

DO RELIGIOUS GENDER IDEOLOGIES PROMOTE GENDER PREJUDICE?

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ABSTRACT. The view of women has long been questioned and debated in religious circles. Four main views have been recognized and labeled as traditionalism, complementarianism, egalitarianism, and feminism. These four views accuse their opposing counterpoints of prejudice while maintaining their view is biblical and balanced in favor of both genders. The question is asked, does each view preach and teach the positive value and worth of both men and women? While generally categorized according to philosophical ideals, the application of roles and responsibilities by each of these gender views suggests a corresponding affect on the biased view on men versus women. Whether the view is extreme patriarchy or matriarchy, the circular spectrum demonstrates a shifting value of which gender is more positively favored and which is negatively cast. To support awareness that gender views prejudice interpersonal interaction between genders, a survey was conducted with participants from each gender view to determine if their individual theological conviction about the roles of men and women in the church influenced their general sentiment of all actions of men and women. The goal of the survey was to corroborate the observation that one's gender ideology unduly distorts their general attitude about men and women. The survey requested first impressions of various biblical characters and then asked participants to rank them according to morality or godliness. The results confirm the stereotypes held by each group. The challenge is given to the religious community to recognize and confront the underlying implications in their gender teachings.

KEY WORDS: gender, traditionalism, complementarianism, egalitarianism, feminism

Introduction. Background

The various views of women in society, home, and church have long been questioned and debated in religious circles. This division has led to four main categories of gender views within the Christian community: traditionalism (also known as patriarchy or fundamentalism), complementarianism, egalitarianism, and feminism (secular and Christian). Traditionalism defends the conviction

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that men and women were created by God distinctly different and for specific purposes, as Elisabeth Elliot expresses, “The issue of so called equality of men and women touches the very foundation of Christian faith, for it goes deep into the nature of God” (Pawson 2007: 7). Complementarianism softens the edges by highlighting the equal value of manhood and womanhood while maintaining their gender distinctiveness as essential to their personhood. (Piper and Grudem 1991: 34). Egalitarian teachings hold to equality for all people, even though men and women still differ in essential ways (Stackhouse 2015: 14). The Christian feminist view focuses on complete sameness rather than differences and is committed to “the humanity, dignity, and equality of all persons... a social order in which women and men of all races and classes can live together in justice and harmony” (Japinga 1999: 13).



Figure 1— Gender view relation

While these four groups have defined stances, the gender categories are not static. There is a spectrum of viewpoints and nuances within and between each of the groups. For example, traditionalism contains subsets like the Quiverfull and head-covering movements, whereas more “liberal” traditionalists simply focus on the submission principles. Christian feminism contains broad categories from political agendas to stressing the relevance of women in the church. Likewise, there are soft complementarians and soft egalitarians which cross over to each other’s view on certain topics, thus blurring the distinctions between the groups. These four views have commonly been illustrated as a horizontal line with patriarchal traditionals and one end and matriarchal feminists at the opposing other, with varying degrees of complementarian and egalitarian viewpoints in between. This author’s personal belief is that the views are better represented with a circular diagram (figure 1) because the difference between extreme traditionalism / patriarchy and extreme feminism / matriarchy is which gender is in charge (man or woman), as behaviors and expectations of the leader/submitter roles are quite similar.

While each of the groups believe their view is correct and the others in error, the halves of the sphere (traditional / complementarian on one half and feminism / egalitarian on the other) have been at greater odds with each other. Both are responsible for vilifying the opposing gender side. Broad stereotypes include feminists disrespecting men and egalitarians disregarding differences while traditionalists devalue women and complementarians place restrictive boundaries. Feminists are commonly caricatured as man haters or “lesbian misanthropes” (Stackhouse 2015: 12). Christian feminists are accused of misleading and lying to women, taking them off a godly path and placing them in a way of regret

(Alexander 2016: 34). Similarly, traditionalists are categorized as promoting “male-dominated theological assumptions, including the beliefs that the subordination of woman has been ordained by God, that woman is evil by nature, and that God is male” (Ferm 2004: 78). Misogyny and the power / control of male leadership underlies the created “negative and often deadly rhetoric about women” (Baard 2019: 1). Matthew Fox characterizes this view as insanity, “Religious fundamentalism exemplifies identification with the oppressor... Fundamentalism is patriarchy gone berserk” (Fox 1988: 27).

