

# Influence of Christianity – The Status of Women in the World

When Jesus came on the scene, women had virtually no rights. Both Jesus and his apostles raised the status of women by teaching God's will.

In ancient Athens, a Gynaceum was a segregated quarter for the wife in her husband's home. An Athenian wife was confined to quarters when men guests were present

Plutarch (2nd century) - men kept wives under lock and key and women were not permitted to speak in public.

Homer (850 BC), Euripides (480 BC) and Sophocles (497 BC) speak of silence for women; "One cannot trust women".

Hilarion to his wife as she was about to give birth, "If it is a male, let it live, but if a female, 'cast it out'."

In Rome (1st century BC), marriage with manus gave a Roman husband absolute power over his wife. Her husband owned the wife and all her possessions. A woman was required to have a guardian throughout her life if her father wasn't living.

A woman could not speak in court. Infamia was a label for disobedient Roman woman. In Coemptio, a Roman father sells his daughter to her husband

Cato wrote that a wife lacked the right to tell her husband's slave what to do. *Patria Potestas* was a father's absolute power over family members. A Roman had absolute power over children, even when grown and had power to execute his children. A Roman husband had full authority to chastise wife and even kill her, the same as he would his child. For a nonadulterous offense, the husband had to have consent of the extended family. Woman had rights only to her dowry, everything else belonged to husband, unless she had married with *manus*.

In 4:6 and Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. 7 There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." 8 For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. 9 The Samaritan woman therefore said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)

Two things – "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?"

She was a Samaritan and she was a woman.

10 Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." ... 27

And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He had been speaking with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why do You speak with her?"

*His disciples came, and they  
marveled that He had been  
speaking with a woman*

They could forgive Jesus speaking  
with a Samaritan but He was  
speaking with a woman!

The rabbinic traditions regarding teaching women are given in *Sotah 3.4*

*“Let the words of the Law be burned rather than committed to a woman ... If a man teaches his daughter the Law, it is as though he taught her lechery.”*

But Jesus even taught Jewish women.

Lk 10:38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet.

40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up [to Him,] and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me."

41 But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but [only] a few things are necessary, really [only] one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. "

On another occasion Jesus taught Martha

Jn 11:24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." 25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this? " 27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, [even] He who comes into the world."

The early church was helped often by women Lydia (Acts 16) who invited Paul to come to her home; Phoebe (Rom 16) who was a helper, Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3), who were co-workers.

Celsus (2<sup>nd</sup> century) ridiculed Christians, saying their religion attracted women – a sign of weakness and low repute.

Tertullian (3<sup>rd</sup> century) said that Romans “preferred to be the husbands of she-wolves than of Christian women: they could commit themselves to a perverse abuse of nature, but they could not permit their wives to be reformed for the better!”

Such a conversion meant the woman no longer revered her husband’s gods, allow the sacred fire in her husband’s home to go out, threatening the foundation of Roman Society.

Christianity instituted a new family standard

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;

Eph 6:4 And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Josephus (Jewish historian, 1<sup>st</sup> century) “It is the ancient practice among us [Jews], to have many wives at the same time.”

1Cor 7:2 But because of immoralities, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

1Tim 3:2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

Suttee: in India, Hindus burned widows alive. “The widow, as a good and faithful wife, was expected to throw herself on her husband’s funeral pyre and be cremated with him. If she refused, she was often put there by force, even by her son(s).”

Christianity is in complete opposition to such treatment of widows.

Jesus, taking pity on a widow at Nain, raised her son (Lk 7:11-15)

Jesus condemned the Pharisees for taking advantage of widows (Mk 12:40)

The church fed the widows (Acts 6:1-6)

Christians were to care for widows (1 Tim 5:4) and the church was to care for widows who had no children to care for them.(1Tim 5:3)

In 1829, the British outlawed *suttee* (or sati for widow burning) and in 1856 gave Indian widows the right to remarry, even though the Hindus argued that this violated their freedom of religion guaranteed by their constitution. *Suttee* is still practiced as late as 2002 when their “elderly 65 year old mother” was forced into the fire by her two sons in India.

Bride burning in India continues to be practiced. CNN Aug, 1996 reported 2500 brides per year burned due to irritation at the size of dowry accompanying marriage.

Foot binding of young girls in China, practiced to make a woman walk on tiptoe and thus make her more desirable to men, was outlawed in 1912. Christian missionaries led the crusade to abolish this practice.

“The birth of Jesus was the turning point in the history of woman.”

Where else do women have more freedom, opportunity and human worth than in countries that have been influenced by Christianity?

“Index of Economic Freedom” ranks countries of Western Europe, North America and Australia/New Zealand as the top 20. Exceptions to the correlation with Evangelical Protestantism are Hong Kong, Singapore, Ireland and Chile.

The next 50 countries mixed Catholic, and Asian--Czech, Belgium, Lithuania, Malta, Bahrain, Barbados, Armenia, Bahamas, Japan, Botswana, Norway, Portugal, Spain, El Salvador, ... France ... Next 50--Mexico. ... Islamic and Catholic countries, Saudi Arabia, Peru, Bolivia, Cambodia, Georgia ... Last 50 - Brazil. .... pagan countries of Africa, Senegal, Guyana, Namibia.

The infant mortality rate is highest in central African countries. Angola (18.7%) ranks first, but Afghanistan (16%) and Tajikistan (11%) are close behind. The highest rate among Asian countries is #28 Laos (8.5%). India, a country divided between Islam and Hindi ranks 55th at 5.6%. Most Islamic countries begin to appear at 72nd with Morocco (4.2%). Catholic countries of South America start with Guatemala (3.2%) at #80. The US (0.6%) is #184 with the countries of Western Europe, Australia/New Zealand appearing between the US and Singapore(0.02%) which is #226

Do any of these countries lack the natural resources that would cause them to fall into their place on the list?

Iceland (0.03%) with virtually no natural resources is #222.

Wherever Bible beliefs have gone,  
and Catholics don't qualify for  
being Bible believers (they believe  
in the Roman Catholic Church and  
its doctrines), the status of women  
has risen to that taught and  
practiced by Jesus!

Can there be any doubt that the influence of Christianity has raised the moral status of women as God directed? – Even in countries that are no longer controlled by Bible believers!

Would you be free from the bondage of sin?

Rom 6:2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection,