

AUSTELL GRANDVIEW SDA CHURCH PRESENTS

HERITAGE

A BLACK HISTORY MONTH CELEBRATION

PART II

BLACK WOMEN | HONORED

BASED ON GALATIANS CHAPTER 3:26-28

RICHARD MCNEIL

THERE IS A CURRENT WAR ON BLACK WOMEN

“What happened on that auction block centuries ago is still unfinished business for African American women today.” —Dr. Gail E. Wyatt

For African American women, racism-related stress may be compounded by experiences of sexism.

Recent studies indicate that gender discrimination predicts psychological distress, anxiety, anger, obsessive-compulsive behavior, and depression. (Klonoff, Landrine, and Campbell 2000; Landrine, Klonoff, Gibbs, Manning, and Lund 1995; Moradi and Subich 2003).

Some researchers who examined racism and sexism, state that African American women experience a unique form of oppression that is specific to their race-gender subgroup (Collins 1986; hooks and Mesa-Bains 2006; Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight 2008).

Racism and sexism are inextricably intertwined, into one hybrid force that is used to devalue women and foster racist perceptions of gender roles (Essed 1991).

HERITAGE

PRE- COLONIAL HERITAGE | AFRICAN CULTURES

In many African cultures, women have prominent positions, they have been dominant in the tribes within the Swazi, Luapula and Lunda.

West African women also enjoyed a relative amount of freedom that impressed Arabs and European visitors.

The fact that there had been women in power in traditional societies is mostly neglected in mainstream historical accounts on the position of women in Africa.

In ancient Ghana, women sometimes served as government officials. Later, in the forest region, women sometimes inherited property and owned land—or at least controlled its income.

Women retained far more freedom in West Africa than was the case in Europe or southwest Asia.

In some places in Africa, women are treated like slaves and deprived of the human rights but...

“This is an affront to not only their dignity but also the best offerings of African tradition, which sees women as the preeminent symbol of life, a precious gift.” - Anne Arabome, “‘Woman, You are Set Free!’ Women and Discipleship in the Church,” in *Reconciliation, Justice, and Peace: The Second African Synod*, ed. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 121.

INTERESTING FACTS

African scholar Teresa Okure shares,

“In traditionally African contexts, fully human undertakings are done conjointly by men and women. The traditional priesthood for instance, embraces both women and men each in his/her own right as a person.” Teresa Okure (1985).

"In some cultures, like the Ewe culture of Ghana, women enjoy a much higher status and respect than they do in the church which is supposed to proclaim and be God's agent of liberation in and through Christ of all oppressed and marginalised persons". "In our African religious tradition women were priests and ministered well to the community, why not today?" - Teresa Okure (1985).

According to African theologian Dickson in the book, “Theology in Africa” “It is more correct to speak of complementary roles which African societies expect of sexes in order to serve the greater purpose of enhancing society's effectiveness. (A. Dickson. Theology in Africa, Pg. 64.).

“South Africa—the Rainbow Nation that was truly founded by both mothers and fathers, unlike the United States and many other countries where the birth of a nation is often associated with the founding fathers.” - Hippolyte Fofack

The South African Parliament— is 42.3 percent women— is one of the most gender-balanced in the world.

Chief Musamaali Nangoli (1990) in his book “No more lies about Africa, says , A man who beats up his wife is considered by society to be weak in mind and utterly lacking in moral character. So that [nonsense] that you have read about the woman in Africa being a second class citizen is just that nonsense.” - [Chief Musamaali Nangoli (1990) in his book “No more lies about Africa”].

WHEN DID THIS IDEA OF SUBJUGATING WOMEN COME IN?

Stereotypical gendered roles began in the antiquities [the ancient past, the period before the Middle Ages] and are reinforced in religious teachings.

Elizabeth A Clark

COLONIAL PERIOD

Eastern religions denied women human nature and attributed to them an animal nature.

Aristotle stated:

"The female is a male which for some accidental reason did not attain its full development".

Euripides said:

"The woman is the worst of all evils". And Aulo Gellio affirmed: "The women are a necessary evil.

Jewish writings

"Praised be God, that he did not create me as a goy (gentile)! Praised, that he did not create me as a woman! Praised, that he did not create me as an ignorant person!" Hauke (1988: 78) in his book Women in priesthood.

Rabbi Eliezer wrote (Around 90 A.D.):

"He who teaches his daughter the torah is like one who teaches her dissoluteness ... may the words of the torah be burnt before anyone delivers them up to women".

CHURCH THEOLOGIANS AND WOMEN

Saint Thomas Aquinas Summa Theological I. Q. 92 affirms:

"Woman is an occasional and incomplete being, a misbegotten male. It is unchangeable that woman is destined to live under man's influence and has no authority from her Lord".

2) Women, you are the devil's gateway. (Tertulian on the 'dress of women').

3) The woman does not possess the image of God in herself but the man is by himself alone the image of God. (S. Augustine on trinity).

4) When a woman thinks alone she thinks evil, Her very name, femina means 'absence of faith'. (Malleus maleficarum 5th century; Manual against witchcraft).

5) Eve originally was more equally a partner with Adam, but because of sin the present woman is a far inferior creature. The woman is like a nail driven into the wall, she sits at home (Marthin Lutero, 'on marriage').

6) It is the unbroken tradition of the Catholic Church that women have never been admitted to the holy orders, with which the orthodox tradition also concurs. (Vatican declaration, 1976).

It was the importing of western patriarchal colonial systems in Africa, that undermined the traditional cultural structures that empowered women in traditional African societies.

The colonial rule in Africa destroyed African culture with the introduction of values like individualism, corruption, capitalism and oppression.

“The traditional power of African women, disintegrated through imposed colonial legislation and a system of western values.” (AMADIUME, op. cit., 111s. The importance of motherhood should be seen in the context of the preservation and continuance of the group.)

The decline in moral values in Africa can be directly linked to the intrusion of colonial ideas and foreign religions.

According to scholars (Wayman, 2011; Tattersall, 1997)

“The religious traditions and customs in the Bible are more in sync with the traditional African religions than with the modern religious practices in the Christian churches in Europe and North America.” Kamara, M. G. (2000). Regaining our African aesthetics and essence through our African traditional religion. *Journal of Black Studies*, 30(4), 502-514.

Africa was closer to the biblical standards of God’s Word before European colonialism, than afterwards.

“foreign christians were withholding from African society the fullness of the biblical welcome. While allowing for such motive as personal ambition and an impatience of European discipline it was not here that the root of the matter lay, it was in failure of the white man as the African saw it, to act in accordance with the demands of the Gospel which he proclaimed (Groves, 1958:156).”

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Women participated as deacons, elders, assisted Paul and other Apostles and as Apostles themselves (Rom. 16:7). Church leaders (Rom. 16:3-5) Church rulers (Rom. 16:1).

Paul honors the women just as much as the men [equally].

The Gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul preaches

Galatians 3:26–28

26 For you are all sons/daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 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.

God does not discriminate.

HERITAGE