There are reasons why these stereotypes exist. Each view has hidden suspicions regarding the actions and motivations of the “secondary” or even “lesser gender” but are hesitant to admit it as it is patently prejudicial. Some brave exceptions are willing to admit why the stereotypes exist within their own circle. Fredrica Thompsett, a feminist theologian, acknowledges that, “Some religious feminists and secular feminists do reject the Bible as totally oppressive and patriarchal, irredeemable in its usefulness for women today (Thompsett 1986: 28). Erin Conn, a modern-day traditionalist, explains that current masculinity “without a clear purpose [can be] used to manipulate, control, and abuse” (Conn 2022). Both sides acknowledge the extreme propensities of their views.

Yet despite these acknowledged faults, each hemisphere adamantly portrays themselves in positive, “accepting” terminology. They adamantly claim to have mutual respect and admiration for the sexes. Complementarians preach that both men and women, despite what their roles may be, are equally valued. Leadership is Male author, David Pawson, claims his work is not about “putting women down” (Pawson 2014: 3:40). Traditionalist Debi Pearl asserts that women are not inferior (Pearl 2014: 21). Egalitarians and Christian feminists repeatedly claim their position is not about domination or inverting the existing hierarchy to place women over men; instead “they are talking about radical power shifts in society that move toward collaboration and reciprocity, rather than domination and submission” (Thompsett 1986: 35). Christian feminists repeatedly state that women are not superior to men. “Matriarchy is no solution to patriarchy. Both retain the root of the problem, which is usurping of power by one sex over the other” (Groothuis 1994: 103). Yet the caricatures continue: traditionalists respect women, but only in a certain place, while maintaining men are at the top of the hierarchy. Feminists appreciate men, but only in a certain role, while women belong in places of highest leadership.

Contrary to the vocal pronouncements in literature and social media from within each group, those who are more feminist in their beliefs can in general appear to be overly critical of the ethics and actions of men and convey a partiality for women. Conversely, women and men who are more traditionalists in

their gender views can have the same tendency, in general critical toward women and presuppose a more positive view favoring men. Literature from each of the groups studied intensely proclaim objectivity and balance in looking at the roles, ethics, and motives of men and women in society. However, language often encountered from each group can divulge subtle predilections which may be swayed by their ascribed gender ideology. While this perception can be emotionally palpable, there is not much in the way of confirmation to definitively demonstrate the veracity of such a claim or to refute pretexts to the contrary.

Regardless of how the views portray each other and defend themselves, each view's definitive stance on gender philosophy affects more than what a woman should do or should not do. The views produce a standard of thinking and behavior about the comparative value between men and women. Does ascribing to a religious gender view create a bearing on positive or negative view toward men and women? Feminists suggest the male, patriarchal influence has influenced culture negatively for centuries. Maureen Fitzgerald summarizes the patriarchal church's view of women:

Orthodox tradition claimed that God, the society's estimation of the highest good, was considered male; women were second in creation, "an afterthought" after male perfection, a "helpmeet" without claim to an independent existence or unmediated relationship with God; women's goals in life, their path to salvation, should be to perform the "helpmeet" function well, to sacrifice their own interests, their very life, for a man and his children. (Fitzgerald 1993: vii)

Conversely, feminists claim, their approach to Scripture "creates narratives of critique and reimagination with an eye toward life and the flourishing of women" (Baard 2019: 1). Traditionalists counter that feminism is destroying the church, "If human life is to flourish, dams [biblical boundaries] have to be erected and defended" (Conger 2018). Rich Stacy boldly claims, "Feminists made up the rules and gullible women fell into the trap laid for them by Satan." Peter Jones, author of *Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America*, explains:

