



Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

Vol: 1(3), 2019

REST Publisher

ISBN: 978-81-936097-3-6

Website: <http://restpublisher.com/books/cllrm/>

Bible and the Women: A Feminist Perspective of the Holy Bible

B. Sharan^a and Dr. S. Franklin Daniel^b

^aPh.D Scholar, Department of English, Madras Christian College, University of Madras.

^bAssociate Professor, Department of English, Madras Christian College.

ABSTRACT:

The diction 'Gender' in the Biblical narrative is measured to be a corresponding word of the term 'Woman' referred in the Holy Bible. While women were created as equals before God, the male-controlled society censures the truth that women were created as equals and instead articulates the fact that women were created only as subordinates to men. This paper attempts to study the Holy Bible through a woman's perspective thereby debunking the patriarchal statements that rob women of their pride.

KEY WORDS: Gender, Women, Equals, God, Male – controlled society, Subordinates, Men, Holy Bible, Patriarchal.

FULL PAPER:

The Holy Bible does not teach that woman is inferior to man. Regrettably, there is great misperception in the minds of men and women concerning gender roles in Christian ministry. This paper attempts to commiserate the Biblical suppositions on women disparaging the patriarchal interpretations of the Holy Bible regarding gender roles. God strictly shows no discrepancy between male and female as far as their basic self - worth goes. Genesis 1:27 says "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them" (NKJV). The "image" of God is reflected in both man as well as woman. Women, just like men were bestowed with different gifts from God as both male and female were created as equals before God. Many misjudge that the Holy Bible looks down upon women; like the Scripture doesn't give any space for women etc. Contrary to this claim the Holy Bible presents some absolutely venerable and exceedingly divine women. Scripture makes it flawlessly clear that the creation of woman is not a postscript. A woman is just as much an elite part of God's creation as man. It is high time that the patriarchal society should stop saying that a woman is responsible for the fall. While both, male and female have mutinied equally against God's will, how is that a woman alone responsible for the fall? The Bible doesn't blame woman for the fall instead the norms of patriarchal society does. When women were fashioned in God's image, the male dominated society deprecated women's status by saying that they were less equal to the men in society but the strong fight of women for their impartiality had finally cemented the way for women's equality in the society. In an age when many women were graded equals to slaves, The Holy Bible accredited their value and fostered their status to likeness with males before God. When many patriarchal writers acknowledged the point that God formed woman only as a helper of man, the Biblical feminism sequenced the same statement by voicing women's equality as the statement indicates the point that a male can't do anything alone without the help of a female. This verse in Genesis 2:18, "And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.'" (NKJV) illuminates that a helper is not somebody who is secondary, but the one who works together, side by side. The examples in the book of Luke, chapter 7, verses 36-50 and the book of Mark, chapter 14, verses 3-9 denotes that the Bible supported women when the society put them down.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, "Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." (Mark 14:3-9; NKJV)

The Bible, by elevating the status of women, did not hesitate to break through traditional, racial, and sexual blockades. The Holy Bible is not only full of heroes but also full of heroines. The Old Testament has Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Deborah, Ruth, Hannah, Esther and a multitude of others. The New Testament has many heroines like Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene etc. The Bible does not have male prophets alone; it has also got female prophets. The examples of Deborah and Huldah stands firm to validate the statement. "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time" (Judges 4:4; NKJV); "So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her" (II Kings 22:14; NKJV). During the Old Testament times, women were not even consented to raise their voice against men. But even during those times, the Bible gives readers the examples of Miriam, Deborah and Esther, as Women trailblazers. The examples of Lydia, Pricilla, and Phoebe in the New Testament authenticates the avowal of having women spearheads in the Church. There are so many other heroines in the New Testament. For example, the Samaritan

Woman (John 4), the woman who anointed Jesus with perfume (Mark 14) etc. There are several basic disparities between man and woman in emotion, voice, physical size and strength, childbearing etc; but the variances between the sexes go even further as they have discrete roles to play. The Bible writers were not frightened to give women the recognition they deserved but the patriarchal society looks at the role differences as prejudiced. Transformations in roles do not imply subordination or dominance. Women and Men can fill the altered roles and functions and still linger "equal." E.g. While both Children and Parents are valuable in the sight of God's, would a three-year-old have an "equal" say with his/her thirty-year-old parents? In the same way, the Bible teaches that men and women are equal but their roles are different and are of equal importance. When Jews restricted women from reading Torah, Jesus Christ himself being a Jew encouraged women to sit at his feet as a disciple and learn. There were no double standards for moral concepts regarding men and women during Jesus' days. Also, certain examples of Jesus' treatment regarding divorce and adultery evidence the equal stand of women with that of men.

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (John 8:3-7; NKJV)

When Old Testament laws had severe effects on women, Jesus' take on this issue deconstructed the patriarchal standards of the laws of adultery. The New Testament of the Bible decrees the authority of women in ministry. When the male disciples of Jesus' uninhabited him during the time of Crucifixion, women were with Jesus near the Cross until his death. Also, the post resurrection of Christ was first to a woman through which the Gospel widely spread. The Holy Bible considers women as very momentous channels of ministry. The Book of Acts in the Holy Bible testimonies the place of women in the events and augmentations of the Church.

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers. (Acts 1:12-14; NKJV)

No Spiritual gifts were denied to women. This example in the Bible disapproves the demarcation on women which affirms that Spiritual gifts were only given to men. The Holy Bible has also included women in teaching the ministry.

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cencrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. (Romans 16:1-4; NKJV)

These are certain examples that corroborate their stand on women's equality in the Bible. This paper also deplores the fact that Apostle Paul's teachings were maltreating women. When many patriarchal thinkers appeal the Apostle Paul as women hater, Paul himself has quoted about gender equality in the Holy Bible through the verse, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28; NKJV). The certain examples of women cited in this paper exhibits that Paul had sincerely utilized women to minister in churches. Though male and female roles were seen independent in the Bible, they were always premeditated to be interdependent upon each of them. This paper, therefore, deconstructs the patriarchal customs of gender discriminations in the Bible thereby averring the practicality that both men and women were allocated equal social and moral responsibilities to build the Lord's kingdom. This paper thus establishes that even women were fellow hands in the development of Christian mission. "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building" (I Corinthians 3:9; NKJV). When women were considered as decrepit during those days, the records of the Holy Bible thus explicate that women had come out of their patriarchal circle and evidenced themselves in the gargantuan task of spreading the Gospel. The paper thus confirms that the Holy Bible irrevocably endorsed the tribute and poise of womanhood.

WORKS CONSULTED:

- **The Holy Bible**, New King James Version. Print
- Groothuis, Rebecca, **Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality**, Baker books, 1996. Print
- Strauch, Alexander, **Men and Women Equal Yet Different**, Lewis and Roth publishers, 1999. Print
- Greene, Kathryn, **Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Doctrine**, Oxford University Press, 2000. Print
- Fee D. Gordon, Groothuis Merrill Rebecca, Pierce W. Ronald, **Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementary Without Hierarchy**, InterVarsity Press, 2005. Print
- Parush, Iris, **Reading Jewish Women: Marginality and Modernization in Nineteenth century Eastern European Jewish Society**, Cambridge University Press, 2004. Print
- Naveh, Hannah, **Gender and Israeli Society: Women's time**, Vallentine Mitchell, 2003. Print