. The ability of Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt through understanding and patience could be traced to his mother, Jochebed, and Mariam, his sister, who co- trained him. Esther, an orphan, was also a woman leader in the Bible. She was beautiful and brave. Israel was saved from destruction by Esther's actions and diplomacy. Deborah was another woman leader who had the gift of prophecy. She was a Judge in Israel and also a prophetess. Her reign witnessed the conquering of the enemies. Deborah inspired heroic confidence and awakened the hope of freedom in Israel. She was the fifth judge in Israel who was raised by God to deliver his people from bondage (Fatokun, 2006). Meanwhile, Christian missions of the 19th century were the expression of a patriarchal society (Sundker & Steed, 2000). African women were relegated by the missionaries despite their relevance in socio- economic, political and African Traditional Religion.

In orthodox churches, men play dominant roles, while women are marginalised and relegated to the background in some administrative structures in these churches. Women in orthodox churches appear to be less valuable in the service of God. They are sometimes looked down on as less spiritual than men. This is apparent in the Methodist and Anglican Churches, where women are only allowed to function as Lay Readers (Fatokun, 2006). On the contrary, in the New Testament dispensation, during the time of Jesus, the way he related with women showed his passion, love, and concern for them. In fact, women were among the earliest believers and followers of Jesus. A good number of women, such as Mary Magdalene, Saint Joana, Susanna, Mary, and Martha, belonged to this group of women.

In the early Church, examples of Jesus' attitude towards women were followed by the apostles and as a result of this; women were prominent in the activities of the early Church. Women ministered unto the apostles out of their substance in the early Church. They equally held official positions of spiritual influence in the Church during this period. Women of this period played prominent leadership roles in church administration, much so in an equal stand with their male counterparts. The Pentecostal Churches probably borrowed this ideal, and that



might be the reason some of these Pentecostal Churches give women different roles to play in our contemporary Church.

Furthermore, Pentecostal Churches followed the example of Jesus in dealing with women and also borrowed the idea of the early Church whereby women were prominent in the activities of the Church. Giving women roles to play in the Pentecostal Churches has led to the production of great women Church planters, General Overseers, prophetesses, lady evangelists, pastors, teachers and many others.

The majority of the women whose husbands are Church founders have been great help mates to their husbands in assisting in the Church ministries. Prominent among these women as highlighted by Fatokun, are Rev. Dr. (Mrs.) Sam Amaga of Foundation Faith Church (a.k.a Salem International Churches), Pastors (Mrs.) Faith Oyedepo of Winners Chapel, the late Pastor (Mrs.) Bimbo Odukoya of Fountain of Life Bible Church, Lagos, Rev. (Dr.) Mrs. Funke Nelson Adetuberu of My Faith Ministry International Churches, and (Mrs.) Deola Ojo of Grace Family Church, Ibadan. One of the most noteworthy achievements of women in ministry is the full leadership status assumed by Bishop (Mrs.) Margaret Benson-Idahosa after the death of her husband in 1984. She took over the Church and it has continued to grow even after the demise of her husband (Fatokun, 2006).

Moreover, Pastor (Mrs) Funke Adejumo of Agape Church and Pastor (Mrs.) Folu Adeboye of the Redeemed Christian Church of God are women of great helpmates to their husbands. Also, the late Mrs. Abiodun Kumuyi was an initiator and writer of Christian Women Mirror, a magazine written to build godly women, which is published every month to teach women homemaking and leadership roles in the church and society at large. Despite the fact that women in Deeper Life Bible Church are not given the opportunity to lead, the late Mrs. Abiodun Kumuyi still contributed in no small measure to the development of women, the church, and society at large through her Christian Mirror Magazine. Pastor (Mrs) Bimbo Odukoya, until her death in 2005 was a popular televangelist, writer and a marriage counsellor, who ran the affair of Fountain of Life Bible Church with her husband, Pastor Taiwo Odukoya. Pastor Bimbo was a role model to other women and youths, and she impacted positively on many lives.

