

Interpreting Galatians 3:28 in the Light of Feminist Theology

INTRODUCTION

The New International Version (NIV) of Galatians 3:28 reads “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The passage in question is explanatory enough even to a lay man. The simple interpretation is “unity in Christ transcends ethnic, social and gender distinctions.” But out of this interpretation, a movement named “Feminism” which started as an offshoot of liberalism ensued fighting for gender equality. This is glaring when Eric asserts:

In recent years this verse, Galatians 3:28, has been hoisted as the battle standard of feminists and Biblical egalitarians who count themselves as evangelical. They argue that this verse shows that the church has, in past generations, maintained unbiblical support of a paternalistic church and family order. This has kept Christian women from rising to their God-ordained place of equality of position and authority alongside men in the leadership of the church and in the family.¹

The fact that the marginalization of female-gender is a general phenomenon in Africa that cuts across cultures, races, and generations cannot be disputed. Although the loud responses to the marginalization of female gender started as an offshoot of liberation theology that began in the 1960s among the Latin Americans. However, Davaney claimed it has its root deep in the first women’s movement of the nineteenth century.² In addition to this, Susan opined that;

Amongst the more energetic and enthusiastic forms of theology that emerged during the latter half of the twentieth century, feminist theology took up its place to become one of the prominent ways in which women have found theological voice and have allowed the wisdom of faith to be rooted in their lives. While its provenance is located in the Western Christian tradition, its bearing formed by the philosophical assumptions and political ideals of the Enlightenment, feminist theology has become something of a common discourse entered into by women of other faith and intellectual inheritance.³

¹ Eric Peterman, “Galatians 3:28 and Evangelical Egalitarian”, *Conservative Theological Journal*, www.conservativeonline.org or call Tyndale at 800-886-1415. Accessed 25/09/2016.

² Sheila Davaney, *Trends in Feminist Theology* www.ChristianTheology.wordpress.com, 17.

³ Susan Frank Parsons, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology* (Cambridge: University Press, 2004), xiii.

Feminist theology as the case may be, could be inherently unbiblical, however, some are biblical. The term feminism itself is subject to many different interpretations, with varying levels of biblical support. The feminist movement or the so-called women's lib movement is a crusade for freedom, equality, and justice. Although Bible-believing Christians have good reasons to distance themselves from the feminist ideology, they share the legitimate concerns of the movement in standing up against any form of injustice, unfairness, and discrimination.

Attempting to state whether the adherents of feminism are justified in the light of Galatians 3:28 might be too bias without an indepth study first into the movement itself, what they believe and an exposition of the text will do a great good to help resolve at a veritable conclusion. There is the need to do a thorough study of Galatians 3:28 in light of its context to determine if it can legitimately be seen to advocate Biblical gender egalitarianism. Or does Galatians 3:28 indeed advocate functional equality in the church and home. These questions deserve a thoughtful, Biblical answer, for as someone has wisely said, “a text without a context, is merely a pretext.” The Grammatico-Historical Method of Interpretation will be followed in doing justice to the text.

THE FEMINIST THEOLOGY: TOWARDS A DEFINITION

Feminist theology in its real self is subject to many different interpretations (as afore mentioned), with varying levels of biblical support. The first century historian, Josephus Flavius said “the woman is in all things inferior to the man.”⁴ Rabbi Judah, a contemporary of Josephus, also said “a man must pronounce three blessings each day: Blessed be the Lord who did not make me a heathen...blessed be he who did not make me a woman...blessed be he who did not make me an uneducated person.”⁵ Ron Rhodes sums it up when he said:

Jewish Rabbis in the first century were encouraged not to teach or even to speak with women. Jewish wisdom literature tells us that “he that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at the last will inherit Gehenna [hell].” One reason for the avoidance of women was the belief that they could lead men astray: “From garments cometh a moth and from a woman the iniquities of a man”

⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1974), 622.

⁵ H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munchen, 1893), 2:495; cited by Werner Neuer, *Man and Woman in Christian Perspective* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 93.

(Ecclus. 42:13). Indeed, men were often viewed as intrinsically better than women, for “better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing a good turn” (Ecclus. 42:14).⁶

In view of the above scholastic postulations about women, it is not surprising that they enjoyed few legal rights in Jewish society. It was in this oppressive context that Christianity was born. A cursory look at the above gives an impression of feminine marginalization.

