

**‘HAVE THOU NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT JUST MAN’: A
PHILOSOPHIC-THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON MATTHEW 27:19 “THE
ROLE OF WOMEN IN GOOD GOVERNANCE”**

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Abstract

To undermine the role of women in good governance is to take for granted the fact that women from time immemorial have contributed in so much measure and have participated in politics and good governance not necessarily that they become actively represented in the political terrain as equal to the male folk. In fact, the whole idea of feminist argument most times is a critique of biblical stories that are depicted from a male dominated society and this has made it possible for feminist to react by questioning the status quo from a philosophical approach. Unfortunately, this is not the case because in biblical times women have used so much of what they have either positive or negative to influence decisions of great leaders in biblical times and such decisions remain sacrosanct and have salvaged so many decisions that contributed to the governing of the society especially when life is at stake. This paper in a qualitative research philosophically import a theological reflection on Matthew 27:19 and argues that women irrespective of their status in the society not necessarily as leaders can influence decisions that can help build society so that feminist thought does not see power and authority only via political elections but also can make significant impact through the influence they have on the male folk to change situations for the purpose of good governance.

Introduction

The tensions, problems and issues that come with enlightenment make society more interesting. There will be no need for continuous education if there are no tensions, problems and issues in the society; and in so doing the art and humanities will have nothing much to offer society. It is as a result of these

tensions, problems and issues that the art and humanities will continuously put on its thinking cap so as to bring a balance where there are tensions; solutions where there are problems; and clarification where there are issues.

Feminism is one of those issues that have caused problems and tensions in the family and society and these have come into the political arena where women have decided to seek equal status with men in political participation. Feminism has raised lots of issues but this paper will restrict feminist agenda to political participation for now because there is now a popular belief that the current failure in leadership especially in Africa is as a result of male dominance in the political scene. Hence, the female folk are contentiously demanding equal status of representation with the male folk. This has become very pertinent that even in our local communities, tribal meetings and association, in the church and most likely in the mosque it is very common to hear that stakeholders should be “gender sensitive” in distributing leadership position. This is because women in the past and even in the present have constantly demanded for position that befits their status as human beings so that they too become decision makers in any given opportunity. According to Ogabo Godwin Adinya,

The Bible and Christianity historically have been interpreted as prescribing distinct gender roles, with women often being excluded from church leadership. Until the second half of the 20th century, institutionalized Christianity was unfavorable to women in pastoral and ecclesiastical offices (2018:75).

This has led to the development of a feminist theology found in several religions, including Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, to reconsider the traditions, practices, scriptures and theologies of those religion from a feminist perspective. According to Grenz and Olson,

feminist theology was developed in three distinct steps. They begin with a critique of the past such that they review the ways women have been oppressed; they seek alternative biblical and extra-biblical traditions that support the ideals feminist are trying to advance, and finally feminists set forth their own unique method of theology, which includes the revisioning of Christian Categories (1993:227).

Feminist theologians did not leave out feminist Philosophers in this scholarship battle attention to women; as such Plato did not deny women leadership role and given his view that some women should be trained to rule (*Republic*, Book V). If Plato would consider women for leadership then the question is, who denied

women their roles in decision making? Who should restore their roles back to them to make decisions? Does the participation of women in political leadership automatically translate into good governance? Do women have an antidote to corruption since every human being has tendency to be corrupt?

This paper in attempting to philosophically assert the fact that it is an ontological reality that women have always been given the opportunity in making decisions considering the normative sense that men and women are entitled to equal rights and respects; the paper also theologically extrapolates Matthew 27:19 as the basis in which scriptures acknowledges the significant roles women have played in the galvanization of good governance not necessarily through political leadership but through consultation, advice, counsel, dialogue etc. and such were put into significant consideration and even became more effective.