Nowhere do bold attacks on the Bible surface with such moral fever as in the unholy alliance of feminism and radical biblical scholarship. Liberals have always chafed under the orthodox canon of Scripture... Feminist liberals, believing they have found high moral ground, do not hesitate to go all the way. (Jones 1997: 82)

How religion approaches gender is then called into question. Erin Silva, reflecting on how the church addresses women, concludes, “the church will stand as a stumbling block to the spiritual growth of its members” (Silva 1994: 154). The question arises, does one’s religious gender stance affect the way they view men and women in general? This author asserts, that while each of the gender views realize the importance of being “politically correct” and gender sensitive, their belief system and teachings does influence the way followers of each group unconsciously interact with the opposite sex. Ascribing to one particular gender view creates a subconscious bias toward the way one regards men and women. A survey was conducted to investigate if people’s religious viewpoints subconsciously moved them favored one gender over the other.

Survey Rationale

Despite the official statements and insistence of gender respect, there is still the underlying suspicion that the gender views practically affect the way men and women are viewed. Determining explicit prejudice regarding the motives or behaviors of others is exceeding difficult. No two people are absolutely equal in their dogmatic stance, and many factors influence the appraiser’s thoughts or rationale about the behavior of individuals. Life circumstances, culture, and ulterior motives can bias actions and ethics. Having a completely neutral situation for evaluation is impossible. Therefore, to support the awareness that gender views prejudice interpersonal interaction between genders, this author conducted a survey among people holding to each of the gender views to determine if their individual theological conviction about the roles of men and women in the church influenced their general sentiment of all actions of men and women.

The goal of the survey was to corroborate the observation that one’s gender ideology unduly distorts their general attitude about men and women. The purpose was not to absolutely determine a direct correlation, but instead serve as a warning to further validate the need for the church to be flexible and open in evaluating gender roles in Christianity. Gender worldview bias can influence attitudes of Christians toward each other, causing the unity of the faith community, required in Scripture, to be undermined. This gender bias can in turn influence hermeneutics, where the men and women in the Scriptures are judged as to their motives and actions. When this happens, the church at large is underserved and remains overly divided, unable to pursue the greater goals of the gospel. On a wider scale, unnecessarily pre-formed opinions on gender expressions affects teaching, preaching, and ecclesiology. Traditionalists may believe it is actually sinful to not view the nature of gender according to their beliefs, while Christian feminists can see any view outside the feminist view as immoral and subjugat-

ing to women. The maxim that “to a hammer, everything is a nail” applies here regarding gender worldview. Automatic assumptions or reactions prompted by preconceived views usually result in negative or destructive responses. If this type of attitude is not corrected, all commentaries on people and activities in the Scripture becomes suspect and one can only “trust” an interpretation that lines up with an already determined perspective. No gender worldview is held to in its entire dogmatic stance, but prejudice may force the observer into an overly restrictive ideological box or even unnecessarily misogynistic or misanthropic viewpoints by default. Through an understanding of the propensity of learned gender bias, one can become more guarded in assumptions and begin to see others in a more redemptive light.

Survey Design

Participants in the study were asked a set of questions regarding specific women and men found in the Christian Bible. Biblical personalities were determined to be a more ideal choice than historical, political, or other famous people as a basis for analysis for a number of reasons. As part of a larger Christian study, the use of biblical characters is also appropriate for the context since gender views in this research is religious based. Men and women in Scripture are familiar to all participants in the survey and are removed contextually and historically, reducing the cultural prejudice which may exist toward them. Additionally, information about them is limited and subject to the same perspective in their narratives. Positively, all of them can be seen from more than one view by an observer thus lending themselves to open interpretation. From the multitude of people in the Scriptures, specific characters were chosen due to the positive and negative characteristics making the evaluative ground for study participants more level.