To some, the word feminist theology represents liberation and long-awaited justice; to others, divisiveness. Emotions have run feverishly high in the debate over women's rights, and the past few decades have seen the debate move into the theological mainstream.⁷ Parson explains further that “Feminism is a critical stance that challenges the patriarchal gender paradigm that associates males with human characteristics defined as superior and dominant (rationality, power) and females with those defined as inferior and auxiliary (intuition, passivity). Most feminists reconstruct the gender paradigm in order to include women in full and equal humanity.⁸

The contemporary development of the word feminism according to John Pobe, signal issues of sexual equality and women’s rights and advocacy of women’s rights.⁹ Feminist Theology has been termed advocacy theology because it is concerned with the liberation of women from oppression, guided by the principles of seeking to achieve the full humanity of women.¹⁰ Thus, feminism emerged as a reaction and/or response to sexism inequality, the denial, and subjugation of women’s right by the society. As a concept, feminism developed due to women’s rejection of ill treatments meted to them in the society.

Considering what Josephus, Rabbi Judah, Ron Rhodes and Susan have said, one thing is common to them all – liberation and justice. At the heart of the feminist movement are issues concerning unsatisfied and hurt women. Women have all too often been treated unfairly and as second-class

⁶ Ron Rhodes, *The Debate Over Feminist Theology: Which View is Biblical? (Part Three in a Three-Part Series on Liberation Theology)*, www. Accessed 27/09/2016.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Parsons, 3.

⁹ John Pobe, *Biblical Studies and Feminism in the African Context* (Ibadan: National Association of Biblical Studies [NABIS Western Zone], 2012), 23.

¹⁰ Ursula King, *Feminist Theology from the Third World* (New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 3.

citizens in the world. They have been hurt in the home as well, where they have to live with inadequate male leadership. Many are experiencing frustrating marriages as they suffer from abusive, neglectful, and domineering husbands. When they attempt to challenge these injustices, what they get is more abuse and violence. This has made many women feel that society is on the side of the men who have abused them. Hence, a better definition, perhaps, will be that Feminist Theology is that branch of Liberation Theology that deals with fighting for the rights and freedom of females using the Bible as basis.

As good as this definition would have been, there is a problem with it. It has to do with twisting the Bible in order to suit their desire. This could be explained better by saying;

Adding any philosophical descriptor to theology is automatically suspect. It implies the theology is being interpreted with the deliberate intent of supporting an ideology; that the ideology comes first. This is backwards, since we ought to adjust our philosophy to match God's words, not the other way around. When someone touts "X theology," he is skewing theological interpretation in order to support "X." This is the case with so-called feminist theology, a term used to describe several different attempts to alter the Bible toward a preferred conclusion.¹¹

As noted earlier, feminist theology could be inherently unbiblical, however, some are extremely biblical which implies that though it may involve skewing the bible in order to support their ideology, yet it still has some sound biblical teaching. In lieu of this, Feminist theology then can still follow the definition above.

VARIETIES OF FEMINISM

The different subgroups among feminists have been categorized variously. Rhodes classified them as secular feminists, New Age feminists, liberal Christian feminists, and evangelical feminists.¹² These subgroups should not be viewed as having clearly defined lines of demarcation; rather, they are more like clusters along the theological-philosophical continuum. Along this continuum, it is possible that a feminist may fall between the clusters, thereby sharing some of the characteristics of two different groups.

¹¹ <http://www.gotquestions.org/feminist-theology.html>. accessed 25/9/2016.

¹² Ron Rhodes, *The Debate Over Feminist Theology: Which View is Biblical? (Part Three in a Three-art Series on Liberation Theology)*, www. Accessed 27/09/2016.

Secular feminists: These are humanists who disallow God, revelation, and religion in the discussion of feminism. They view the Bible as a major source of chauvinist¹³ ideas and a relic of antiquity that has no relevance to the ongoing debate over the roles of men and women in modern society.

New Age feminists: They are pagans who are typically involved in the worship of a feminine deity or goddess.

Liberal Christian feminists: These ones operate within a Christian framework but approach feminism (and theology in general) from liberal perspective. They believe the Bible writers were simply men of their times and were limited in their perspectives. Liberal Christian feminists employ a “hermeneutic of suspicion” — that is, they “systematically assume that the Bible's male authors and interpreters deliberately covered up the role of women in early Christianity.”¹⁴ Using such a hermeneutic, it is easy to sift out from the Bible anything one finds offensive to one's feminist taste.