Feminism: Not a Struggle for Power

The development of feminism has led to attention being focused on the subordinate position of women in our contemporary societies. Yet, there is little agreement about the causes of this inequality or about what actions should be taken to reduce or end it (Haralambos, Holborn, Chapman & Moore 2013: 104). This has led to different schools of thought leading to multiplicity of theories been developed every day by feminist irrespective of their field of study. Hence, it is really becoming very difficult to define the concept "feminism". This is largely because feminist have not been able to distinguish what is normative from what is descriptive. Feminism describes the position of women without providing any explanation for it but always making reference to history how men have either been bad to women or how men have denied women leadership positions. This makes the definition of feminism very ambiguous because it is largely based on sentiments of the past devoid of rational grounds due to the fallacy of argumentum ad hominem. This kind of argument occurs when it is used to counter another argument; however, it's based on feelings of prejudice (often irrelevant to the argument) rather than facts, reason and logic. An ad hominem argument is often personal attack on someone's character or motive, rather than an attempt to address the actual issue at hand. It is in most cases an appeal to emotion in the courtroom and politics. Often, the attack is based on a person's social, political, or religious views. On this account, that women and men ought to have equal rights and respect is the normative claim; and that women are denied equal rights and respect functions here as the descriptive claim. What is the cause of women being marginalized? Should a particular claim be universalized as a justification for the cause of the marginalization of women

in the development of feminist ideology? What becomes a normative foundation for feminism that will embrace a universal rational ground for the cause of women being marginalized? What about circumstances where women are not marginalized but are made of valuable assets to society? Should the marginalization of women be considered based on number or value?

Given the normative grounds for the equality that exists among men and women already gives a rational ground that the descriptive situation does not explain the cause of the feminist agenda but more or less a reaction to the status quo due to aberrations that can also be faced by both genders. This means that it is morally wrong for a woman or a man to be marginalized since they normatively share the same equal status as human beings. As such, in responding to Marie Pauline Eboh's opinion that the narratives of gender inequality and some of the socio-cultural values and norms disempowered women (2015:1) might not necessarily be true because every human culture promotes the fundamental dignity of the human person. This fundamental dignity is a value and a norm; but where there are discrepancies it becomes an aberration due to selfish interest of human nature. Therefore, laws might be made to disempower women but this is not the case of norms and values. Values are associated with ethics and norms and they are not based on individual consent, anti-universalizing, naturalistic and humanist tendencies (2015:219); rather values and norms will question the disempowerment of women and cannot be against itself. The disempowerment of women has no basis on values and norms and ethics but rather the disempowerment of women is the aberrations of societal doings and imperfection. It is this basic foundation of norms and value that characterizes the fundamental argument for the equality of male and female.

To situate feminism to leadership qualities according to Harriet Bradley is not a criterion for performance or the ability to make decisions or hold positions of authority, so largely monopolized by men, is not inscribed on male and female bodies (1997:76). Therefore, to limit feminism to struggle for political participation does not justify performance but rather performance justifies the feminist agenda in terms of political participation. Political participation through leadership comes with competence and merit and not by mere seeking political office. Feminism does not struggle for power for its own sake but rather it creates an awareness and disposition on the appropriate use of power for the good of society. In most civilized societies no one has ever denied women the right to political participation or political leadership but considering the descriptive nature of society there is always a place to have or create differences as the

society is not a perfect society. Despite the normative dimension to the equal status of man and woman it will not be out of place to also factor the fact that the society was once a victim of slavery as descriptive dimension to what the society projects. Our society is naturally a place of imperfections and in constant need of corrections and restructuring and as such slavery in the past was also a projection of the imperfection of society in which both males and females were victims of the descriptive nature of society. Hence, gender inequalities are based in gender relations, in the complex webs of relationship that exist at every level of human experience (Odey, 2018:237). Most feminists according to Bisong argue that what they crave for is not equality, but equal opportunities. Equal opportunities cannot be given to unequal people (2015:63). This makes feminism to be more or less a reaction than a rational inquiry into the past and present and in so doing maintaining the normative sense of its principle rather than a struggle for political leadership or participation. According to Bisong Peter, if equality is a fundamental property of every human, then the women would not need to struggle for equality, for they would necessarily be equal by birth (2015:61).