From the outset, the survey was designed to be overtly qualitative, evidenced by numerous factors. Relationships between variables were a key component, as traditionalist, complementarian, egalitarian, and feminist views were evaluated. The objective of the study was thematic. Opinions regarding biblical characters were observed with the determinate endpoint being whether or not there was a subjective parallel between a gender group and their sentiment toward the virtue or ethic of the designated character. Questions were designed to be open-ended and spontaneous, with participants asked to give their initial reaction without introspection. Item analysis to determine unconditional merit of the questions was not intended or conducted, in order to give unrestrained freedom of answers. Even the forced-choice response was subjective. The test ceiling, that is, the limit which the surveys could measure, was designed to be simply emotive. The construct of the questionnaires was to evidence possible traits of prejudice

formed by preexisting gender ideologies in order to demonstrate unhealthy influences of strict adherence to one limited ideology. In this manner, this research is a qualitative inventory of personal opinions in the form of self-reports.

Identification of gender ideology was self-identified, and disposition toward particular Bible personalities was naturally idiosyncratic. Mathematical and statistical analyses to determine absolute relevance were not employed. Therefore, quantitative causality was not possible in the determination of correlation. However, while not phlegmatic in design or results, there were still quantitative aspects in this study. For example, a sufficient sample size was sought to reflect the general population as much as possible in order to strengthen the emergence of a pattern. Using descriptive statistics to describe features of the data gathered enabled patterns to be observed without the need for specific inferential analysis. With a larger sample size and descriptive evaluation, perceptions can be made pertaining to prejudice and assumptions of the various gender ideology groups.

Questionnaire Design and Participant Selection

The participants were selected from a personal group of men and women chosen from personal doctoral associates, educational contacts, church members, and word of mouth referrals. Additionally, groups identified with and promoting specific gender views on social media, websites and blog posts were invited to take part in the survey. Each respondent had the opportunity to answer anonymously to remove any pressure of how they answered. Questions and responses were devised to be brief and simple in order to encourage participation and limit the variables between participant and target endpoint. The intent was to have straightforward attitudes expressed on cursory level considerations of biblical characters. Ten biblical characters were chosen, five men and five women, based on each character having both positive and negative traits mentioned in the Scriptures. The women included Sarah/Sarai, Mary Magdalene, Miriam, Eve, and Rahab; the men were David, Moses, Solomon, Peter, and Gideon. The composition of the questions was to discover if those who claim a certain gender view responded favorably toward their “preferred gender” or would their answers be, as their literature claimed, more balanced.

The survey was divided into three sections. The first was to ask each participant to answer, in one to three words, their initial thought upon reading the character’s name. Before starting the survey, a clarification was given that the answers may contain a character trait, something the person in question did or a way to describe them, yet what must be recorded was the participant’s first thought, feeling, or reaction. The participants were encouraged that there were no right or wrong answers, and that they should not be tempted to write what

they considered might be a “correct answer.” The aim of this question was to understand the initial response, whether positive or negative, of people toward various Bible characters.

The second part of the survey was to take the previous ten biblical characters and rank them in the order of “godliness,” meaning, according to the participant’s perception which character would be of highest moral or spiritual temperament, and which would be at the worst end of the list (see Figure 2). Those with the higher number could be considered more respected, better role models, and worthy of esteem, while those with lower scores were viewed less than ideal. Participants who wished to express their optional opinion at the end of the survey admitted that this was the most difficult section to complete. Many realized that the biblical characters had both positive and negative traits, and that as sinners, all had fallen short of “godliness.” Though in fact the only biblical character who would qualify as ranking a perfect “10” on the godliness scale is Christ, with all others far beneath Him, the objective of forced ranking in this section was to verify the subconscious answers from the previous question on character description. The fact that respondents understood that each character had both positive and negative components to their character lends credence that their final evaluation and ranking might bely their gender ideology.

In your opinion, rank the following biblical characters in order of “holiness.” — 1 being least godly/moral and 10 representing the most godly/moral. (Understanding of course they all had positive and negative traits mentioned about them in the Bible.)

	least godly										most godly									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sarah/Sarai	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
David	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mary Magdalene	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Miriam	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Solomon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Eve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Peter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rahab	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gideon	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next

Figure 2 – Ranking of Biblical Characters

The third and final section of the survey related to questions of demographics. This section was perhaps the most innocuous yet was the most important data for the research. Personal questions were asked to identify the participants’ age bracket, religious affiliation, and assigned gender at birth. [Assigned gender at

birth” had originally been listed as “sex” on the survey but was changed at the request of some Christian feminist participants who felt a binary male/female sex category might be offensive to prospective test takers.] The most crucial question was the final question and related to the purpose of the study: What would they consider as their gender view. Choices included Traditional/Patriarchal/Fundamental, Complementarian, Egalitarian, Christian Feminist, Secular Feminist, not identified with gender worldview, or undecided/unknown (see Figure 3). The question of associated ideology was asked at the end of the survey to avoid shaping answers before the survey started. Respondents also had the opportunity to state if they were brought up with a different worldview than they currently hold to. At the end of the survey, participants were also given the option to include an email or additional comments.

Personal gender worldview CURRENTLY: *

- Traditional / patriarchal / fundamental
- Feminist
- Christian Feminist
- Complementarian
- Egalitarian
- Purposefully not categorized
- Undecided
- Unknown

Next

Figure 3 – Personal Gender Views

Demographics and Means for Study Responses

The research time frame was preset to allow for one month of response time, conducted between April 1 and May 1, 2022. Invitations for participation were made via Facebook and Twitter, with participants asked to forward the survey to friends and family. Surveys were dispersed by primary means of online media and secondarily by word of mouth. The questionnaire itself was administered by means of the online tool Survey Planet (www.surveyplanet.com). There was a total of 72 responses to the survey. However, some of the results were incomplete or had expired the deadline for response. Therefore, the completion rate of the questionnaire was high at 66 / 72 (91%). Most participants were female (74% vs. 26%). Ages of participants ranged from 20 to 70 years old ($M =$ years). Countries of responses as reported by Survey Planet included the United States, Serbia,

and Romania. Of the 66 responses, the gender ideology groups were divided as follows:

- 10 – Christian Feminists
 - 6 were former traditionalists
 - 2 were former egalitarians
 - 1 was always a Christian Feminist
 - 1 did not know background
- 2 – Secular Feminists
 - Both were former traditionalists
- 6 – Egalitarians
 - 3 were former traditionalists
 - 2 were raised egalitarian
 - 1 did not know background
- 16 – Complementarians
 - 10 were raised complementarian
 - 4 were former traditionalists
 - 1 was formerly egalitarian
 - 1 unknown
- 23 – Traditional/patriarchy/fundamentalist
 - 1 was former Christian feminist
 - 3 were former egalitarians
 - 4 were unknown or undecided backgrounds
 - 14 were always traditional
 - 1 unknown
- 6 – purposefully did not identify with a gender worldview group
 - 4 were former traditionalists
 - 1 was former complementarian
 - 1 claimed they grew up without worldview
- 3 – undecided/unknown
 - All three grew up traditional

Findings

Character Descriptions and Associations

Answers to the description of biblical characters were evaluated and compared according to claimed gender views and is summarized below. These are the “first thoughts” participants had when confronted with the biblical names. Some answers may not be “biblically accurate” in describing the characters, but the point

of the survey was to discover what perception was given to each of these people regardless of whether they were theologically right or wrong.

The Female Characters

Eve

As the woman associated with the sinful fall of mankind in Genesis 3, it is not a complete surprise that Eve had the most negative comments of any of the female characters (although one of the male characters fared worse). Of the negative responses, 43% were unfavorable due to her actions of sin, disobedience, eating the forbidden fruit, and being deceived. Three responses (4%) were positive, suggesting she was a leader and life-giver. The rest of the responses were neutral describing her as mother, wife, and woman.

Sarah/Sarai

Even though Sarah is listed in Hebrews 11 as one of the great women of faith, 41% of the answers viewed her in negative terms. Most think of her laughter upon hearing she would become a mother (Genesis 18), and others cite her unbelief, manipulation, bossiness, and strong-willed personality. Only 19% viewed her positively, with answers such as beautiful, submissive, obedient, and blessed by God. Of the neutral answers, 30% referred to her as wife, mother, or matriarch.

Miriam

Miriam, a prophetess of Israel (Exodus 15) and one of Moses' siblings, was largely described in neutral terms as sister and for the song she sang. She was described negatively by 15%, citing gossip, rebellion, and challenging behavior which resulted in the punishment of her leprosy. However, she was also viewed positively, as 18% claimed her as resourceful, faithful, and a strong leader.

Rahab

Rahab, whose brave acts were recorded in Joshua 2, was overall positively viewed. Although 21% characterized her by her past life (sinner and prostitute), 57% praised her courage, faithfulness, and creativity as one who helped the Jewish spies. One referred to her as a "shero" (female hero) and several associated her with actions of God – rescued by God, used by God, and in the genealogy of Christ. Neutral answers included associations with Jericho, scarlet cord, and spies.

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene is mentioned several times throughout the gospels. Often confused with other characters named Mary, Magdalene was saved from demonic possession and was a testifying witness to Christ's resurrection (Luke 8;

24). Mary Magdalene ranks the highest overall of both the female and male descriptions with a 66% positive response. The majority of adjectives had to do with love, both loving and being loved by Jesus. She was a friend, forgiven, and faithful, and was also labeled as a disciple, apostle, and witness. However, 18% of participants first thoughts went to negative narratives of Mary as a prostitute, demon possessed, adulterous, and immoral.

The Male Characters

Peter

The Apostle Peter had the lowest specific ranking out of all the biblical characters. He comes in at 46% negative, with the most cited reason as being impulsive. Other negative traits include immature, stubborn, flawed, and his action of denying Jesus. While Peter had the lowest scores, he was also one of the highest ranked at 40% positive. He was a faithful disciple, apostle, and friend to Jesus, and was zealous and passionate.

Gideon

Gideon, an Israelite judge and prophet (Judges 6-8), had evenly distributed positive and negative traits mentioned, both at 28%. He was a warrior and leader who trusted God, but he was also doubting, fearful, and weak. The majority of answers were neutral listing the anecdote of the fleece, a general mention of the “Bible” (a response which could refer to either the place where his story is found, or very possibly associating the biblical character “Gideon” with the Gideons, an organization popular for free Bibles often found in American hotel rooms), and “unknown” (as he seemed to be a lesser-known character).

David

David is a main character of the Old Testament, whose story is found in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Chronicles, along with other biblical portions which he authored. David, as with Gideon, had equal positive and negative responses, both at 27%. While labeled as adulterer, womanizer, and murderer, he was also known as a man after God’s heart, a best friend, and a tender warrior. His main descriptions were king and shepherd, and only one response mentioned Goliath, referring to his battle as a youth.

Moses

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy contain details about Moses’ life and actions. He was rescued by God as an infant and called to confront Pharaoh and lead God’s people out of Egypt. Moses was praised positively by 37% of respondents for his leadership, bravery, and humility. Unfavorably por-

trayed actions such as his striking the rock in anger and traits such as fear and doubt placed him at 22% negative. He was largely known for the Red Sea, the Ten Commandments, and being the baby placed in the Nile River.

Solomon

The most positively viewed male character was Solomon. Solomon was the third king of Israel, son of David and Bathsheba. His stories are found in 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Chronicles. He also is credited for authoring several portions of the Old Testament. He was the only male with over a majority (58%) of positive responses, mostly due to his association with wisdom. He did have 21% negative reactions for his many wives, concubines, and his spoiled, foolish lifestyle choices. Neutral answers included words such as king, son, and temple.

Godliness Rankings

The second section requiring a forced ranking of godliness is illustrated in charts 1-5 according to gender view groupings. Character was ranked on a scale of one to ten for each biblical person, least godly to most godly respectively. Scores were then summed and given a percentage within the claimed gender group. The charts reflect the overall evaluation of each biblical character, with larger percentages equating to higher godliness scores. The charts are arranged with female character responses on one side (in light grey) and male on the other side (in darker grey), to see the shift in gender views and preferences more easily.

Feminists

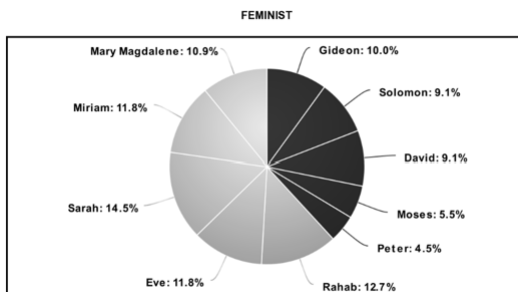


Chart 1 - Feminist

As the majority of survey participants considered themselves religious, some responses received were from a secular perspective. [Several secular feminists chose not to complete the survey because they stated that they were unfamiliar with the biblical characters.] Their overall descriptions of the biblical

characters were positive, with only one male character receiving a negative connotation (Solomon was associated with polygamy).

The chart shows the comparison of how the characters ranked in godliness. Without exception, the five lower scores belonged exclusively to the men and the top five good morality ratings were women. Even Eve, the lowest scoring fe-

male character in all the other groups, was praised as a leader and placed higher in respect over the all the men.

Christian Feminists

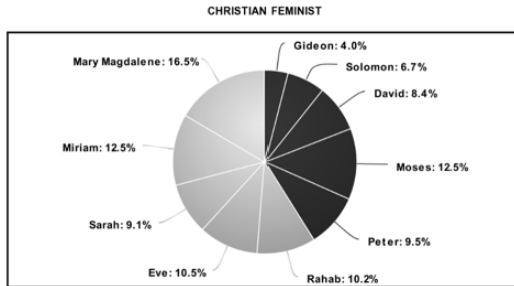


Chart 2 – Christian Feminist

At first glance there seems a slight difference between the secular and Christian feminist groups as women still were viewed more favorably than the men. In tallying up the descriptive first-thoughts, Christian feminists used forty-two positive words and five negative words about the female characters. Conversely,

thirty negative words described the male characters, and twelve descriptions were positive.

The godliness ranking chart mirrors the descriptions expressed. Women were generally favored over the men, apart from Moses, who tied for second place with his sister Miriam.

Egalitarian

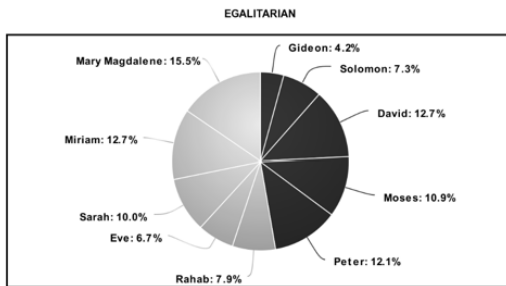


Chart 3 - Egalitarian

Equality is the main Egalitarian message, and this is represented by the survey data, as the rankings were evenly distributed between genders. While a woman, Mary Magdalene, came in the highest, Miriam and David tied for second with Peter and Moses following closely behind.

Interestingly, positive first-thought descriptions of women were more than double the negative female traits, demonstrating a positive favoring toward women. Descriptions of men were almost split evenly between positive and negative yet leaned slightly in the negative.

Complementarian

Here the shift is seen as the male figures start to score higher than the female counterparts. This is also the first occurrence that a male, Moses, has taken the

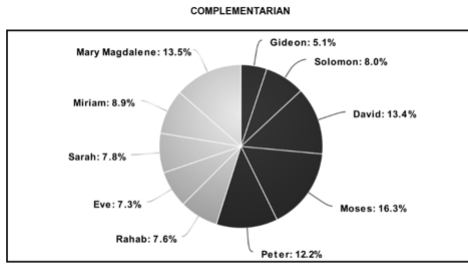


Chart 4 - Complementarian

role of most godly. Although Moses was awarded the highest score, a male (Gideon) still received the lowest score.

The number of negative associations were the same between men and women, but the men ranked slightly higher in positive traits whereas women had more neutral terms.

In this group, it was interesting to observe that some gave negative descriptions to each character, regardless of gender, whereas some gave only positive traits. One surveyor realized the pattern and commented that all of her answers were negative. This likely simply demonstrated that while some people were either very pessimistic or optimistic, they still treated both the male and female characters the same.

Traditional

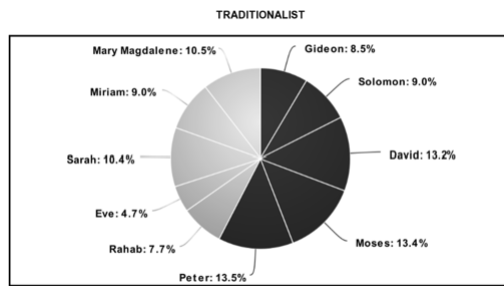


Chart 5 - Traditionalist

Surprisingly, this is the biggest identified group in the survey. In reading some of the answers and descriptions, this author would have made the assumption that some in this group would be better classified as egalitarian or complementarian. However, the survey participants chose to identify at tra-

ditional/fundamental/patriarchal. Motivations for this were beyond the scope of this survey but would be interesting for further discussion.

Generally speaking, the traditionalists were very positive in their rankings. While describing men, traditionalists were over four times more positive than negative. Women were also described more favorably than negatively, although not as esteemed as the men, only one and one-half times higher. Peter takes the top prize for the traditionalist view of godliness, although he proved himself to be the person with the lowest scores overall. Traditionalists are also the only group that placed a woman with the lowest score. Eve appears drastically lower than her peers, which is no surprise with the amount of traditionalist literature written against her.

There were participants in this group that were similar to the secular feminist answers. Where the feminist ranked the all women high and all the men low; some traditional answers followed suit with the men ultimately high and the women low.

The most interesting result came from individual traditionalist. When describing male characters, the participant chose positive associations and adjectives; however, when describing the female characters, their masculine counterparts were named. For example, Sarah's description was Abram; Eve's was Adam; Mary was Jesus. That particular participant provided their name for follow-up and was contacted to learn more about the descriptions. They had not realized their view of women depended on the attached man until it was pointed out to them. It provided an opportunity for reflection and growth to see women as individuals.

Conclusions

As previously stated, the aim of the survey was to consider how one's gender views may affect the way they view men and women in general. Literature and teachings from traditionalists, complementarians, egalitarians, and Christian feminists, all claim that they are for the advancement and fair esteem of both men and women and that their gender view promotes that ideal. Yet, the results of this survey seem to indicate that there still is a bias that impacts each group's posture toward genders. Although each category answered predictably according to their gender view stereotype (patriarchy in traditionalism favoring men and both secular and Christian feminism favoring women), some of the responses demonstrated the depth of influence caused by a strict adherence to one viewpoint.

If men and women are truly both equally created, equally valued, and equally important as each group asserts the Scriptures teach, then the survey results should show that generalized equality in the rankings of men and women. However, the study results confirm the stereotypes of each group. The challenge then is for each of these religious categories is to recognize and confront the underlying implications in their teachings. Traditional, complementarian, egalitarian, and feminist views of men and women do not remain on a theoretical level, but infiltrate and shape the minds and hearts of their followers, not only in how individuals must act and live, but also in how they think and feel about both genders. Practical, purposeful change must first be considered, researched, developed, and then must occur to move from the outwardly philosophical ideal to a pragmatic transformation of application.

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