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Creation of Humankind and the Gender Debate: Re-Reading Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-24 and its Implications for Christians in Kumasi Society

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Creation of Humankind and the Gender Debate: Re-Reading Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-24 and its Implications for Christians in Kumasi Society

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Abstract- The Kumasi society of Ghana is influenced by Christianity and the Asante culture which affects gender roles in their family life, church and society. Women are often subordinated to men in these gender roles due to religious and cultural reasons. The traditional roles of men and women have been challenged by growing feminist movements that aim to empower women in modern times. This brings up questions about the traditional patriarchal norms of Christianity in societies and the reinterpretation of sacred texts that impede gender equality. Despite varying interpretations, an exegetical analysis of Genesis 1:26 and 2:18-14 suggests that these texts promote gender equality. Kumasi society has also made strides towards gender-based equality in contemporary times through female education, single parenting, wider economic roles of women, and the ordination of women as priests despite the patriarchal norms of Christianity and the Asante culture. Nuances of Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-24 endorse gender equality and must inform and guide Christians of contemporary Kumasi society in championing gender equality in family, church and society.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Ghanaian society has been characterized by a patriarchal culture where men are the primary providers and women are tasked with domestic management. These operative assumptions have perpetuated a system of gender injustice in Kumasi, leaving women underrepresented in the family, church, and society. In the political arena, the precedent of a woman becoming a national president in Ghana is yet to be set and women in parliament are numerically lower than men. In the economic sector, the number of men in white-collar jobs and those in technical professions far outweighs that of women. In some churches, women are sidelined in leadership positions with the Catholic and the Seventh-day Adventist church yet to ordain a female priest.

Women have limited rights in education, technical training, property inheritance, service rewards,

and decision-making at family and societal levels.¹ Thus, women are often subordinated to men in family and society due to religious and cultural reasons. The interpretations of Judeo-Christian scriptures, such as Genesis 1-2, support male dominance in the home, church, and society.² Kumasi society, heavily influenced by Christian beliefs and practices, is not immune to the impact of sacred scriptures promoting male dominance. Although the Asante culture of Kumasi recognises the important role of women in society, including the influential position of the queen-mother, some adages highlight male dominance, such as “if a woman owns a gun, it lodges in a man’s room” and “a woman sells garden eggs but not gunpowder”. These adages affirm the dominance of men over women in family life and society. Given this, Kumasi society is influenced by Christianity and Asante culture which affect gender roles in both family and society. Women are often subordinated to men in these traditional gender roles.

The traditional gender roles of men and women in family, church, and society have been contested by the increasing feminist movements seeking to empower women. This raises questions about the traditional patriarchal norms of Christianity in societies and the reinterpretation of sacred texts such as Genesis 1-2, which are seen as hindering gender equality.³ Various interpretations of the texts have been given by scholars, which either impede or endorse gender equality in family life, church, and society.⁴ Scholars belonging to the complementarian ideology traditionally interpret Genesis 1 and 2 to support hierarchically gendered roles. However, they sharply contrast with the egalitarians who

¹ Anne Mikkola et al, “Development and Gender Equality: Consequences, Causes, Challenges and Cures Development and Gender Equality” *Helsinki Center of Economic Research* 159, no. 17 (2007): 1. Accessed July 13, 2017. <https://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/eri/hecer/disc/159/developm.pdf>.

² Paul Rastara and Daniel Bediako. Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation, (2013): 1. Accessed October 28, 2016. <https://www.adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thruthree.pdf>

³ Michael Stitzinger, “Genesis 1-3 and The Male / Female Role Relationship,” *Grace Theological Journal* 1 (1981): 27. Accessed October 24, 2016. [Faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ited_hildebrandt/.../Stitzinger-Gen-1-3-GTJ-1981.htm](https://www.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ited_hildebrandt/.../Stitzinger-Gen-1-3-GTJ-1981.htm).

⁴ Paul Ratsara and Daniel Bediako. Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation, (2013): 1. Accessed October 28, 2016. <https://www.adventistarchives.org/man-and-woman-in-genesis-one-thruthree.pdf>

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argued for gender equality of the man and woman right from their creation in the Genesis creation account.⁵ Raday asserts that religious texts and norms, particularly those of Christianity, have an impact on how people see gender roles in society.⁶ Consequently, it is essential to comprehend the unique roles God intended for man and woman, as enshrined in Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18–24. These two texts are analysed to come to a solid grasp of the appropriate roles of men and women in society and their implications for Christians in the Kumasi metropolis.