Likewise, women's roles and leadership in RCCG could be traced to the activities of Pastor (Mrs.) Folu Adeboye, the wife of the General Overseer. She is a woman of vision who has demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to her family and the Church. She taught women in the Church that, what a man can do, a woman can do better. As a result of these, women in RCCG have recorded great successes in leadership roles. This is why, today, RCCG has women who are deaconesses, assistant pastors, full pastors, and wives of pastors who assist their husbands in running the affairs of the Church. However, it is imperative to make an inquiry into socio- religious paradox of African culture, Christianity and women's liberation. This is necessary because "African culture is imbued with religion and religion is used to undergird and validate culture", (Oduyoye, 2001, p. 4).

Statement of Problem

Most articles written on culture, Christianity, and African women have focused directly on celebratory and condemnatory narratives, neither of which adequately captures the reality of African Christian women. This therefore propels the researcher to offer a socio-religious inquiry



of paradox for understanding how women's liberation and restriction coexist within African Christianity.

Objectives of the paper

The main objective of the study is to make a socio- religious enquiry of the paradox of African women's liberation within the Christian cycle. In doing this the article;

1. analyze the patriarchal components of African culture and Christianity,
2. examine how African culture and Christianity shaped women's status,
3. investigate impacts of socio-religious barriers on women liberation and empowerment in Africa,
4. contribute to scholarly discourse in socio- religious, gender study and African studies to reveal their complex relationship.

Theoretical Framework

Scholars have argued that women have always been at the receiving end, they are not fully empowered particularly at the religious sphere, where equity ought to be encouraged, (Adesanya, 2026; Adabembe, 2025). Using radical feminist theory, which is in the second wave of feminism that started around 1960, by some key proponents such as; Shulamith Firestone, Mary Daly, and Valerie Bryson this theory see society as patriarchal. It is ruled and dominated by men thus, men are the ruling class and women are in the subject class, (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). This theory posit that women has always been exploited and that only revolutionary change can bring about women's liberation. Mary Daly a radical feminist blamed women oppression and subjugation on male aggression while, another radical feminist Shulamith Firestone, 1972 was of the view that women's subjugation and oppression is as a result of their biology. Shulamith (1970) affirmed that there must be elimination of not just male privilege, but sex distinctions which put barriers on women must be eliminated. Valerie Bryson (1999) argued that women belonged to "an oppressed group who had to struggle for their own liberation against their oppressors. Hence, this article is theoretical inspired by radical- libertarian feminists. This theory affirmed that it is possible for gender differences in all spheres of life to be reduced or better still eradicated radical –libertarian feminists aims for a state of androgyny where there are no visible differences between men and women. These group believe that the differences between men and women are socially made, and if removed, there would be equality between men and women. The goals of radical feminist include:

- i. Reformation of traditional family structures and gender roles that reinforce patriarchal
- ii. Eradication patriarchal system that perpetuate dominance and contribute to gender inequality
- iii. Women's bodily autonomy (Olivia, 2026).

The radical feminist theory, which was propounded in 1960's by some by Shulamith and Daly, provides a basis for the consideration of the fact that women's oppression is deeply rooted in patriarchal society. The theory also posits that there is an existing relationship between women subjugation and oppression in patriarchal gender relations. However, some scholars such as Valery Bryson (1999), criticized the position of radical feminism on the



ground that, the concept of patriarchy as an impediment to women's liberation is descriptive and a historical because it describe the position of women without providing any explanation for it. Radical feminist were also criticised because they encourages women to focus only on their bad experiences with men and forget experiences of happy marriages (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). Nevertheless, radical feminist theory is relevant to this study. This study drew inference from the theory as the assumption of the theory explains reasons for women's subjugation and oppression in all aspects of lives. The implication of the Shulamith and Daly's radical feminist theory within the context of this study is that, men have majorly benefitted from women's oppression and women must struggle to liberate themselves from men who are their oppressors. The assumption of the study is in agreement with the position of Adabembe (2025) when he argued that: men's domination and the patriarchal structure of Nigerian politics have led to the oppression and exploitation of women in politics.