To participate in the political affairs does not necessary rest on securing a leadership position but the ability to influence decision making directly or indirectly. There is no doubt women have been intentionally denied participation in the management and affairs of public life but in most cases these denial are not intentional but aim at protecting the woman's dignity. In most African cultures the dignity of a woman is in her silence not because she does not have the political will but her silence dignifies her. Furthermore, Odey Samuel Odey also agrees that this inability for women to participate in politics also constitute the fact that women have in the past lacked the financial strength to participate in the political life as compared to the financial strength of men (2018:243) as this could be another reason why her level of participation was not intentionally denied. The question one may ask is, does the denial against women in political participation be it intentional or unintentional negates the ontological or normative argument that they are of equal status with men? It therefore means that nobody has denied women the right to leadership but the domination of men in the past and present were based on circumstances and opportunities at the disposal of men of which women who possess such opportunities and privileges used same for exceling in leadership position. It therefore would mean that women themselves will be responsible for their emancipation. According to Bisong, equality does not lie in existence but in essence and everybody needs to lie on its own essence if he/she wants to be equal with the person he/she

perceives to be superior to (2015:61); but this can only be done systematically and strategically. It is this strategic and systematic implementation of feminist agenda that will reduce tensions and problems in its realization of the feminist dream. Hilary Clinton is quoted to have once said in a tweeter handle of the United States Embassy, Harare that “there cannot be a true democracy unless the voices of women are heard. There cannot be a true democracy unless women are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own lives” (2019). In as much this is true; what Hilary Clinton did not explicitly express is how these voices of women should/can be heard. This is why it is imperative to use the biblical model of Pilate’s wife as a strategic and systematic influence to save her husband from guilt as he washes his hands off the death of Jesus Christ.

A New Approach to Leadership: What Leadership Is Not

Leadership has been given so much attention in a formal academic discourse to the extent now it has an informal discourse in fields of church leadership or pastoral implementation and areas related to principles of management. One common denomination of leadership is service; there will be no better way to understand leadership as service reflected in Luke 22:25-26 thus: Jesus declared, “the Kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them call themselves benefactors. But, you shall not be like them. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest and the one who leads like the one serve”. This is usually called the servant-leadership style and a model recommended in any genuine democracy. This servant-leadership style operates not just on the level of literally climbing the ladder of leadership position. It also involves leading through proxy or what could be described as “Leadership by Proxy”. This means one must not necessary serve through the vehicle of leadership position but very possible to influence decisions through established relationships. Leadership by proxy engages the powerful influence of women to constantly engage their husbands positively in the affairs of public or political life.

Women can serve the people and their voices can be heard in a silent manner and become more effective than when leadership position is granted to them. This will help reduce the tension that arises in the struggle for political power or leadership. Leadership is not necessarily the struggle for power but when feminists are looking for leadership position, most times it does not necessary translate into effective positive change. Feminist should constantly avoid the political battle ground despite their unique sense of resilience and compassionate characteristics. This is because according to Odey Samuel Odey:

Excluding men from work on gender relations can provoke male hostility and retaliation. It can intensify gender inequalities and thus leave women with yet more work to do among unsympathetic men and patriarchal power relations. Given that women already interact with men on a daily basis in their households and public lives, involving men in the renegotiation of gender relations can make interventions more relevant and workable and make lasting change (2018:245).