This paper adopts an interdisciplinary approach, combining Biblical theology with Sociology. Resorting to an exegetical analysis of Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-24, it deduces the proper roles God designed for men and women in family life, church and society in the creation narratives of the Judeo-Christian scripture. It further examines factors influencing gender roles among Christians in Kumasi society and the implications of the two pericopes of the biblical text for gender equality in Kumasi society. Qualitative data on the determination of gender roles in Kumasi society was gleaned from expert interviews with ten Christian leaders of different denominations in Kumasi. A set of hundred questionnaires with open-ended questions was also distributed to some selected Christians in various denominations in Kumasi to solicit their views on gender roles in family life church and society. Using the thematic approach, the primary data were qualitatively analyzed, and juxtaposed with the secondary data obtained from views of scholars on the subject matter. The study also draws implications from the exegetical analysis of the two pericopes in informing and guiding gender roles in family life, church and society of Kumasi.

II. CREATION OF HUMANKIND AND THE GENDER DEBATE

Christians have employed the Bible over the centuries for guidance on varied issues, many of which have sparked heated debates.⁷ Debates surrounding these issues remain unabated and in many parts of the world, one of these is the contentious issue of gender roles in the church and society. As the Bible remains the authoritative scripture for Christians, Genesis 1 and 2

have become the sources of reference for the gender debate in support of or against gender equality.

In opposing gender equality, some arguments are put forward by scholars through the utilization and interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2. Polydrous, for instance, reviewed the works of Milton about the interpretation of the image of God in Genesis 1:27 and debunks Milton's view that man's status is elevated based on his nearness to God's image which effectively diminishes woman's status.⁸ Milton was strongly convinced by St. Paul's position that "the woman is not primarily and immediately the image of God but the man".⁹ However, critical study of the text brings to light that the woman was primarily part of the image of God as the use of the terminology, *'ādām*, about the creation of humanity in the image of God in Genesis 1:27, is a generic term that stood for both the male and female. It is therefore stated categorically in the text, "male and female, he created them".

Trible asserts that the creation of the woman finally happens in the Yahwist account of creation, after the making of the garden, the man, trees, and animals.¹⁰ Consequently, some biblical commentators claim female subordination based on the chronology of these events.¹¹ According to Tribble, these commentators argue that the Priestly account espouses the egalitarianism of the sexes because both the man and woman are created simultaneously, whereas the Yahwist account makes a woman a lesser and inferior sex because she is created after the man.¹² However, the argument of these commentators that the woman is inferior to the man according to the Yahwist account can be rebutted on the basis that the trees and the animals would also be superior to the woman since they were all created before the woman.

Froula endorses the traditional interpretations of Genesis 2 that impede gender equality and asserts that Adam's authority and superiority are derived from his act of naming the animals in the absence of Eve.¹³ Thus, the subordination of the woman can be confirmed because the authority to name the animals was solely bestowed upon the man.¹⁴ She argues further that in the Yahwist account of creation, God creates man first and prohibits him from eating from the Tree of Knowledge of good

⁵ Luis Dizon, Hansie Fernandes and Robert Grooves. *Complementarian and Egalitarian Approaches to Biblical Theology within Evangelical Protestantism*, (2013): 3.

⁶ Frances Raday, "Culture, Religion, and Gender." *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 1, no. 4 (2003): 655.

⁷ Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi, "Church Involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade: Biblical Antecedent vis-à-vis the Society's Attitude to Wealth." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 44, no 2 (2018), 4-5; Chimwemwe Harawa-Katumbi, "The Bible, gender equality and teaching theology in Malawi." 2010, 1. Accessed October 17, 2016. <http://academic.sun.ac.za/teologie/netact/genderequality2011/new/Ch9Bible&GenderMalawi-Katumbi.pdf>.

⁸ Desma Polydrous, "Gender and Spiritual Equality in Marriage: A Dialogic Reading of Rachel Speght and John Milton." *Milton Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2001): 23.

⁹ Polydrous, "Gender and Spiritual Equality in Marriage", 23.

¹⁰ Phyllis Tribble "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41, no. 1 (1973): 35. Accessed November 16, 2016 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1461386>

¹¹ Tribble "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation." 35.

