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Gender stereotypes in traditional religions

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The role of religion in society

- Religion has played a significant role in world social development.
- The most important function of religion, inherent only to it, is satisfaction of mystical need (secret spiritual forces), the putting in order of the feelings and thoughts of man
- Religion creates and justifies moral law, the norms of behavior in all, and unites people of one confession, gives them certain worldviews guidelines
- Religion gives the believers a relief in suffering, show the way out of difficult situations that seem hopeless
- The significant influence of world and national religions on the reproduction of the spiritual sphere of mankind remains today.
- But the evolving process of society secularization promotes the emergence of tension between those who believe in Tradition and defend Tradition (orthodox), those who try to reform religious institutions within the institutions themselves (reformers) and those who seek to change the very essence of religion (revolutionaries).



The problems of gender stereotypes in religions

- Religion is one of the cultural practices that transforms the biological sex into the cultural constructs of "masculinity" and "femininity."
- Gender stereotypes suggest that people have different ideas about the behavior and personality characteristics of men and women
- Men and women can have a set of both qualities, and stereotypes simply state that some of these qualities are more characteristic for men, others are for women
- Naturally, that religious people are more likely to support stereotyped attitudes toward gender roles
- An example is the differences in the gender roles of representatives of various religions. Thus, a number of leading religions of the world (Islam, Judaism and Christianity) teach that women are subordinate to men



Traditional quotes from Bible about gender roles(1)

- In the creation story, God first made Adam and then Eve as his helper. *Genesis 2:18* says, “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”
- In *1 Timothy 2*, Paul used the creation order as evidence for men being the leaders/teachers in the church and not women. Look at what he said in *1 Timothy 2:12-13*: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”
- *Titus 2:1-5* Teach the older men to have self-control, to be serious, and to be wise. They must be strong in faith, in love, and in patience.³ Also, teach the older women not go around saying bad things about others or be in the habit of drinking too much. They should teach what is good.⁴ By doing this they will teach the younger women to love their husbands and children. ⁵ They will teach them to be wise and pure, to take care of their homes, to be kind, and to be willing to serve their husbands.



Traditional quotes from Bible about gender roles(2)

- Regarding the distribution of duties in the house, the Bible tells husbands to provide for their families. This means that her husband should work and earn enough money to satisfy all needs of his wife and children.
- Evasion from this has certain spiritual consequences. "And he who does not care for his family, and first of all for the household, he denied the faith and became worse than the unbeliever" (*1 Timothy 5: 8*).
- Paul teaches that the husband's love should mirror Christ's love for the church. In *Ephesians 5:25-28*, he says: Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for ...In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.



Alternative quotes from Bible about gender roles(1)

All differences and contradictions disappear in God

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- *Before God all are equal.*

Corinthians 11:12 For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.

- *The husband joins the wife, and not the wife to the husband*

Ephesians 5 :The Scriptures say, “That is why a man will leave his father and mother and join his wife, and the two people will become one.”^[a] ...³³ But each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself. And a wife must respect her husband



Alternative quotes from Bible about gender roles(2)

- *Mark 16:9 For the first time the Risen Jesus appears to woman Mary Magdalene.*

Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

- *In patriarchal Israel there was a period when the nation was ruled by a woman.*

Judges 4:4 Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time.

- *Jesus praises a woman for the fact that she left the household and listening to the word of the Lord.*

Luke 10:38-42 Martha and Mary.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus^[a] entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. ³⁹ And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary.^[b] Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.



Dependence of gender stereotypes on the cultural background

- we must admit that the description of research results will largely depend on which cultural ground the researcher belongs to.
- From a feminist point of view, the Islamic world articulates its attitude towards the woman most categorically, invading family and marriage relations and describing gender roles. Strange for a feminist view is the idea of feminine fidelity, in which one can not doubt only if the woman is isolated from men.
- On other hand for the Muslim and Cristians, the sacred books are a source of ideas about gender equality, about marriage and divorce, inheritance of property, family and the continuation of the family.
- For the Muslim woman the Koran remains a sacred text, and she can not oppose polygamy, for example.



Changing gender stereotypes

- The position of a Muslim woman in the communities of North America, Germany and other industrial countries is different from that of her sisters in Afghanistan, Indonesia or Iran.
- Most Muslim women do not criticize sacred texts, but look for new ways to read them.
- Similar processes occur in the Christian world. Believers people read the Sacred Texts and find new interpretations. They separate cultural and historical features from really important religious and moral principles.
- Globalization, the growth of technology and the Internet frees women from traditional gender roles.
- Now a new generation is growing up, for which traditional gender stereotypes are not convincing. Despite the fact that religion is very conservative, in all traditions there are liberal movements and liberal theologians, who are rethinking stereotypes and prejudices.



Conclusions

- Gender stereotypes are quite stable, but historically variable sociocultural images. The most stable are the ideas about the basic characteristics of men and women supported by the institutions of religion.
- Despite the fact that religious people readily follow traditional gender stereotypes, nevertheless there is an influence of modernizations that have occurred in modern society, orientation towards egalitarian gender principles.
- So, after analyzing the gender stereotypes of traditional religions, we can conclude that, on the one hand, most religious women accept their position as the destination of the will from above. On the other hand, gender stereotypes of masculinity - femininity have changed.