Therefore, women should not necessarily focus on political power as if feminism begins and ends with political power or dominating the family but their ability to renegotiate through positive influences as an alternative methodology in leadership through proxy. So far, there has been a deplorable effect of feminism on the base of society because its descriptive sense of the situation is shaking the foundations of the normative discourse. Extreme or hard feminism can destroy rather than build; but a balanced sense of feminization instills sanity for the progress of society. Feminism has destroyed marriages and has destroyed the moral foundations of so many societies due to radicalism in approach without the moral foundations that characterize society. The difficulty lies in the frustration of some women who lack the disposition of psychological maturity and when the discourse of feminism suffices and emotions set in, devoid of rational inquiry. Radical feminism has condemned men in leadership positions and sees men as literally bad and women as the perfect model of leadership. This has led to an inaccurate and unworkable view of men as “the enemy”, which suggests that they cannot be trusted as fathers, leaders, friends, sexual partners and political allies.

Leadership is not just about taking over positions but to bring about positive change; every human being has the capability and potential to bring about change and not an exclusive right of women or men but the inclusiveness of everyone irrespective of gender with the goal of growth and sustainable development.

Feminism and leadership does not necessarily translate into positive influences but the feminization of the process of involving women to use their natural position as women to emotionally persuade the male folks to act rightly and justly. This does not in any way negate or challenge women from taking leadership positions; but when given the opportunity and privilege to transform

society, they ought to challenge the status quo not merely by sitting on the position of leadership but by acting accordingly to transform society for positive change and sustainable development.

A Contextual Analysis and Theological Reflection on Matthew 27:19

It is very important this paper limits itself to the situation that took place in Matthew 27:19 so that we don't begin to dig too far on the nature of biblical language used. At the same time, to the best of what this paper intend, it shall justify its purpose. It is difficult to know the name of Pilate's wife as it is not recorded in scripture but according to *John Hills Exposition of the Bible*, her name was Abrokla who might be a Jewess, as the wife of Felix was (Acts 24:24), and a favorer of Jesus, or at least, a religious person, and if only a mere Heathen, yet had some notion of justice to be done; and however, pressed by her dream, sent a messenger to her husband, as he was trying this cause: saying "have thou nothing to do with that just man"; meaning Jesus whom she either knew to be so, or concluded from her dream that he was one: and her sense is, that her husband would have no hand in his condemnation and death, but rather do all he could to release and save him. There are a lot of twists to this text as narrated by Matthew considering the nature and purpose of the death of Jesus Christ.

The question thus follows naturally: Was the woman not a stumbling block to the mission of Jesus Christ? It depends on the point of the argument but our concern here is the influence she had by communicating with him in relation to the subject matter. Despite the dream, Matthew does not indicate the content of that dream. Lanyer (2012) in *Women's Bible Commentary: Twentieth Anniversary Edition* envisions the dream as one in which Pilate's wife comes to understand the true nature of events in the Garden of Eden and the relative culpability of Eve and Adam. While there is so much interpretation of these texts, for this paper we shall take a simplistic approach as regards the role women play in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament and in a similar role with the execution attempt of Mordecai who was saved by a Jewess known as Esther who pleaded with the King Xerxes not to kill Mordecai and her influence which was strategic and systematic. These were the words from Mordecai to Esther: "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this" (Esther 4:14). Women should continuously break the silence despite cultural barriers not necessary when they

are in leadership position. Esther and the wife of Pilate broke the cultural barriers in the Jewish cultural setting where women were not supposed to come into the courts where the King resides. In the case of Pilate's wife she sent a message and it is more of a strategic and systematic acknowledgement of the role women can play in good governance to save lives or to enhance lives.