¹² Tribble "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation." 35.

¹³ Christine Froula "Rewriting Genesis: Gender and Culture in Twentieth-Century Texts." *Tulsa studies in women's literature* 7, no. 2 (1988): 199.

¹⁴ Froula, "Rewriting Genesis: gender and culture in twentieth-century texts." 199.

and evil even before the woman comes into being. The woman, meanwhile, is not only formed second but formed from the rib of Adam, and the rib as the “male womb” affirms the origin of humanity out of the male spirit, hence the woman’s subordination to the man.¹⁵ Froula in her view, interprets Genesis 2 to promote gender inequality using the naming of the animals solely by the man and the creation of the woman from the man as her basis.

Aside from these interpretations which elevate the status of a man as against that of a woman, other interpretations seek to bring the woman at *par* with the man. In contrast with Froula’s views, Galinski perceives the rib as a symbol of equality between the man and the woman and has nothing to do with the subordination of the woman to the man in their relationship.¹⁶ Drawing upon Galinski’s view, one can note that the rib depicts equality of the sexes with further insight provided in subsequent arguments. Galinski, further asserts that as to the woman owing her existence to the man because of her being created from his rib, it is worthy of note that God without any aid, did the creation. God created the man from dust first and subsequently created the woman from the man’s rib when he put him into a deep sleep.¹⁷ Given this, deriving the woman out of the man does not imply subordination but affirms the purpose for which she was created. Thus, she was created from and for man to fulfil the perfection and goodness of God’s creation that “it is not good for the man to be alone” in Genesis 1: 18.

Drawing upon Galinski’s position, Joyce takes the argument further by asserting that the creator formed the woman from substance gained from the side of the man.¹⁸ This consequently had nothing to do with ribs. Moreover, nowhere did the Hebrew language use *šēlāc* for rib as in the Old Testament. *Šēlāc* is translated as “side”, “corner” and “chamber” in its 49 occurrences in the Old Testament.¹⁹ In this regard, material for the creation of the woman suggests equality of the sexes owing to its interpretation by Joyce as the side and not the rib.

One pertinent interpretation of Genesis 2:18 that supports gender equality was put forward by Eichler. According to him, the word *‘ezer* never refers to a person of subordinated position, as it appears 19 other times in the Old Testament. While it is always

appropriate to interpret it as “help” or “helper”, *‘ezer* implies a helper who delivers or rescues or a person who is even superior to the one being helped. The word *neged* (*kāneḡdô*), combined with *‘ezer*, also suggests equality, thus a helper who is a counterpart.²⁰ This implies that the woman was created as a counterpart of the man based on the nuances of *‘ezer* and *kāneḡdô* as it is used about the creation of the woman.

The above arguments explain whether subordination or equality was the original relationship that existed between the man and the woman in the creation narratives of Genesis. The divergent interpretations either promote or impede gender equality. The subsequent section would then offer readings into the text to establish whether the texts promote or impede gender equality.

III. GENDER ROLES IN THE CREATION NARRATIVES: SUBORDINATION OR EQUALITY

The above section has shed light on the role of Judeo-Christian scriptures in the gender debate and scholars have consequently polarized the interpretations of Genesis 1-2 to either support or debunk patriarchy. This section examines the texts to assess their diverse scholarly interpretations, deducing the respective roles of the man and the woman so far as Genesis and the gender debate are concerned.

a) Genesis 1:26-28

The narrator opens Genesis 1:26-28 with a statement *wayyômer ‘elôhîm nāqāšē^b ‘ādām*. It is translated as “and God said, let us make humankind”. This indicates the Creator’s declaration of his intention to create humankind. *‘ādām* denotes humankind, male and female, as evident in its relation to *zākār* (male) and *ūnāqēbā^b* (female) in Genesis 1:27. Its appearance in Genesis 5:2 depicts the same sense. It is attested in Genesis 5:2 that God created them, male and female, blessed them, and called their name *‘ādām*. It is important to note that *‘ādām* is referring to both the male and the female in this context and not exclusively to the male. This then differs from its usage in the context of Genesis 2 where *‘ādām* with the definite article refers to “the man” and for that matter exclusively the male.

