

NO WILL OF MY OWN

By Jon Zens

How Patriarchy Smothers Female Dignity
And Personhood

****Why are women the focus of so much mistreatment?**

“Henceforth it is also war by Satan upon the womanhood of the world, in malignant revenge for the verdict of the garden. War by the trampling down of women in all lands where the deceiver reigns. War upon women in Christian lands, by the continuance of his Eden method of misinterpreting the Word of God; insinuating into men’s minds throughout all succeeding ages, that God pronounced a ‘curse’ upon the woman, when in truth she was pardoned and blessed; and instigating men of the fallen race to carry out the supposed curse, which was in truth a *curse upon the deceiver*, and not on the deceived one (Gen.3:14). ‘I will put enmity between *thee* and the woman,’ said God, as well as between ‘*thy* seed and her seed,’ and this vindictive enmity of the hierarchy of evil to woman, and to believers, has not lessened in its intensity from that day.” (*War On the Saints*, 1912)

****What is “patriarchy” (page 22)?**

****The era Jesus lived in was patriarchal. In terms of the treatment of women, most of the world is still functioning like the first century.**

ULU, Uganda (WOMENSENEWS)--After getting married at 18, Alice Ongom, who is now 45, settled down in Gulu, a northern Ugandan city that was a battleground during the country’s intermittent civil war from 1986 to 2003.

But after giving birth to five daughters, her in-laws worried she couldn’t give her husband a male heir.

“All my in-laws hated me and told my husband to chase me away,” Ongom says. “He did not chase me away, but instead he brought in another woman.”

After his second wife fell sick and Ongom lost three sets of twins, Ongom says she suspected that her co-wife was suffering from AIDS and that her husband had transmitted HIV from her co-wife to her. Ongom took an HIV test and found out she was HIV-positive.

Ongom says the problem started with her father, who was guided by traditions that place a premium on boys and discount girls.

"I should not have got married at 18 years," says Ongom, who dropped out of school in grade seven. "I should have been in school. My dad refused to pay school fees for all of my siblings because we were girls."

She says it's a cycle.

"My mother had been accused of bearing only girls and chased from her matrimonial home," she says. "We grew up with our stepmother."

"Before I joined TASO, I had contemplated suicide," Ongom says. "I wanted to kill myself and poison my children because I had lost hope."

She says TASO has also provided free medication and counseling, which she says has helped her to stop hating herself.

<http://www.womensenews.org/print/8591>

****Women grow up in a reality constructed by males (page 25).**

****Girls grow up in cultures where boys are more important (page 27).**

****Girls often grow up being taught that females are associated with evil and weakness (page 28).**

**** "Honor your father and mother" is used to intimidate girls (page 29).**

****Girls are taught that they provoked their abuse, and then are blamed for it too (page 32).**

****Life is defined for abused girls; they cannot pursue life for themselves (page 34).**

****The offenders are often excused and continue as respected church members (page 35).**

****Patriarchy results in the loss of female personhood (page 37).**

****Patriarchy marginalizes and harms half of the human race (page 41).**

****Mothers end up enforcing patriarchy's encroachment upon girls' boundaries, and perpetuating male dependence (page 43).**

****Patriarchy highlights the human propensity to desire control and dominion over others (page 47).**

****Patriarchy views the value of women in terms of their uterus (page 49).**

****Patriarchy misuses the Bible for its own ends (page 49).**

****Patriarchy devalues women who are in the image of God (Gen.5:2).**

Ana Audilia Moreira de Campos in 1979 described the daily life of rural women in El Salvador. This same basic picture is sadly duplicated in most places around the world today.

Men who earn little or no income have almost nothing to be proud of except their virility. They have few ways to relieve their frustrations, so women often bear the brunt of their discontents. There is absolutely no respect for the human dignity of women. It is common for their husbands and fathers to beat, kick and humiliate them in the most vulgar ways The majority of men in our rural communities refer to women as "idiots," "pigs," "worthless," "disobedient," "deceitful," "disloyal," "lazy," "stupid," and "daughters of whores" If it suits his mood, any of the above perceived qualities serve as sufficient reason for him to mistreat his wife From the day she is born, a female is regarded as inferior. The birth of a girl child is a great disappointment No one celebrates the birth of a girl The woman's job never ends. She has to work at least sixteen hours a day to complete her chores Men, however, think women's work has little value Women have become the nation's beasts of burden, shouldering the basic responsibilities of the family and society in order that men may be free to pursue whatever work and pleasures they desire The myth of women's inferiority continues to flourish because of traditional customs and educational biases that have conditioned both sexes to believe the male is superior This national inferiority has been created

and forced by men. Institutionally, it is maintained and reinforced by the school system, the government, the Church, the community and the family (“Challenge of Women’s Liberation,” *Cross & Sword: An Eyewitness History of Christianity in Latin America*, H. McKennie Goodpasture, Orbis, 1989, pp.264-267).

Notice that last sentence. National female inferiority “is maintained and reinforced by the Church.” How can we be surprised at this in light of the way women were treated in the history of the church? The church has led the way in suppressing women. What Paul meant by “submission” has nothing to do with the meaning it took on as the Greek philosophic body/soul notions infiltrated Christian theology.