

**THE CHALLENGE OF *GUNAIKŌN DIAKONIŌN* (WOMEN MINISTERING) IN LUKE
8:1-3 TO THE CHRIST APOSTOLIC CHURCH, DELTA STATE**

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AUTHOR: EKPAOGBA,SUNNYMANYO

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGE	-	Assistant General Evangelist
AGS	-	Assistant General Superintendent
ANTC	-	Abingdon New Testament Commentary
CAC	-	Christ Apostolic Church
CACGWA	-	Christ Apostolic Church Good Women Association
CACMA	-	Christ Apostolic Church Men's Association
CACMF	-	Christ Apostolic Church Ministers' Fellowship
CACMWF	-	Christ Apostolic Church Ministers' Wives Fellowship
CACYOF	-	Christ Apostolic Church Youth Fellowship
C&S	-	Cherubim and Seraphim
CWC	-	Centre for World Christianity
DCC	-	District Coordinating Council
DEC	-	District Executive Council
FEW	-	Federally Employed Women
FT	-	Faith Tabernacle
GEC	-	General Executive Council
GS	-	General Superintendent
JABU	-	Joseph Ayo Babalola University
MFM	-	Mountain of Fire and Miracles
NASB	-	New American Standard Bible
NBC	-	New Bible Commentary
NYTS	-	New York Theological Seminary

NOW	-	National Organization for Women
NPB	-	Nigerian Publication Bureau
PWC	-	Professional Women's Caucus
PWD	-	Public Works Department
RCCG	-	The Redeemed Christian Church of God
TAC	-	The Apostolic Church
TIDAC	-	The Institute for Diasporan and African Culture
WEAL	-	Women's Equity Action League
VMCBAAN	-	Voluntary Midwifery and Community Birth Attendant Association of Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study interpreted Luke 8:1-3 with a particular focus on ministry of women in the New Testament Era. It examined women service in the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) in Delta State of Nigeria. Furthermore, it contextualized the services of women in the Gospel of Luke in the CAC in Delta State. This was with a view to orienting the society on the concept of women ministry in the church.

The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source comprised of the Greek text of Luke 8:1-3, which was analyzed into phrases, keywords and interpreted with the aid of Bible Dictionaries, Commentaries, and Greek Lexicons. Furthermore, unstructured interviews with the representatives of CAC in Delta State were conducted. The selected respondents were drawn from the nine divisions of the church in the Delta State, which is made up of five Zones and the four Districts Coordinating Councils (DCC) of CAC in Delta State. They included the nine DCC/Zone's Superintendents and the nine CAC Good Women leaders of the four DCCs and five Zones. In addition, interviews were conducted with nine respondents from among Pastors, Deaconesses, Midwives and female members of CAC Youth Fellowship (CACYOF), one each from of the nine DCCs/Zones. The selection of these respondents was aimed at eliciting opinions from the leaders of CAC in Delta State and the various women segments. The secondary sources comprised books, journal articles and the Internet. The data collected were subjected to critical analysis using hermeneutic approach.

The results showed that women served Jesus Christ and his team with their substances. These services included ministering with their material possessions and spiritual gifts. On the local scene, CAC women in Delta State are involved in all the units of the church. They have



financial obligation towards periodic distributions of food items to their pastors, besides their pastors' statutory salaries. The study also found out that, individually and collectively, the women served as evangelists, prophetesses, teachers and church planters. Owing to the marginalization of female ministers, several such as Lady Evangelist Bola Odeleke had left CAC to found their own denominations. Furthermore, the study discovered that, in collaboration with their fellow women from other States, CAC women also employed their material possessions in the construction of hostel facilities at CAC Prayer Camp, a bakery at Joseph Ayo Babalola University. Western education and enlightenment had assisted in enlarging the scope of women in CAC in Delta State.

