

Women in christianity



Women are oppressed by the religion of Christianity.

For the religion of Christianity the equal rights for women is a great unfulfilled concern, from time beyond memory they have been dependent to man, in the family, and with restrained rights and involvement in worship. This is a big and intricate matter as Christianity is one of the major religions in the world. Is the opinion that Christianity “ oppresses women,” based on historical facts or is

the misinterpretation of these out of context scriptures; Let us look to the bible for some answers and solutions to the chaos and confusion with which modern women are confronted.

Throughout the Bible, men were the heads of families and were the leaders. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Noah, David, Solomon, Joseph and many more. As a result , it stands to reason and historical fact that the Bible is indeed patriarchal. But does this inevitably mean that women are oppressed and degraded?

Genesis(1: 26-27)

“ Then God said ‘ Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air..’

“ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”

It was not Adam alone, but Eve who made up God’s image, and thus, women are a part of this creation story, not demeaned but fully equal in the benefits provided by God. Arguing the idea that the male gender was created first is

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like twins arguing about who is greater due to which emerged first from the womb. They were created equally and with the intention of reflecting God's image in their own union, man and wife. http://www.religioustolerance.org/lfe_bibl.htm

The Bible teaches that man and woman were co-participants in the Fall: Adam and Eve were both responsible. Gen 3: 6; Rom 5: 12-21;

The Bible teaches that both man and woman were created in God's image, had a direct relationship with God, and shared jointly the responsibilities of bearing and bringing up children and having dominion over all the earth, and over all the creatures. In first-century Palestine, the way Jesus treated women was considered revolutionary. Jesus Christ taught that women were just as responsible for growing in grace and knowledge as men when it came to being one of his followers.

Jesus expected women as well as men to learn from him. The Bible does not say how many women moved around with Jesus and his male disciples, but definitely Luke records the names of a prominent few, and mentions there were "many others." Jesus walked through towns and countryside, preaching and giving the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve followed him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases: Mary called Magdalene, who had been freed of seven demons; Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Susanna and others who provided for them out of their own funds. (Luke 8: 1-3) It was the women who stayed at the foot of the Cross. The mother of Jesus, Mary, the other Mary, and Mary Magdalene with only one of the Apostle John, the beloved disciple.

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And it was Mary Magdalene who went early at the tomb and It was a woman who found the most important phenomenon in history, the Resurrection of Jesus.

In that time in history and culture , women were considered to be not reliable and they were not permitted to be witnesses in court. And yet Jesus wanted a women as his strongest witnesses, and accomplish his greatest works.

Jesus asked Mary to bring the announcement to the apostles, so we see that he relied on women to bring the men to him. Christianity today has a lot to thank women for, as men disbelieved, questioned, and ran away, but the women gathered them and lead them back to Jesus.

Now, one major issue is Saint Paul. He comes across as a big misogynist. But is our interpretation accurate? In 1 Timothy 2: 11-13, Paul says, “ Let a woman quietly receive instruction and be submissive. I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over men. Let them be quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. Adam was not deceived , it was the woman who was deceived and fell into sin. But she will be saved through motherhood, provided that her life be orderly and holy, in faith and love.”

St. Paul has been the victim of a bad press as far as women are concerned. Some have regarded him as the one whose basic message to women is to shut up, cover their heads and listen to their husbands. In the thirteen letters of St. Paul, there are probably no passages that are as difficult for modern Western readers as those having to do with women.

To clear Paul of charges of misogyny, perhaps we need to look at some historical considerations:

Paul was brought up as a Jew in the sect of the Pharisees until his adult life. In the Judaism in which Paul was reared, relationships between men and women were subject to the laws of ritual impurity. If a man so much as touched a woman at the wrong time of the month he could become ritually impure himself. In Leviticus, the law stipulates that a woman who has given birth to a daughter must undergo a period of purification twice as long as that for the birth of a son. And among the daily prayers " the Eighteen Benedictions" recited by Jewish men is this: " Blessed Thou art, O Lord, for not having created me a woman." So St. Paul grew up regarding to women in a particular way, and some of the comments he makes about women can probably be credited to his own background.

<http://tzion.org/articles/EighteenBenedictions.htm>

Women's status and freedoms were definitely restricted by Jewish law and custom.

As we mentioned already they were not permitted to be witnesses in court trials. They could not go out in public, or talk to strangers. They had to be double veiled when they went out of their homes. " They were excluded from the worship and teaching of God, with status barely above that of slaves." Their place in society was set in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the interpretation of those scriptures.

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In a Jewish and Hellenistic environment, the submission of the wife to the husband went without question as considered the foundation of the family order, and in therefore of the order of society.”

For many scholars , the first Christians had been accused of rocking the boat, and Paul wanted to make it clear that Christians were not anarchists.

Therefore, Paul’s statements about women tend to take on a different tone altogether if seen within the context of all of his writings, actually they serve to reflect and reinforce the message of mutual submission in Christ. (Lynda L. 1990 pg. 21)

In fact in Galatians 3: 27-8: The Same Paul says “ All of you who were given to Christ through baptism have put on Christ. Here there is no longer any difference between Jew nor Greek, or between slave or freed, or between man and woman: but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

This doesn’t mean that the borders no longer exist in this life; Paul was not out to abolish slavery and to struggle for the social equality of women. His concern was not for the improvement of present social structures but for the establishment of unity in the church, the one body of Christ, and then as one in Christ all other issues would be overcome.

One important point is that Paul, depended on women to help him in his ministry, and he thanks them in his letters by name, Phoebe, a deaconess of the church, “ she helped many and among them myself ” (Romans 16: 2).

In Philippians (4: 2-3) Evodia and Syntyche of whom, he says, “ they have laboured with me in the service of the gospel.”

And finally If he really despised marriage, would he have spoken so warmly and repeatedly of the couple Prisca and Aquila, whom he referred to as “ my helpers in Christ Jesus. To save my life they risked theirs; I am very grateful to them, as are all the churches of pagan nations.”

As seen Women have exerted a special influence on Christian life and have profoundly affected its spirituality, but the exact nature of this relationship has yet to be fully understood. Holy women throughout history have struggled over the nature of women`s calling within the church. Christianity has been, both a liberating force for women and the cause of their oppression. But we would like to conclude with an uplifting message, God is still saying today to those of us who are willing to listen a message that will clear us of any doubts towards gender equality;

“ In heaven, men and women will stand together praising God ”. (REV. 22: 3-5) A clear picture or even better the eternal picture, about women in Christianity.

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