God’s intention to create humankind in Genesis 1:26 is seen in the dominion mandate. Humankind was created to rule over all other creations. *wayyirdû* in Genesis 1:26 is the phrase that depicts the divine and cultural mandate bestowed upon *‘ādām* (humankind) to rule over creation, following the Creator’s declaration of his intention to create them as discussed.

²⁰ Raanan Eichler, “Gender Equality at Creation” *The torah*, 2016. Accessed on Monday, 10 October 2016. <https://thetorah.com/gender-equality-at-creation/>.

¹⁵ Froula, “Rewriting Genesis: gender and culture in twentieth-century texts.” 199.

¹⁶ Les Galicinski, “Gender Issues in Genesis 1-3,” 1997, 6. www.Depositsoffait.com/papers/Gender%20Issues%20in%20Genesis%2013.pdf

¹⁷ Les Galicinski, “Gender Issues in Genesis 1-3,” 6.

¹⁸ The Lord God then took woman from the side of man, a beautiful type and shadow as the church came from the side of Christ. Cf. Pat Joyce, “God’s Original Intention for Man and Woman,” *God’s Word to Women*, 2005. Accessed 10 October 2016. http://godwordtowomen.org/genesis1_2.htm

¹⁹ Joyce, “God’s Original Intention for Man and Woman,” *God’s Word to Women*, 2005.

wāyirdū appears jussive in meaning and a Hebrew compound of *waw* particle conjunction with the *Qal* imperfect 3rd person masculine plural of the verb *rādā* (rule). According to Gesenius, the jussive with the *waw* in conditional sentences depending on an imperative or cohortative expresses an intention or an assurance of a contingent occurrence as in Genesis 24:51; "Take her and go, and let her be".²¹ In this context, *wāyirdū* is a verbal compound of the contingent occurrence, dependent upon its preceding expression whose verb appears in a cohortative sense as *nqāse*^h. Thus, in Genesis 1:26, the Creator declares his intention to create humankind, followed by a conditional statement of humankind having to rule over His creation with *wāyirdū* the verbal phrase of the conditional statement.

It has been concluded with the affirmation thereof that God's purpose in creating humankind is to rule over the whole of His creation: the universe. Though the universe in its Hebrew form is not mentioned in the narrative, the literary style of Merismus is adopted in expressing it. The reason why *haššāma yim*, *hayyām*, and *hā'āreš* are mentioned in Genesis 1:26 is to represent the universe but enumerating on its parts (the heavens, the sea, and the earth) and therefore create what is called a merismus.²² According to Willem, whether *'ereš* means earth or land is a subject of controversy, however, the expression *kol-hā'āreš* frequently means the whole earth, rather than just the whole land. When combined with *haššāma yim* (heavens), the phrase "heaven and earth" expresses the totality of the created order; thus, the universe, as the opening verse of Genesis succinctly expresses it.²³ The narrator then adopts the literary style of merismus to identify the universe with the mentioning of *haššāma yim*, *hayyām*, and *hā'āreš* and the care for the universe is entrusted to the man.

The purpose of the creation of humankind is thus to rule over the universe: to be its steward. Furthermore, this divine mandate is not exclusively given to the male. Still, both the male and the female, hence the verbal phrase, *wāyirdū* appears in the plural form comprising both male and female and the use of *'ādām* likewise connotes both male and female.

b) Genesis 2:18-24

Genesis 2:18-24 commences with a statement from the Creator expressing His thoughtfulness about the man and his loneliness in the garden. This occasioned the creation of the woman to salvage the

man's loneliness and to complete creation since creation would not have been complete if the man had been without a companion. The woman in the context is referred to as *'ēzer kaneḡdō* and the combination of *'ēzer* and *kaneḡdō* implies a helper counterpart. *'ēzer* connotes "help," "support," or "succour."²⁴ It occurs 20 times in the Old Testament and it is predominantly used about Israel's God. 13 of its occurrences in the Old Testament relate to declarations concerning God's ability to save or deliver.²⁵ Its distinctive usage in Genesis 2:18 implies the Lord God declares that it is not good for man to be alone and therefore should be given a helper counterpart (*'ēzer kaneḡdō*). The helper counterpart in this context has to do with the woman, whom the Lord declares his intention to create for creation to fully achieve its purpose of completion, resonating with the idea that "it is not good for the man to be alone and therefore must be given a helper counterpart". For the Lord God to fully complete his creation in Genesis 2, he must create for man a helper counterpart. The phrase *'ēzer kaneḡdō* communicates this idea of the helper counterpart. The woman then becomes an indispensable equal companion of the man and therefore not his subordinate.

For the man to appreciate the gift of the woman from God, he first created the animals to mimic the man's companion. However, the man realized the futility of the animals to be his companion after he had named them. *wayyiqrā' hā'ādām šēmōt* is a phrase that indicates Adam naming the animals in Genesis 2:20 and translated as "and the man gave names". *wayyiqrā'* functions as a transitive verb with *hā'ādām*, the subject, and the pronominal direct object is *šēmōt* (names). The verb *qārā'* is joined with *šēm* in any context of the Old Testament to form the expression "to name or to call a name to".²⁶ In this context, it refers to the man without the woman giving befitting names to the animals after God had created the animals. Waltke opines that the man assumes the headship role as he names the animals by the cultural mandate in Genesis 1:26. This sole mandate to name the animals in the absence of the woman depicts the man's imitation of God as he brings the world under his dominion.²⁷ The phrase then depicts humankind's authority over the animals.²⁸ However, some commentators, according to Froula, argue that the man names the animals before the creation of the woman as he asserts his authority over creation and this implies the subordination of all creation to him including

²⁴ Brown, Francis. *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996): 740.

²⁵ VanGemeren, Willem. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology* (Michigan: Zondervan Grand Rapids, 1997): 378.

²⁶ VanGemeren, *New International: Dictionary of Old Testament*, vol 3, 147.

²⁷ Bruce Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Michigan: Zonderan, 2001): 88.

²⁸ Nahum Sarnah, the JPS Torah Commentary, 13.

²¹ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar/edited and enlarged by E. Kautzsch* (New York Mineola: Dover publication 2006): 109.

²² Old Testament Studies blog, "Exegesis of Genesis 1:26-28". Accessed October 20, 2016. <https://otrmin.wordpress.com/2009/06/24/exegesis-of-genesis-126-28/>.

²³ VanGemeren, Willem. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology vol 1*. (Michigan: Zondervan Grand Rapids, 1997): 519.

the woman since he had solely fulfilled the cultural mandate to dominate creation in the absence of the woman.²⁹ However, one would better appreciate the equality of the man and woman if he or she grasps the nuance of helper counterpart in Genesis 1:18, which depicts the purpose of the creation of the woman. Thus, the woman was created as a helper counterpart of the man and therefore not a lesser inferior being.

After the creation and the naming of animals in Genesis 2:20, the helper counterpart the man desires to have could not have been identified with any of these animals. There must therefore be a new act of creation for creation to fully fulfil its purpose of goodness as the Creator intended it to be, hence declaring that it was not good for man to be alone in Genesis 2:18. God then caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man and from his side, he formed the woman in Genesis 2:21. According to Sarnah, the Hebrew word, *tardēma*^h refers to a divinely-motivated heavy sleep and it has a dual function in its usage in the context of rendering the man insensitive to the pains of the surgery and unconscious as God is at work.³⁰ Sleep in the Old Testament signified inactiveness or passiveness.³¹ This implies that man had no role to play so far as God's creation is concerned as witnessed by the Yahwist account. The man must therefore recognize the sovereignty of his creator and that he is a creature and not a creator. His dominion over other creatures comes from God. However, his superiority over the woman must be disclaimed since he had no role to play in her creation but it was solely the work of the Creator with the divine purpose of being his helper counterpart and not his subordinate.

The clause, *wayyiben yhwah (ādōnāy) ʾēlōhīm ʾet-haššēlāʿ* in Genesis 2:21 denotes the creation of the woman from the side of the man after he had been put into a deep state of unconsciousness. It can be perceived here that the woman was created out of the man's side but not rib because *šēlāʿ* denotes "side" in the architectural design of the ark in Exodus 25:12 and the side chambers of the temple in 1 Kings 6:5. It also occurs twice in our text under study to denote the part of the man's body used to form the woman. The modern versions of the Bible such as the Revised Standard Version and the King James Version use the word about the rib in the creation of the woman in Genesis 2. As to whether either *šēlāʿ* is about rib or side, it theologically connotes physical union and signifies that the woman is the man's companion and partner, ever at his side.³² The woman is therefore created with materials from the

side of the man to imply equality neither from his feet nor his head to signify subordination or authority.