The suppositions about women in African culture

The word culture is from the Latin word *cultura* which means the cultivation of the soil. *Cultura* equally means the cultivation of human mind, this is mainly done through education (Dzurgba, 2009). Culture is a complete way of life of people, although not static it is what human beings have made of nature. Therefore, religion is used to undergird and validate culture in Africa societies. This is not unrelated to the fact that culture is imbued with religion and religion with culture (Oduyoye, 2001). Hence, culture is social heritage and it seeks to realise numerous values in society. Therefore, anything that African called culture cannot be criticised or questioned. Culture therefore, has contributed immensely to subjugation of women in all aspects of life be it socially, politically, and in religious cycles. Unfortunately, gender inequalities and subjugation of women and the supposition in African culture that women are to be seen and no to be heard are among the turbulence issues that have robbed women of dignity and development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Meanwhile, in Yoruba culture women subjugation starts from birth. It is always a thing of joy for Yoruba man of Southwest Nigeria their wife give birth to male child. The woman would be celebrated for given birth to *arole*, meaning heir or successor to the throne or *opomulero* pillar of the house and inheritor of family legacy. on the other hands a woman who gives birth to only female children would face the wrath of the husband and his family, female children in Yoruba community are sometimes compared to *agbara* meaning erosion who will sometimes leave the family and join another family. Therefore, a man whose wife gives birth to only female children would often time marry another wife. Therefore, the adage, *kaka ko san fun iya aje o fi gbogbo omo bi obinrin* which is interpreted to mean it could have been better for a witch if he has not given birth to female children only. Any woman that gives birth to only female children are considered witch. In fact, it can be deduced from some Yoruba adages that women are generally considered withes *bo birin ba pe nile oko a daje*, if a woman stays long in her husband's house she would turn to a witch.

A man is the head of the family in African society and must be reverend and worship by the wife, women are subjugated within the husband's family and she is part of her husband's properties, and can be shared with his properties after his death. The woman is supposed to obey, and follow her husband instructions in Yoruba society because he is the *olowoori* of the woman, meaning the one that paid her dowry. Wives are regarded as *eru* slaves within the husband's family, thus, the popular saying *eru o ki ri omo* meaning slaves



must not contribute to issues of the master. Therefore, a Yoruba woman cannot contribute to an important discussions, especially when it involves the husband's family and siblings. Thus, in the contemporary social media world, there has been arguments on whether wives should be added to their husband's siblings and families WhatsApp groups.

Politically, African traditional societies, especially Yoruba subjugates women when it comes to leadership positions. For instance, women can only be reagent for some Months after the demise of the king, it is more or less an abomination for a woman to be a king in Yoruba land, although there are stories of some women kings who contributed to the development of their towns, example is ooni Lawo Gidigba of Ile-Ife , but their number is very minimal compared to that of male kings and one would wonder why there are no women king in the contemporary Yoruba community. Unfortunately, the subjugation of women in African political space have crept into Nigeria political space.

Presently, in the history of politics in Nigeria there are no women governors or presidents, these positions are exclusively for men. Unfortunately, few women that are in State House of Assemblies, House of Representatives and Senate are discriminated against and sexualised as reported by Adabembe, (2025). The extent of sexualising and subjugating women in Nigeria political spheres was revealed, by the former president of Nigeria Late Muhammadu Buhari who served between 2015-2023 when in declared on BBC interview that " I do not know which party my wife belongs to, but my wife belongs to my kitchen, and my living room and the other room" (Adabembe, 2025, p. 3150).

Senator God'swill Akpabio the Senate president of 10th Senate was criticised for been sexist and dismissive when he verbally abused Senator Natasha Hadisa Akpoti on July 19, 2024, saying that the Senate chamber is not a nightclub, after the Senator spoke on a motion without permission from the Senate president. The statement he later apologised for (Sahara reporters, 2025). Unfortunately, Senator Natasha Hadisa Akpoti was later suspended when she made a petition of sexual harassment against the Senate president. Adabembe (2025) noted that, political career of Senator Akpoti Natasha has been characterised by party rivalry, political tension, and humiliation, legal battles subjugation and harassment. Thus the scholar confirmed that:

The attitude of people towards women politicians in Nigeria is generally unbecoming. It is often time hinged on the patriarchal and religious structures of African society, where women are believed to play supporting roles or are believed to be seen and not to be heard; this concomitant erroneous dominion mentality of the patriarchal and religious structure of African society have placed women at the receiving end, (p. 3150)

Fortunately, women are relevant in African sacred structures, the roles of women cannot be over-estimated, for example, they populates religious space, they introduce children to gods early in life, they are in charge of getting sacred waters that are meant for ritual purposes which Adewale, called *omi aifo*, (Adewale, 1986) preparation of foods during festivals and they are the one that takes care of sacred places by scrubbing and plastering them with *ere* made of special leaves and charcoal soak for periods of time for proper fermentation before use. Folorunso, (2006) asserts that, some roles in traditional religion in Nigeria are exclusively for women, some women are prophetesses or priestesses, diviners, medicine- women, and herbalists and they are recognised and respected has mouth piece of gods in Osun Osogbo and Iyamopo of Igbeti.

Folorunso (2006), asserts that, women serves as diviners, celebrants and priestesses in some traditional religion. For instance, in Ikere Ekiti, there are some water which could only be assessed by and fetched by virgins *omi yemoja* and *omi olumogede* are examples of these waters. Also in the same town, Olufayo, (1996), posits there are goddess that the has women has the priestess *Obanifon* is a in this category. In addition it has been confirmed that women helps to attract the presence of gods through their sonorous songs during traditional festival serve as celebrants in traditional worship, because they chant gods praises in other to bring their presence down.

The points above shows that women are inestimable in African religion especially among the Yoruba. Unfortunately, Adesanya (2011), reveal that women are restricted due to their biological made up. That is some women are not allowed to participate in some traditional rituals due to menstruation, but virgins and menopausal women are allowed to be devotee of some gods and goddesses. Hence Oduyoye (2001) declared that, African women are denied in participating fully in religious rituals for almost half of their lives, thus, their humanity are not affirm. Thus, women are strictly restricted to some cults and are not allowed in *oro* festival and this is evident in some of the Yoruba saying turned to song;

*Awo egungunl'obirin le se;
awogeledele'obinrin le mo,
b'obinrinbaf'ojukanoro, oro a gbe e*

“A woman could participate in the *Egungun* festival
She may even know about the *Gelede* festival.
But will pay with her life if she dares to surface
at the *oro* festivals” (Adesanya 2011, p. 108).

The researcher's argument on exclusion of women from some cults is that, women are known to be naturally compassionate, they are *abiyamo*, meaning a woman that gives birth to and nurture children, hence, cannot stand some evils perpetuated by men such as killing for rituals and the rest thus, priests that are involved in these acts exclude women from such cults. The fact that, *ifa* copus reads *obinrin lodale obinrin leke , e ma finu han obinrin* which literarily means “women are traitors, they must not know your minds”, clearly shows that, these men were involving in some unwholesome acts which *abiyamo* a woman that gives birth and nurtures children would not allow to happen in her presence hence they are excluded from their evils. In some Yoruba society women are considered as children the popular adage *tomode ba foju di oro , oro agbe* meaning if a child dares *oro* cult, such a child will face the consequences. Oduyoye, (2001), confirmed that *omode* in this context is a woman who may want to look at *oro* cult.