Evangelical feminists: They are those who generally (not always) hold to conservative views on the Bible and theology but who nevertheless embrace the feminist idea of abolishing gender-based roles in society, church, and home. They believe the Bible is authoritative and, rightly understood, supports their feminist views. Historically, the first widely publicized book on the role of women in the church that hinted at the formulation of a specific feminist theology was published in 1968: *The Church and the Second Sex*, by Mary Daly.¹⁵ Following the publication of this book, the market was virtually flooded with books and articles on feminist theology, all of which challenged the idea that female subordination was ordained by God. In 1975, a conference of evangelical feminists was held in Washington, D.C., that attracted 360 participants from across the United States. The conference formally endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment and established the Evangelical Women's Caucus (EWC), a grassroots “consciousness-raising” organization with chapters in many major cities.¹⁶

Some traditionalists believe that the emergence of evangelical feminism may be an example of the negative influence of trends in the wider culture on contemporary Christianity. However, Christian feminist Virginia Mollenkott rejects this assessment: “We did not become feminists and then try to fit our

¹³ The word is from the noun chauvinism and it means excessive, patriotism.

¹⁴ Kenneth L. Woodward, “Feminism and the Churches,” *Newsweek*, 13 Feb. 1989, 61.

¹⁵ Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

¹⁶ Richard Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 122.

Christianity into feminist ideology....We heralded the feminist movement because we were convinced that the church had strayed from a correct understanding of God's will for women.”¹⁷

Haven considered this varieties, one question that comes to mind is “Has the church truly strayed from a correct understanding of God's will for women?” This work examines what the Bible has to say to Feminist Theology and how evangelical feminists argue their case from Scripture. To simplify the task, the work will first consider what Galatians 3:28 is actually saying.

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY TO FEMINIST THEOLOGY: GALATIANS 3:28

One might say that the theme verse for evangelical feminism is Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Evangelical feminists argue that Paul is not speaking in this verse about the equality of men and women in their spiritual standing before God, but of the practical outworking of that standing in society. Richard and Joyce Boldrey assert that “Galatians 3:28 does not say 'God loves each of you, but stay in your places'; it says that there are no longer places, no longer categories, no longer differences in rights and privileges, codes and values.”¹⁸ Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty suggest that in view of Galatians 3:28, “all social distinctions between men and women should [be] erased in the church.”¹⁹ Summing this up, Clark said,

Nowadays many assume that Galatians 3:28 is the place in which we find the heart of the scriptural teaching about the roles of men and women. Moreover, many interpret Gal 3:28 to mean that ideally in Christ there are no role differences between men and women, an interpretation which opposes Gal 3:28 to all the other texts that assert such a difference. According to this line of interpretation, this tension should be resolved by giving a preference to Gal 3:28. This view sees Gal 3:28 as ‘the great

¹⁷ Quoted in Phyllis E. Alsdurf, “Evangelical Feminists: Ministry Is the Issue,” *Christianity Today*, 21 July 1978, 47.

¹⁸ Richard and Joyce Boldrey, *Chauvinist or Feminist? Paul's View of Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 33.

¹⁹ Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1974), 72.

breakthrough' and regards the other passages as 'conservative' or 'traditional' passages that express something of limited value.²⁰

Can this be true? Is Paul really saying what the Feminists believe? To be able to answer this question averagely, there is a need to expose the text at hand doing an averagely correct hermeneutical interpretation. Although, there are numerous passages of the Bible responding to Feminist Theology but since the focus of this paper has been narrowed to Galatians 3:28, there is need to dwell on the text.

An Hermeneutical Interpretation of Galatians 3:28

A commitment to both the authority of Scripture and a normal, literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic means, among other things, a commitment to a study of this passage in situ. A key to understanding this passage, and any other, lies in understanding the context. Ramm observes, "grammatical interpretation involves consideration of the context,...entire Scripture... sets the general mood, gives the general perspective, governs the fundamental assumptions, or sets the possible limits of meaning for the interpreter .²¹ By lifting passages out of the context of history, authorial background, intended audience, intended purpose and the surrounding passages, various subjective and mistaken interpretations can arise.

