

Matriarchy versus patriarchy research paper

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



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The Treatment of Women within Religion throughout History:

Women have been a fundamental element of religion serving in a myriad of capacities from the highest office to the lowest positions. Kraemer (2012) argues that the female role has been distorted in the modern era and must be re-examined. This study will evaluate the efficacy of that view and produce evidence to support the argument. It is necessary to credibly determine women's role's in religion in order to obtain the best of every opportunity.

Beginning with an overview of women in religion throughout history, this evaluation will establish a base data range upon which to build a foundation. Following this segment with a modern assessment of women's religious roles around the world will establish the scope and vitality of women in modern circumstances. Finally, combining the first sections will establish the evidence necessary to produce a credible assessment as regards the future of women in religion.

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In the end, this study will have examined past practice, modern application and future potential of women in religion with the stated goal of creating a deeper grasp of the contribution that they provide.

Past Examples

History is full of illustrations of the vital role that women have played in religion throughout the world. As healers, doctors and anatomists women in the early ages were deemed to be blessed with the healing knowledge and were often considered divine in many capacities (Ehrenreich 18). Early eras deemed the matriarchal society to be a more inclusive model of civilization than that of the often war mongering patriarchal societies. Fulfilling such vital roles as pharmacists and midwives women were the backbone of education and social science since before recorded words (Ehrenreich 18). With careful and diligent study young girls often dedicated their entire lives to the betterment of the whole, which in turn began to be perceived as a form of religion.

The nature of religion defines the roles that the sexes play in that belief system. From the female dominated rites of Bacchus to the high priestesses that spoke for the gods of Mt. Olympus, women's roles have been diverse and full of mystery (Kraemer 184). Evidence from the period directly preceding the appearance of Christianity in Rome illustrates a strong female presence in a wide variety of social and religious institutions. In a very real way, the often touted conversion of the women to Christianity was a direct result of the emerging male dominated theocracy suppression of the more traditional forms of female worship (Kraemer 184). This same approach by the Christian establishment is argued to have produced the perception of

negativity as regards the role of woman in associated religious practice. Common among the populations of the early eras were women of power that owned or operated the local inns and places of worship (Lucas 159). Many of current religions of the pre Christian period including the favoured Isis cult had many strong women that were deemed anti-Christian (Kraemer 185). With the ascension of Christianity, the often revered role of the female was reversed causing the women in question to become an outcast in the evolving society. The established power structure prior to this period was deemed more balanced in terms of any form of male or female dominant. There was an overt campaign on the part of the ascending religious establishment to limit and control the female portion of the society through the diminished role in religious observances (Kraemer 186). In the case of the Christian, the power of women was a direct affront to their teachings and therefore was wrong according to their belief system.

Asian women during the period of Christian ascendancy often found themselves observing more than one set of strictures in order to maintain social standing (Ruether 220). In modern day Asia, the marginalization of women was a gradual concept that finally took root after generations of social upheaval. It was the actions of Frances Willard and Anna Howard Shaw that found it necessary to firmly repudiate any other form of equality but that which is found in the Bible that cemented this view in the main stream (Ruether 142). This approach, eventually adopted by a wide range of international bodies has the women's roles reserved to the lower echelon, in a long running attempt to limit their influence.

Alongside the silencing of the female voice in many of the major religions

across India and the Middle East is that the role of matriarch has largely been relegated to the family segment (Ruether 140). Underlying the many strictures pertaining to women among the holy literature of religions is the associated social legal support system that is created around the belief system, which in turn demonstrates a strong favour to the male dominated culture. Ruether (140) argues that the subjugation of women by any religion is an attempt by that belief structure to create a system that condones a form of oppression. Alongside any religion will be dissention, if the ruling class can find a religious method of moral oppression the result will be a diminishment in the voices raised against the belief system.

Modern Implications

Modern religion has shifted profoundly away from the matriarchal underpinnings to a very strong perception of a male dominated institution. Where much of the healing and therapeutic healing processes were once the domain of women, modern estimates have stated that over ninety per cent of the professionals in these fields today are male (Ehrenreich 18). This is a shift that has been established due to the subjugation of women though the offices of religion for a sustained period. While the overall number for women in the health and care industries ranks over seventy per cent, their positions are that of the lower level employee, or base worker (Ehrenreich 18). With a large number of women having to pay heed to a small number of men, the same form of discrimination is illustrated.

Religion has been blamed for both slowing progress and being the source of it (Lucas 65). With what many viewed as cultural stagnation in the form of the Dark Ages due largely to the religious idealism of the period, the

associated subjugation of women and anything deemed pagan was the natural next step. When women of the period spoke out in any form of defiance, religion attributed this outburst to demonic energy, further alienating the outspoken woman (Lucas 65). This traditional view has given way to a gradual recognition that a redefining of the roles of men and women in religion is a critical step in creating a method to reach the next level of understanding.

Crawford (10) argues that even though modern theory has displaced many of the inferior roles of women in the religion, much of the underling perception of passivity and dependence have remained constant. This speaks to the culture and the underlying social acceptance that many of these religious ideals have in the regional society. The established position of the male and female in the culture is the result of generations of developed evolution, in which religion has played a critical role (Crawford 10). This fact will continue to provide obstacles to progress by attempting to apply traditional models to modern issues.

Future Potential

Crawford (191) continues to argue that it is the recognition of the value of women in religion that has been the continued driver towards fundamental reform and equality. With every modern innovation, the realization that the female has an active and pivotal role in the religions of the world will become a further reality. It will be the continued struggle to supplant the sense of inferiority that will propel humanity as a whole to a more inclusive establishment.

The vital decisions for women in religion in the future will rest on choice and

pluralism, or the ability to be a representative of their belief (Lindley 434). With the very real capability of transforming the modern establishment into a more effective spiritual mechanism, women in religion have every opportunity to achieve tremendous goals.

In Conclusion

Women have, and will continue to have, a vital role to play in religion. Across the world, in every belief system, women have held positions of authority and influence. This study has produced evidence that supports the initial ascendance and then gradual subjugation of the matriarchal society by the male segment. Reducing the role of women from roles of leadership to positions of workers and silent partners served to reduce the opposition factor experienced by many of the emerging religions of the era. It was far easier to find a religious means to silent the objectors rather than accommodate their views.

In the end, religion has gone from a largely diverse although balanced experience to a largely male dominated arena. This creation has begun to give way as the recognition of the need to evolve continues to shape the entire human race. It will be the responsible and ethical actions of the global population that will assure that women are no longer ascribed as inferior in the religious establishment and both male and female are perceived as equal.

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