According to Tracey Rich (2011) in *The Role of Women*, she opined that traditional Judaism has been grossly misrepresented and misunderstood. The position of women is not nearly as lowly as many modern people think; in fact, the position of women in *halakhah* (Jewish Law) that dates back to the biblical period is in many ways better than the position of women under American civil law as recently as a century ago. Many of the important feminist leaders in the 20th century (Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedman) are Jewish women, and some commentators have suggested that this is no coincidence: the respect accorded to women in Jewish tradition was a part of their ethnic culture. According to traditional Judaism, women are endowed with a great degree of "binah" (intuition, understanding, intelligence) than men. The rabbis inferred this from the fact that woman was "built" (Gen. 2:22) rather than "formed" (Gen. 2:7), and the Hebrew root of "build" has the same consonants as the word "binah". It has been said that the matriarchs (Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah) were superior to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) in prophecy. There are many learned women of note. The Talmud and later rabbinical writings speak of the wisdom of Berurya, the wife Rabbi Meir. In several instances, her opinions on *halakhah* (Jewish Law) were accepted over those of her male contemporaries. In the *Ketubah* (marriage contract) of Rabbi Akiba's son, the wife is obligated to teach the husband *Torah*. Many rabbis over the centuries have been known to consult their wives on matters of Jewish Laws relating to the woman's role, such as laws of Kashrut and women's cycles. The wife of a rabbi is referred to as a *rebbetzin*, practically a title of her own, which should give some idea of her significance in Jewish life (Tracy, 2011).

The Positive Influence of Women in the Family

Women have a very significant role they play in the family and this cannot be underestimated. They have a very powerful influence on their husbands and even on their children; and this powerful influence can be positive and as well be negative. Peter Bisong Bisong in *The Earth, My Mother: Lessons from Feminism* made a very significant attempt to highlight the role of women in the family which invariably translates into impactful values than can be beneficial to the transformation of society. As such, he admonishes to settle the crisis in feminism

so as arrive at the ideal definition of motherhood so we don't misplace our personal sentiments to a struggle that would destroy rather than build (2015: 151). This is exactly why feminism has destroyed so many homes and families which is the bedrock of the society which feminist scholars intend to build. Marriage is therefore, a great inhibitor of the dreams of equality for feminists (Bisong, 2015:59). It will become more appropriate to understand that marriage is a vocation that comes with its own spirituality and not just an ideological framework but also an institution which is natural and divine meant to be a vehicle for the stabilization and growth of society. It is much easier for women to destroy the home in the biblical context thus: "a wise woman builds her home, but a foolish one tears it down with her own hands" (Proverbs 14:1). The book of proverbs grounds this passage in view of the fact that women have a strong role to play in reconstructing the society through the family. The absence of women to give good counsels in the family most especially to their husbands has dangerously affected the input men put into political power.

In a Novel titled *Macbeth* written by William Shakespeare it is very much obvious how Lady Macbeth possesses the power to influence her husband's decision in a negative manner. She is stronger, more ruthless and more ambitious than Macbeth. Throughout Shakespeare's tragic play, the theme of ambition is raised constantly, and the character who shows more ambition than any other at the beginning is Lady Macbeth. Macbeth proves to be a man who is greatly influenced by his wife's ideas and ambition at the start of the play. Furthermore, Macbeth wants to enjoy what he has earned from his services. He has earned the title of Thane of Cawdor. He knows that if he proceeds with the murder of Duncan could lose men's good opinions of him. However, when Lady Macbeth hears this she attacks her husband's weakest spot; his courage. She tells him he will only be a man if he commits the murder. She states that she herself would kill her own baby in order to attain her goals. She manipulates Macbeth overrides all of his objections and repeatedly questions his manhood. Macbeth is driven to a point where he feels he has to prove himself, "I am settled and bend-up". When this happens, Lady Macbeth proves to be an immense source of inspiration on Macbeth; she has managed to completely change his mind. It must be remembered he does have freewill. After the "deed" is carried out Macbeth is full of remorse.

No doubt, if Lady Macbeth had translated and negative influence to a more positive outlook it would have been more beneficial to her family; but on the contrary she became an unmitigated disaster. She did not act like the wife of

Pilate and this is the very situation so many families find themselves; women who are supposed to be instrumental to family values when the men seem not to be thinking straight so as to build their homes as wise women betray that confidence to material acquisition. Pilate's wife boosts her confidence and reinstated her dignity as a woman by playing her role in the family. So many women are suffering today due to the inability to become wise counsels to their husbands and when the chips are down, they end up visiting their husbands in prison and taking food to them. In similar vein, the former President Mugabe of Zimbabwe had a very bad counsel from the wife Grace Mugabe who did not do the needful as a result of her own selfish interest and the end became a disgraceful outcome and President Mugabe was forced to come down from his seat of power through a coup.