According to Coad, "the letter to the Galatians is happily free from critical problems concerning authorship, scholars having been virtually unanimous in endorsing it as a genuine work of the Apostle Paul."²² The problems which do exist relate to the date of composition of the letter, and to the location of the churches to which it was addressed.²³ Emphasizing this, Adeyemo stated that "scholars generally agree that this letter was written by the Apostle Paul but they are less certain about whom it was addressed to."²⁴

²⁰ Steven B. Clark , *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*, (Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood), <http://www.cbmw.org/.resources/books/clark/>. accessed 27/09/2016.

²¹ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 138-139.

²² Walter M. Dunnett, *Exploring the New Testament* (Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), 54-56.

²³ F. Roy Coad, "The Letter to the Galatians," in G. C. D. Howley, (Gen. Ed.), *A Bible Commentary for Today Based on Revised Standard Version* (Glasgow, London: Pickering & Inglis, 1980), 1489.

²⁴ Tokunboh Adeyemo, (Gen. Ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 1413.

However, regarding the date and the recipients, two theories have been propounded. They are the South-Galatian Theory and the North-Galatian Theory. The former holding that the book of Galatians was written to the Southern part of Galatians around 49 AD while the latter holds that the book was written to the Northern part of Galatians around 50 AD. To confirm this, Tokunboh Adeyemo wrote, "The view is that 'Galatia' refers to the whole province, in which case the recipients include the southern churches that Paul founded on his first missionary journey when he visited Pisidian, Antioch....the letter could have been written as early as AD 49. But it is also possible that Paul was writing only to the churches in the northern district called Galatia, from which the whole province took the name. If so, it is difficult to identify the churches or know when they were founded.....this would mean that the letter would have to have been written after the Council at Jerusalem in AD 50."²⁵

Structurally, Paul's letter is generally acknowledged to fall into three sections:

The opening two chapters (1-2) are largely personal, containing a defense of his gospel and apostleship.

The following section, also of two chapters (3-4), contains the exposition, in strongly argumentative form, of the heart of his gospel: the doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from legal works.

The letter's final two chapters (5-6) conclude with a hortatory appeal to practice the principles and responsibilities of the Christian life through the energy of the indwelling Spirit of God.

The passage in question, 3:28, falls within the bounds of the doctrinal and theological argumentation portion, rather than the hortatory/exhortative portion, as noted above. The Apostle Paul, getting to chapter three of the book, turns to the positive task of expounding the gospel having completed the proof of his authority and that of his message in chapters 1 and 2. Here, Paul began to raise arguments that support his position on the doctrine of justification by faith. This, he kept on proofing until he gets to verse 28 which is the bone of contention for this work.

Barion and Muddinan asserted that "verse 27 and 28 interrupt the argument of verse 26 and 29 with reference to baptism."²⁶ He states further that some of the phrases in these verses are found elsewhere in early

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ J. Barion and J. Muddiana, *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 1160.

Christian writings; only the first pairing in verse 28, 'Jew or Greek', is relevant to the immediate context. Hence, several scholars conclude that Paul is here citing an early baptismal liturgy. Explaining Paul's thought in line with Barion and Muddinan, it could be said that the person who is about to be baptized removes clothing, symbolizing the old order, and in baptism is clothed with Christ (v. 27). Buttressing more on this, Martyn said "in Baptism all the social distinctions that lay at the heart of the society of the day are abolished. Religious, social and sexual pairs of opposites are not replaced by equality, but rather by a newly created unity in Christ Jesus."²⁷

In other words, Adeyemo said concerning verse 27 and 28,

In the early church, baptism signified identification with Christ to such an extent that it was almost as if they were 'wearing' Christ. Their lives were taking on the characteristics, virtues, and intentions of Christ. Because of this change, the differences between them disappeared, for now they all looked alike as members of Christ's family. Categories like race, status and gender are no longer important. They have become one.²⁸

Considering the statement above, it is glaring that the distinction between male and female written in Galatians 3:28 is not what the Feminist has turned it into. The original interpretation of that passage, though, promoting equality but not equality in the physical but equality in Christ Jesus. This is evident as Coad supported when he writes, "...it is also becoming one in Christ on the part of all who share the experience."²⁹

Matthew Henry in contextualizing the text said,

That this privilege of being the children of God, and of being by baptism devoted to Christ, is now enjoyed in common by all real Christians. The law indeed made a difference between Jew and Greek, giving the Jews on many accounts the pre-eminence: that also made a difference between bond and free and between male and female, the males being circumcised. But it is not so now; they all stand on the same level and are all one in Christ Jesus; as the one is not accepted on the account of any national or personal advantages he may enjoy above the other, so neither is the other rejected for the want of them; but all who sincerely believe on Christ, of what nation, or

²⁷ J.L. Martyn, *Galatians* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 377.