The study concluded that it is pertinent to bear in mind the interest of all the church ministers since the growth of the CAC in Delta has been credited to the efforts of men and women. This church authority should organized programmes that will enhance the development of its female ministers to match female peers in other denominations.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This research focuses on the contributions of the women who accompanied Jesus Christ during His ministry in the contextual study of women ministers in Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), Delta State. Church history has revealed that the impact of women in the religious sector and the society in general have been overwhelming right from the epoch of the ancient Israel to contemporary era. However, little attention has been given to the fact that their roles within the family, religion, and the society are enormous. Most of the Nigerian Christian denominations (CAC inclusive) have ignored the contributions of women in the emergence and growth of the Church. Despite their impact they have not been compensated by allowing them enjoy the benefits being enjoyed by the male ministers in terms remuneration, condition of service and retirement benefits. This oversight by CAC in particular has constituted a distraction to her women and the church in general. This advocacy for equal opportunities has continued in several ways to truncate the advancement of the church, making the issue most debated, as noted by J.O. Akao,

The admission of women into the presbyterate order of the Church has been a controversial issue since the beginning of the 20th century. Like smoke from a smoldering fire, it has reared its head in different parts of the world in different church denominations. In each given situation or setting, the Church has tried to handle the matter as it thinks best and in dialogue with the scriptures, tradition and cultural ethos.¹

¹ J.O. Akao, "Ordination of Women: Arguments for and against with a Nigerian Perspective," *Orita*, XXXII (2000), 83.

The issue of women role in the running of the Church is being hotly debated. Some of those who are involved in the controversy, like Dorcas Akintunde see women as marginalized.² Several of those who support Akintunde's assertion, like Belleville, say that the alleged marginalization has become a burden on the Church.³ Just as it is observed by the duo (Akintunde and Belleville) unless the issue of women's role in the Church is handled carefully, it may suffer further divisions, because the different ideologies are caused by varying religious perceptions. Randolph Tate thinks along the same line when he asserts that "a people's conceptual framework is ... evident in its religious and philosophical expressions, and these expressions most often are interrelated."⁴ Owing to this disunion, the churches that are concerned have found it difficult to offer acceptable solution to the crisis over the assumed marginalization of women in the Church service. This is because opponents have their Bible passages that are interpreted to suit their interest. Consequently, no party in the feud seems to be willing to yield their positions because they claim the support of the Scriptures.

Nevertheless, a close look at the Scripture, particularly the Gospels and Epistles, reveals the various contributions of women in the ministry of Jesus Christ, Paul and the Early Church. It is however difficult to categorically state the extent to which women served. While scholars like Robert Tannehill are of the opinion that women did not serve in the same capacity as men,⁵ others like Abogunrin suggest otherwise, asserting that the mission of the 70 (Luke 10) included women.⁶ This opinion of Abogunrin appears to agree with the account in Luke 8:1-3.

² D.O. Akintunde, "The Impact of Christian Women Organization on the Nigeria Society," *Oritalbadan Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. XLII, 1, June, 2010, 114.

³ Linda L. Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church, 3 Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 1.

⁴ Randolph W. Tate, *Biblical interpretation, An Integrated Approach* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), 33.

⁵ Robert C. Tannehill, *Abingdon New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 139-40.

⁶ D.O. Akintunde, "Lukan Women in Jesus' Ministry: Prototype for Contemporary African Christian Women," *African Journal Biblical Studies (AJBS)*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, November, 2013, 17.

The researcher's interest in this research was particularly motivated by his experience as a young boy in the CAC, Delta State, where the founders of two CAC assemblies were treated differently. Christ Apostolic Church No. 1, Ozoro was founded by John Erimu, while CAC No. 2, Ozoro was founded by Rebecca Omotor. The male founder was allowed unlimited liberty to serve, but the female counterpart was restricted by the church leadership, and was left with no relevant role in the church liturgies. Yet this is the woman that was evangelizing the region with her healing ministry. This led the current researcher to question if the Christian Church is gender biased. He embarked on the current research to find out answer in the ministry of Jesus to the question.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The debate on the ministry of women in Christianity has been a recurring issue that the Church has been facing for a long time. While some denominations have split over this matter, others such as CAC are still in the confusion over such. The argument over women ministry seems not to have middle ground because the terms are defined in such a way that one must belong to either side of the dispute, scholars are even divided on it.

Earlier studies on women in Luke have focused on the historical and literary approaches to the study of the Gospel of Luke with little attention being paid to the role of women as *διακονία* (deacons) beyond the NT context.⁷ Scholars such as Belleville averred that Christ set women free to pursue their God-given gifts in whatever leadership positions,⁸ while preceding studies stressed that biblical interpretation of the ministry of women should liberate women to serve at equal capacities with men.⁹ However, scholarship on ministry

⁷ Walter F. Adeney, *Women of the New Testament* (London: James Nisbet, 1899), 112, 183.

⁸ Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church*, 1.

⁹ Akintunde, *The Ministry of Women in Lucan Narratives*, 2-3.

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