Nevertheless, like Pilate's wife there are women who have used their position as wives to influence positive decision but these women might not be readily evidential but we have more fallen political leaders who women have useless in the seat of power than for political leaders who have been successful, it is very much obvious that behind every successful man there is indeed a woman.

Piecemeal Social Engineers: The Basis for the Galvanization of Society

Irrespective of the sex and gender, the basic ingredient for the galvanization of society is social engineering. Competence, merit and capacity for positive change to bring about sustainable development are the bedrock for growth and change. This comes with ethical values and normative standards and this makes it difficult to separate politics from morality. Despite democracy as the standard of governance and the involvement of women as an imperative consideration can amount to unhealthy competition and this is why feminism instead of advocating for social engineering to galvanize society, they focus more on competing with men for political leadership. Political leadership is not an automatic ticket for men as well but for men who possess the needed quality and competence for leadership and political power.

In *The Poverty of Historicism*, and again in *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Karl Popper used the phrases "social engineering" and "social technology" when writing about social and political reform. In the former book (*The Poverty of Historicism*) he coined the terms "piecemeal social engineering" and "utopian social engineering" to denote two different approaches to reform. In the latter book (*The Open Society and Its Enemies*), Popper shortened these terms to "piecemeal engineering" and "utopian engineering". Although, popper did not

coin the term “social engineering” the terms “piecemeal social engineering” and “utopian social engineering” and the distinction between the two are his. Popper argued passionately for the former (piecemeal social engineering) and against the latter (utopian social engineering). In the piecemeal social engineering according to Karl Popper, flows from the insistence on attempting to locate and eradicate the greatest and most urgent social evils (1961:158). In adopting the “piecemeal social engineering approach” it helps to put in perspective the duty of every Nigerian to help salvage the Nigerian economy and not the struggle for female participation. Every human being irrespective of our gender and role can reduce the social evil by doing even little things. The late Professor Thomas D. Mason will always say in his lectures that “little things are little things but faithfulness to little things makes little things great”. If every woman will be faithful to her roles in the family she can transform the society more effectively than necessarily taking to leadership position. According to Columba Mgbokwere in *Karl Popper’s Piecemeal Social Engineering or Technology: The Truth, The Fiction*, he argues:

Popper’s piecemeal social engineering promotes peaceful reform and social stability as it rejects holistic social change. It is true that a violent public approach to socio-political issues often leads to unbargained-for mistakes, as was the case with the first Nigeria military coup of 15th January, 1966. The French revolution of 1789, however, has shown that violent holistic change is sometimes inevitable in a deviant government. Therefore, the truth of the matter is that piecemeal social engineering is more relevant and practical in the contemporary period than the holistic redesign of society with its attendant problems (2017:1)

In the above comment of Columba Mgbokwere the feminist agenda should not be a violent fight or protest and should be devoid of game blame or reacting to the status quo but it is a process of growth and development for galvanizing the society and reducing social problems. It is a reasonable method of improving the lot of man and woman for a better society.

Conclusion

Women have so much to play in the social and political life despite the grievances of most feminist ideology. They cannot be neglected as the moral voice of the society in the realization of good governance as achieved by the wife of Pilate in Matthew 27:19. It is an ontological fact that men and women are of equal dignity but the imperfection of society with its discriminatory tendencies

cannot be taken unserious because humanity in totality have suffered various discrimination but things have not gone worst since there is still hope for women to use their roles as women to make influence through family life and other strategic positioning they find themselves so as to achieve a more humane society. Feminism can only be positive when it is used as a tool to add value to society rather than destroy what society has made for its own good and purpose.

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