²⁸ Tokunboh Adeyemo, (Gen. Ed.), *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1422.

²⁹ F. Roy Coad, "The Letter to the Galatians," in G. C. D. Howley, (Gen. Ed.), *A Bible Commentary for Today Based on Revised Standard Version*, 1498.

sex, or condition, soever they be, are accepted of him and become the children of God though faith in him.³⁰

The human distinctions as to race (Jew nor Gentile), social status (slave nor free), and gender (not male and female) are in some sense set aside or nullified in Christ. This point is patently obvious from the explanatory clause “because you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28 and the surrounding texts do not relate to a new social structure, therefore they do not support or even enter into a discussion of the idea of gender egalitarianism. This passage is about the nature of salvation (salvation is totally of God without regard to the status of those saved) and spiritual standing before God (equally blessed). Consequently, this passage should not enter into the discussion of egalitarianism or Feminism. Those authoritarians who devalue or deprecate women as essentially (ontologically) inferior to men are simply wrong. The apostle in this passage demonstrates the joint heirship of women in Christ. Finally, to inject the feminist agenda into this passage, to socialize and relationalize the eternal promises in Christ, is to demean and bring low the powerful effect of this glorious passage.

THE EVANGELICAL RESPONSE

Conservative scholars have generally held that Scripture teaches the true ontological and spiritual equality and value of the genders (Gen. 1:27, 5:2). They also see no essential conflict between the Bible asserting ontological equality, and simultaneously asserting functional and positional subordination in the church and in marriage. A comparison can be made with the doctrine of the Trinity: Christian orthodoxy asserts an ontological equality and value between the Father and Son (e.g. John 1:1, “and the word was God.” John 10:30, “I and the Father are one”). In the same breath, orthodoxy asserts, indeed demands, an economic, functional subordination of the Son to the Father regarding some of his offices, for example, as the Son of Man and as the high priest in the order of Melchizedek, (e.g. Heb. 5:8-10, “although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered, and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek”).

³⁰ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 1996), 2299.

Ray Ortlund, Jr. points out the apparent tension within the doctrine of the Trinity and its analog, the tension between the essential equality of both men and women, and the differentiation as to functional subordination,

We ought to be sufficiently agile intellectually and emotionally to accept this paradoxical truth. Christians, of all people, have a reason to live with paradox. After all, God exists as one Godhead in three Persons, equal in glory but unequal in role. Within the Holy Trinity the Father leads, the Son submits to Him, and the Spirit submits to both (the Economic Trinity). But it is also true that the three Persons are fully equal in divinity, power, and glory (the Ontological Trinity). The Son submits, but not because He is God, Jr., an inferior deity. The ranking within the Godhead is a part of the sublime beauty and logic of true deity. And if our Creator exists in this manner, should we be surprised and offended if His creaturely analog on earth exists in paradoxical form?³¹

Many evangelical feminists and egalitarians reject this tension with regard to men and women, holding that functional subordination in the home and church is a de facto assertion of ontological inferiority. Further, they would assert that ontological equality must be expressed in functional equality for “equality” to mean anything. They would point to Galatians 3:28 as the proof that the apostle Paul understood this fact.

The Evangelicals, however, in proofing their point, state according to Calvin, “This verse ought not to be understood to mean that there is now no social, functional or gender difference between us on this earth, in our relationships with one another, or in the church. This can be shown to be true in several ways.”³²

It would be absurd, of course, to suggest that Paul is referring to all the Galatians as male offspring, in the physical gender sense, by calling them “sons of God”. Men, women and children are addressed as one. Paul’s point is the universal spiritual inheritance and privilege of sonship before God in the present dispensation of grace, attained through union with Christ. This universal position sets the tone of the context for interpreting verse twenty-eight. One can agree with Ortlund who asserts that “Paul’s emphasis is on spiritual, positional status in Christ, before God, “the spiritual privilege of being the sons of God.”³³ One thing that needs to be bore in mind is that,

³¹ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, (eds.), T. H.L. Parker, (trans), (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965), 68.