Gender Disparity in Christianity

Scholars such as Oluwafemi (2019); Adabembe (2019), Audu and Eregare (2021), and Adesanya (2025) have blamed the visible presence of gender divide in African on both Christians and Muslim Missionaries of 19th. Christianity instead of advocating and promoting gender balance and equation which these scholars affirmed is visible in African Traditional societies before the influx of missionaries to Africa heralds gender inequalities in African religious settings. Christian missionaries of Catholic and CMS were the breeding ground for



women's marginalization, subordination and oppression. These missionaries misconceived and misinterpreted biblical passages to marginalize, subordinate and oppress women. The ministry of Jesus and his attitudes toward women was entirely different from the way women were treated and seen in Jewish society which is the foundation of Christianity. Oluwafemi (2019, p. 135) argued that "Jesus was restoring the dignity of women, He neither sidelined men, nor stripped them of their dignity....Religious interpretation, rather than religion itself, masterminded the marginalization and dehumanization of women".

Male domination and patriarchy is so visible in Christianity to the point that women who are known to populate religious gathering are conspicuously playing subordinated roles. Liz Mary Antony in her article "Genesis of Subjugation: An Eco-feminist Reading of The Bible" observed that the "patriarchal structure of our world used the Bible as a means to subjugate women followed by that of the natural world". Sundkler and Steed (2000), were of the view that the complicity of the church in women subordination and oppression is so visible because of patriarchal set up of Protestant or Catholic church which originated in the nineteenth century and their structures resonate with patriarchal structures of an African society. Eaton (2005, p. 33), affirmed that:

From the earliest times to the present, Christian religion, as a social, political and historical force, has been deeply patriarchal, with all that it entails. Because the Bible is still considered to be a sacred text, and is predominantly patriarchal, it gives patriarchy a sacred blessing.

Therefore, it is imperative to examine some biblical passages used to subjugate women in Christianity. Adesanya (2026) identified four common biblical texts that have been used to subjugate women and empower men in Christianity. These Bible passages are Genesis 2: 18-25; 3:16. Ephesians 5:21-33, 1 Peter 3: 7 and 1 Timothy. 2:11-15 two out of these Bible passages identified by the scholar would be discussed in this article. Orebiyi (2001), gave two interpretations to Genesis 2:23 "And Adam said, this is now the bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man".

Firstly, she assumed that, taken out of man can mean been less than man, while bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh can be interpreted to mean woman was an essential part of man and equal to him. In her argument, she affirmed that, woman was not created to be subjugated or inferior to man but was made in the image of God like man.

Ephesians 5:22-24 reads:

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Oduyoye (2001), in her analysis of Ephesians 5:22-24 noted that, women need to be free from the prohibition of leadership placed on women of all ages, race and colours even beyond the end of ages through this declaration of Paul. If critically analysed, it can be deduced from this declaration is that Paul of Tarsus was addressing some group of women, in a particular situation, at a particular place, to address a particular issue when he made this declaration, hence, this should not be quoted out of context to subjugate women of all ages as it is today. The Bible passage has wrecked more harms than good in Christianity. For example, (Adesanya & Adabembe, 2022), affirmed that, it was the particular Bible passage Ephesians 5:22 that



reads “wife submit yourselves to your own husbands as unto the Lord, for the husband is the head of the head of the wife” which has been quoted out of context by church leaders to enable abusers and the passage is used mainly to subjugate women in Christendom. These scholars cited the example of popular Nigerian gospel artists Osinachi Nwachukwu who died has a result of domestic violence and fear of being stigmatized within the church.

Although scholars, have written extensively on women liberation in Pentecostal and African Initiated churches. The question is how liberated are women within the church? Adabembe (2025), reveals the condition of women in Redeemed Christian Church of God, in Ekiti State, she affirmed that, although they seems to be liberated but their liberation is attached to their husbands because before they could be given any position, their husbands are made to sign consent forms of releasing them to serve in this leadership capacities.