After the creation of the woman in Genesis 2:23, the man celebrates her as a gift to him from the Creator.³³ He expresses his joy at seeing the woman that she is his bone of bones and flesh of flesh: the one who would do for him all that other creatures cannot do. The poem expresses the equality of the man and the woman as expressed in the phrase *ʿešēm mēʿāšāmay ūbāsār mibbāsārī* translated as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh".³⁴ It is obvious then that both the man and the woman are created equal in the sense that they are of the same substance, "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" and this therefore depicts their equality in all senses.

The "poetic naming" of the woman by the man after the creation of the woman in Genesis 2: 23, follows the preceding ecstatic mood of the man and his expression of their semblance when he first saw her. However, the "poetic naming" in its Hebrew form as *lāzōʾī yiqqārē ʾiššā*^h translated as "of this one it will be called woman" does not necessarily mean the man was naming his wife which comes after the fall and for this reason the authority of the man over the woman in the Yahwist account of creation.³⁵ As earlier mentioned in the process of naming in the Old Testament, the one who names is superior to the one named. However, one cannot at all place the man's naming of the woman in this context at par with its naming of the animals in Genesis 2:20.³⁶ In the naming of the animals, there is a clear mention of *qārā*^h and *šēm*, which are combined in any context of the Old Testament, as in the naming of the animals, to imply the act of naming.³⁷ However, in this context, there is the usage of *yiqqārē*, *Niphal* imperfect third masculine singular, without the mentioning of *šēm*. In Hebrew syntax, *Niphal* imperfect is used in the reflexive sense to allow something to be done to someone in a futuristic tense.³⁸ The nuance of the usage of the *Niphal* imperfect therefore implies that the man was not naming the woman but discerning his close identity with her in contrast to Genesis 3:20 where the *Qal* perfect is used and where the actual naming occurred.

²⁹ Alter, Robert. "Genesis, Commentary to Chapter 2:4-24", 2005, 1. Accessed July 13, 2017. http://www.shammai.org/genesis_2_comments.pdf.

³⁰ Bruce Walke, Genesis: A Commentary (Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), 89.

³¹ George Ramsey, "Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2: 23 and Elsewhere?" *The Catholic biblical quarterly* 50, no. 1 (1988): 24. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43717586> Accessed March 20, 2018.

³² Efthimiadis-Keith: "Genesis 2:18-25 from a Jungian and Feminist Deconstructionist Point of View1," 59.

³³ VANGemere, *New International: Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol 4, 147.

³⁴ Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. (Winona Lake-Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 379.

²⁹ Froula, "Rewriting Genesis: Gender and Culture in Twentieth-Century Texts," 199.

³⁰ Sarnah, "the JPS Torah Commentary", 13.

³¹ Emmanuel Kojo Ennin Antwi, *The Book of Jonah in the Context of Post-Exilic Theology of Israel: An Exegetical Study*, (St. Ottilien: EOS), 2013, 147-148.

³² Sarnah, "the JPS Torah Commentary", 13.



It can be deduced from Genesis 1:26-28 that the divine mandate to rule over the universe was given to both the man and the woman suggesting egalitarianism of the sexes since both were created with an equal status of dominating and subduing creation. The text never mentioned that the male alone is the crown of creation in the universe. Genesis 2:18-24 also suggests both equality and complementarity of the sexes as the woman was created to complement the man and this complementarity must be understood in the light of equality due to the nuance of *‘ezer kaneġdō*, implying a helper counterpart.

IV. DETERMINANTS OF GENDER ROLES AMONG CHRISTIANS IN KUMASI SOCIETY

Gender is a social construct that is defined by the roles, behaviours, and expectations assigned to males and females based on biological, socio-cultural, and religious factors. Although humans are biologically male and female, society imposes specific behaviours and roles on each sex to differentiate them. To be considered a man or woman, one must behave and perform certain roles that distinguish them from the opposite sex. These gender roles are heavily influenced by biological factors and the culture or religion of the society. Determinants of gender roles among Christians in Kumasi society, like in many other societies, are influenced by a complex interplay of cultural, religious, socioeconomic, and historical factors.

In traditional Ghanaian societies such as the Asante and Ewe, gender-specific roles are assigned to boys and girls from infancy, leading to a different upbringing for each gender and a lack of equal opportunities for girls even in adulthood.³⁹ However, urbanization and social change in Kumasi have enabled women to perform roles that were traditionally considered male-only, and given them equal opportunities in various sectors. Participants reported a significant shift in Kumasi society from the past, where gender roles were strictly defined. Meritocracy dictates the assignment of roles, and individuals are given opportunities based on their abilities and skills, regardless of their gender. Jobs typically associated with the male gender such as masonry, carpentry, and driving have been pursued by some women after receiving technical training in these professions. Education has led to the emergence of opportunities for women in white-collar jobs such as banking, teaching, law, and health sectors. Kumasi society has experienced a significant shift from traditional gender roles to a meritocratic society that allows individuals to pursue roles based on their abilities and skills,

regardless of gender. There are therefore changing perceptions about the division of roles where women were assigned to domestic responsibilities while men dominated in public affairs.

Lambert has identified cultural factors as major roadblocks to achieving gender equality and promoting female education in Ghana.⁴⁰ Particularly, the Asante culture did not encourage the education of girls and women therefore promoting gender inequality in the Kumasi society. A popular local adage, "Obaa de ne bukase," which translates to "the place of the woman is the kitchen," further reinforces the notion that women should not be formally educated. However, the promotion of female education in Kumasi has allowed some women from both Asante and Christian backgrounds to occupy higher positions in economic, political, and social institutions that were previously dominated by men. While men still hold a dominant position in all aspects of life in Ghana, the study found that some women have also gained access to these roles. For example, at the time of the study, the regional director of education in the Ashanti region was a woman.

According to Tsikata, the financial responsibilities in the distribution of household expenses usually fall on men in most Ghanaian households.⁴¹ The traditional Asante culture places most of the household chores and child-rearing responsibilities on women, while men are considered breadwinners. However, in contemporary Kumasi society, some women have also started taking responsibility for household expenses. Therefore, financial responsibility has become a shared responsibility among some couples due to the wider economic roles of women and their employment in various economic sectors. Additionally, single parenting has led to both men and women performing both motherly and fatherly roles due to the absence of a partner resulting from divorce, death, or geographical migration.

In the religious context, Stiles-Ocran argues that traditional norms of Christianity allowed men to hold influential positions in both family and public life as well as in the church, while women have been excluded from leadership positions, particularly from official positions that require ordination.⁴² However, interviews with some selected Christian leaders in various Christian denominations in Kumasi revealed that churches in

⁴⁰ Megan Lambert et al, "Understanding the Barriers to Female Education in Ghana," 2012, 3. www.bluekitabu.Org/blue-kitabu-research-instit/understanding_the_barriers.pdf Accessed on October 13, 2016.

⁴¹ Dodzi Tsikata, "Affirmative Action and the Prospects for Gender Equality in Ghanaian Politics," *Abantu, Women in Broadcasting and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, (2009): 22. <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/buero/s/ghana/10484.pdf>. Accessed on October 13, 2016.

⁴² David Stiles-Ocran, "Jesus' Kingdom Message and Ghana's New Christianity: a Contextual Approach to the Praxis of the Kingdom of God," (MA thesis: University of Oslo faculty of theology, 2013), 8.

³⁹ Victor Gedzi, Principles and Practices of Dispute Resolution in Ghana Ewe and Akan Procedures on Females' Inheritance and Property Rights, (PhD thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2009), 85.

Kumasi society held varying views on how Christianity affects the roles of women in family life, church, and society. Some churches, like the Seventh-day Adventist Church, held traditional views of Christianity that believed that women should be subordinate to men in the home, church, and society. On the other hand, some churches, such as the Assemblies of God Church, believed in gender equality in society and the church, but not in the marital relationship. This means women can head the church and any organization or institution in society, but must submit to their husbands in marriage. Conversely, some churches in Kumasi believe in assigning equal roles to both men and women in the home, church, and society. For instance, the Presbyterian Church permits women to perform every role in the church and society without any hierarchical order of gender roles. According to the Christian leader interviewed, the determination of marital roles rests with the couples and is not determined by the church doctrines. These different views of churches on gender issues reflect how gender roles are perceived within the Christian or religious context in Kumasi society.