³² Ibid.

Paul was writing to first century Christians in Asia Minor who possess a substantially different view of the spiritual value of gender, social status and religious heritage.

CONCLUSION

Having examined critically, what feminist theology is all about, what the Bible has to say about it and what the evangelicals hold on to, the researcher hence, want to agree with Rhodes when he said;

Feminist liberation theology has without doubt made some important, positive contributions. I can only mention a few of the more notable here. First, feminist theology has called attention to the invaluable role women have played in the church throughout Christian history. Second, feminist theology has rightly pointed to the failure of many men in fulfilling their God-appointed roles of loving their wives as Christ loved the church. If Christian husbands through the centuries had been consistently faithful in following this one injunction, the controversy over gender-based roles in the church could have been avoided (or at least substantially diminished). And third, feminist theology serves as an indictment against the abuse and oppression that women have all too often suffered at the hands of chauvinist men. I consider these contributions important and extremely relevant.³⁴

Despite these contributions, however, there are some serious problems that must be addressed. When Paul says “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” in Christ (Gal. 3:28), he seems to be alluding to the morning prayer of Jewish men in which they thanked God that they were not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. These three classes had severely limited privileges in society. Contextually, the verses that precede Galatians 3:28 pertain to justification by faith and how a person comes to be included in the blessings promised in the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 15-25). Then, in verse 26, Paul says “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” For Paul, the term son implies heir (cf. 4:7, 31). “In society these three pairs – none of which were ontologically unequal by creation (that is, they were not unequal in their essence or being as created by God) – are unequally privileged, but in Christ's offer of salvation, Paul argued, there is no distinction. So then, in Galatians 3:26-28, Paul was saying that no kind of person is excluded from the position of being a child of Abraham who has

³³ Raymond Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality And Male Headship, Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood And Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, (eds.), (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 92.

³⁴ Ron Rhodes, *The Debate Over Feminist Theology: Which View is Biblical? (Part Three in a Three-Part Series on Liberation Theology)*, www. Accessed 27/09/2016.

faith in Jesus Christ.”³⁵ That Paul was referring solely to one's position in Christ is evident in the words “sons of God,” “Abraham's seed,” and “heirs according to the promise.” It takes a great leap in logic to say that positional equality must necessitate functional equivalence.

Elimination of gender-based roles is therefore not a legitimate inference from Galatians 3:28. Ontological equality and social hierarchy are not mutually exclusive. The doctrine of the Trinity illustrates this: Jesus is equal to the Father in terms of His being, but He voluntarily submits to the Father's leadership. There is no contradiction in affirming both an equality of being and a functional subordination among the persons in the Godhead. Likewise, there is no contradiction in Paul saying that “there is neither male nor female in Christ” and “wives, submit to your husbands.” Finally, it will be good to conclude that Feminist theology could be good when studied from the biblical point of view and balancing it with evangelicalism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The fact that Galatians 3:28 does not support feminism doesn't place women as second-class citizen as it has become today. Today, both in the church and society, women are being treated badly, as a matter of fact, in some part of Africa, women are still being treated as property, most of them have been hurt in the home as well, where they have to live with inadequate male leadership. Many are experiencing frustrating marriages as they suffer from abusive, neglectful, and domineering husbands. When they attempt to challenge these injustices, many women feel that society is on the side of the men who have abused them. It is in lieu of this that this work recommends the church to first differentiate between Feminist Ideology and Feminist Theology. The first being fighting for women's right justly without being bias and acclaiming equal social, political and economic standing of women with men and the latter being using the Bible to fight for gender equality, advocating the uniqueness of both gender as it was at creation. Women's right needs to be protected though, in the right way.

More so, the church should encourage sound theological teaching so as to be able to interpret the Bible correctly. Furthermore, the church should encourage women's involvement in the church. Many hold on to Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians that “Women should be quiet in the church.” They treat this passage literally to mean women should not talk at all in the church hence, they are denied responsibilities.

³⁵ H. Wayne House, “Neither...Male nor Female...in Christ Jesus,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March 1988, 54.

Finally, closing with the words of Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 11:3 “But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ: and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” He further in verse 11 “Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, neither is the woman without the man, in the Lord.” Thus, the church needs to understand this fact and treat both man and woman as equal in Christ though, social responsibilities differ.

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