Women subjugation in Christendom is so visible in practices that there are areas and zones within the church that women dear not move close to or entered for instance, one of the popular prayer Mountains of Christ Apostolic Church called *ori oke Erio*, marked some places exclusively for men while women are prohibited from getting closer or praying in these zones and areas of the mountain, also women are not allowed to be pastors in Christ Apostolic Church. Scholars have affirmed that 1 Timothy 2: 11-14 and 1Cor 14: 34-35 are used to define gender roles for men and women within the church. The passages have been used to subjugate women thereby deny them the opportunity to used their God’s given talents in the church. In another instances menstruating or women who have just given birth are prohibited from entering the church or putting on their white garments even if they are church leaders and founders. Adesanya (2026), noted that, the paradoxical implication of tagging menstruating women unclean is that, the same blood that brings life and makes the African woman a vessel of life, is the same blood that makes her unclean and dangerous. Thus, the implication of this restriction placed on women by in Christendom does not affirm the humanity of Africa women and Yoruba women in particular.

Deducible Facts on Religio-cultural Barriers Impacting Women’s Liberation and Empowerment in Africa

As noted earlier, African culture is fundamentally religious, and religion is employed to justify, protect, sustain, and reproduce cultural structure. This symbiosis therefore creates sets of barriers to women’s liberation within Christianity which emerged from male dominated or patriarchal societies that placed men in the positions of authority in all spheres of life (Adabembe, 2025). Thus, these barriers are not only social customs, but they are sacralised to subjugate women within Christianity, hence, they are resistant to change. This aspect of this research therefore, identified religio-cultural barriers, their mechanisms and impacts on women’s

- i. The doctrine of male headship has been canonized in African Christianity has divine order for male authority over women. Although, scholars have punctured the bible texts (Ephesians 5:22-23, Colossians 3: 18-25: 1Timothy 2:11-15) used to support these assertions as a culturally response to specific situation in Greco–Roman community. Unfortunately, women who challenged male authority are seeing has not merely violating custom and tradition but disobeying God. The impact of this on women is that, they internalize it as a religious duty thereby limiting their capacity to



advocate for equal partnership in church, society and marriage. Women church leaders and founders are subordinate to their husbands, (Soothill, 2007).

- ii. Exclusion from ordination is part of religio-cultural barriers impacting African Women in Catholic, Anglican and some Pentecostal excludes women from ordination the implication of this is that the spiritual authority to women are reduced to an informal setting which can be easily dismissed. Also, women are conspicuously absent from decision making that determines and set policies on marriage, divorce and domestic violence.
- iii. Disciplinary Mechanism is another barrier facing women, it has been confirmed that women who challenge male authority and seek divorce from abusive husbands or exercise independent spiritual leadership are labeled of being possessed by the spirit of Jezebel. Soothill (2007) affirmed that the labeling is to serve as deterrent, which can include; removal from leadership, public shaming, and in some extreme cases excommunication. The impact of this on women in Christianity is that, liberation efforts face resistance not only from men but also from women who have accepted and internalized patriarchal theology as the will of God

A Socio-Religious Approaches to Overcoming Religio-Cultural Barriers

- i. There is need to develop and disseminate African feminist hermeneutics that interpret patriarchal text from liberation perspectives.
- ii. Harmful cultural practices against women needs to be challenged through theological education and promotion, distinguishing between culturally specific practices and core gospel values
- iii. Mentoring of young women through raising awareness groups within churches, by using biblical role models of women such as: Deborah, Esther, Phoebe and Miriam who were relevant and forces to reckon with during their epoch.

Conclusion

The barriers facing African women in Christianity are real, durable, and sacralised, but they are not total. African women have not totally overcome religio-cultural barriers, but the saving grace is that African women, within and despite these barriers, continue to claim spiritual authority, build economic networks, reinterpret scriptures, and refuse to be silenced. Conclusively, Oduyoye (2021), reminds us that while women's liberation remains incomplete, the journey has already begun; movement, speech, organisation, writing, and prayer mark the path forward, and there will be no retreat.

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