It is reasonable to assert that the perspectives of churches on matters related to gender exhibit notable variations among different churches in Ghana. Certain churches espouse principles of gender equality, advocating for equal opportunities for women akin to men in familial, ecclesiastical, and societal domains. This represents an egalitarian understanding of gender, where women are permitted to share equal roles with men in the church, society, and the marital home. Conversely, other churches adhere to traditional Christian perspectives concerning women's roles that constrain their engagement in family, ecclesiastical matters, and society, hence opposing gender equality. In these religious entities, women's roles within the church are restricted, and their consecration as clergy is expressly prohibited. Nonetheless, a subset of churches promotes gender equality within ecclesiastical and societal spheres but does not extend this principle to marital relationships representing those views held by complementarians.

Despite the patriarchal norms of Christianity and the Asante culture, Kumasi society has made significant strides from patriarchy to a society of gender equality. The study attributes this progress to female education, single parenting, gender norms and teachings of some churches and the wider economic roles of women in Ghana.

V. IMPLICATIONS OF GENESIS 1:26-28 AND 2:18-24 FOR GENDER ROLES AMONG CHRISTIANS IN KUMASI SOCIETY

As indicated in the study, Christianity can impact gender roles through the teachings found in Judeo-Christian scriptures, which some churches

interpret as endorsing patriarchy. However, Kumasi is transitioning towards gender equality due to urbanization, female education, single parenting, and increased economic opportunities for women.

Despite varying interpretations, an analysis of Genesis 1:26 and 2:18-14 suggests that these texts do not promote gender inequality. Kumasi has also made strides towards gender-based parity in contemporary times. As a result, Christians of Asante origin in Kumasi can refer to Genesis 1:26:28 and 2:18-24 as a framework for determining the appropriate roles of both men and women in family life, church, and society. In society, women must be accorded equal rights, opportunities, and roles as their male counterparts provided that the dominion mandate to rule over the universe is bestowed upon both the male and female in Genesis 1:27. Education has proven that women are equally level-headed as their male counterparts and for this reason, their opinions must count in the decision-making process in the society. Women must be given the nod to head any institution in society and enjoy equal representation in governance since the mandate to rule the universe is bestowed upon both males and females.

It is crucial to acknowledge women's invaluable role as partners and supporters in familial relationships, rather than relegating them to subordinate or servile positions. As Genesis 2:18 wisely counsels, women should be regarded as equals to their husbands. In modern Ghanaian societies, education has served as a powerful tool in empowering women to achieve greater social, political, and economic autonomy. By achieving economic independence, women can also make meaningful financial contributions to their families, thereby easing the financial pressures on their husbands.

Churches need to recognize the equal creation of women in the image of God and their mandate to be stewards of the universe. As seen in the Old Testament, women like Deborah, a judge and prophetess, played significant leadership roles. In the New Testament, women were instrumental in the growth of the church. They were the first witnesses of Christ's resurrection and were the first to proclaim the gospel message, which is a pivotal part of Christian theology. Therefore, churches in Kumasi should assign more leadership roles to women using interpretations of Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-24 as the basis.

VI. CONCLUSION

There is evidence of a shift from a patriarchal society to one that values gender equality in Kumasi, driven by social change. Women's education has led to some of them taking on roles that were traditionally male-dominated. Furthermore, some women are now breadwinners in their families due to their economic

empowerment. In addition, some churches have started ordaining women as priests. The interpretation of the two Judeo-Christian texts also supports gender equality and should be used to promote gender equality among Christians in Kumasi.

To promote gender equality in Kumasi, focusing on female education and technical training is essential. This will empower women to contribute to science and technology and participate fully in decision-making. Gender programs should be integrated into school curriculums to eliminate gender stereotypes and discrimination.

Marital roles in Christian marriages in Kumasi should be based on equality. Hierarchical roles where men exercise authority over their wives are not valid, and both sexes should have equal rights. Although men are typically breadwinners, women in Kumasi are now financially supporting their husbands due to their education and training. This support helps reduce poverty and makes women less dependent on men in other aspects of their lives.

Although some churches in Ghana do not ordain women as priests and the priesthood is still male-dominated, there are women making strides in the ministry. This is to inform those churches sidelining women in ecclesiastical clergy to take cues from those who have started to ordain female clergies. Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:18-24 promote gender equality and must inform and guide Christians of Asante background to promote gender equality.

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