

# Religion and Social Hidden Curriculum—The Educative Influences of Christianity and Islam in Women

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## Abstract

In this paper we highlight the similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam, on the social functions of women based on the sacred texts of both, references to a hidden social curriculum in the history. Faced with the growing religious pluralism in contemporary societies, we believe that the debate on how the two main religions in the history of mankind, have had and continue to have an enormous influence on the lives of millions of women, is an important topic.

**Keywords:** women, history, education, Christianity, Islam

## 1. Introduction

Any aspect of the situation of women and their future becomes extremely complex, especially when it comes to this issue through the prism religious, educational or social environment. The particular impact that women have in the field of education, where it overlaps with social traditions marked by religion is a source of numerous studies.

From birth, our thinking, understand, feel and experience is conditioned by our social and cultural contexts. Our perspectives of the different ways that men and women must be developed vary from one culture to another, and this produces imbalances evident in the field of equal opportunities (Agrela & Gil, 2005). Laws such as the “Law of equality between women and men in Spain” (2007) try to address this issue with the intention of making a break for differentiating roles, explicit and implicit social inequalities. Feminist movements have also reiterated the accusations against male arrogance and, by extension, all power structures monopolized by men (Ballesteros, 2002).

Androcentrism and unequal treatment of women present in the two great religions of the world, is constantly being questioned. So, is “tradition” to assign women a role in the functions is determined by their gender but their continuing influence in their respective areas of cultural and thus its contribution to dignify the role of women and strengthening their roles about sex and its consequences in the field of education has changed the trend (Anyon, 1980; Castañeda, 2004).

Our intention in this study, away from high pretensions, is merely raising some of the issues that have arisen as a result of our reflections on the subject.

## 2. Hidden Social Curriculum from Christianity

The Good News of Jesus marks a break with patriarchy in the role of women stressing equality between women and men as a fundamental feature of the new order through the old law, “*neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, nor slave or free. All are one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28). But unfortunately, this progressive idea for its time, had no projection in practice, or affects the laws (Ballesteros, 2002). In this respect, appears a movement within Judaism internal counter, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ called into question the traditional values of the time, trying to eliminate discrimination based on religious values set. Created alternatives to the dominant relationships with equal treatment in which women have the same opportunities as men. This, no doubt, is at the heart of the project of Jesus. As is clear from the Synoptic tradition, the Kingdom of God was separated from the hegemonic structures, (Baley, 1991; Bultmann, 2000).

The women were discriminated against, subordinated in religious practice and in law. For example, at the entrances to spaces in the Jewish temple was a clear manifestation of this, where they are prohibited access to the area of men. In law, the exclusion of women is practiced, for example, in the case of divorce it was a male prerogative, and circumcision, which was the exclusive male membership sign the Jewish people.

In general terms, we can say that women should be included when the Gospels refer to the disciples and followers of Jesus. In fact, on several occasions, an expression or word you hear a woman rising from among the people: "*As he said these things, a woman's voice rose from the crowd and said ...*" (Luke 11:27). No however, we find the critical testimony of Jesus with a group of followers in the text of his death and the events of Easter. The Gospels agree in saying that there was a group of women at the foot of the cross of Jesus, while men had fled. The Synoptics state that there were many of them and who had followed him from Galilee (Matthew 4:23 and 9:35, Mk 1, 39, and Luke 4:43-44). Lucas even provides some of their names (Luke 8:2-3). Moreover, the group of women witnessed the death and burial of Jesus, "*where he was laid they looked at*" (Mk.15:47, Matthew 27:61, and Luke 23:55). They are the first to discover the empty tomb and receive the news of the resurrection (Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-8 and Luke 24:1-8), and even in the Gospels of Matthew and John, the Christ Risen puts these women first. It should be noted that these facts of the death, burial, resurrection appearances, are as confessed in the first Christian creed as the basis of the Christian faith (I Cor 15. 3-5). But to understand the significance of these facts, one must take into account the historical context in which the facts and the limited legal value that the testimony of women was under Jewish law (Ballesteros, 2002).

Jesus favoured freedom of women through their words but mostly with a non-judgmental behaviour, raising its status to the same level as men. We agree with the renowned exegete, Schürmann (2003; Just as Ratzinger et al., 1999), when considering the fact that Jesus accepts women as followers was clearly outrageous behaviour in the context of Palestine and that this position is a stimulus to renewal. What is certain is that life and relationships within the Christian community gradually shaped by the patriarchal system, while the importance of women in the Church began to fade while paradoxically, when really their participation was sought to strengthen the dominant system (Bidegain, 1996; Turrado, 1967).

In a more modern context, after the Council, Paul VI showed how far reaching this was awarding the title of Doctor of the Church of St. Teresa of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena. Therefore, a special commission was established whose purpose was not to study other current issues relating to the promotion of the dignity and responsibility of women (John Paul II, 1988:8), although the Church had reservations about derived from the negative consequences for women and families that the entry of women in the workforce had meaning in the early industrial period.

An example of reasonable change in the attitude that the Church has had since the mid-twentieth century, is found in the recent entry of women in the field of theological studies and research, especially in Anglo-Saxon and Germanic circles (Vuola, 1996). A new field of investigation has been opened which can be defined in the words of theologian women, Ruether (1983, 1996), expressing the wish that the merger and institutional convergence of Catholicism with the message of the Gospels.

### **3. Hidden Social Curriculum from Islam**

Islam, can be considered the only religion that is now strictly patriarchal (Pikaza, 1991, p. 136), from the perspective of a monotheistic creed, inducing possible interpretation of an unfavourable role of women (Rodriguez, 1997; Bradan, 2001).

Islam is not only a religious concept, but it is a religion and cultural identity that permeates all social background (McDowell & Gilchrist, 1994, Williams, 2003). Although from the Arab cultural background, its principles become universal, according to the revelations of the Prophet Muhammad, with recognized and obvious roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

Islam has built a stable, organized on the basis of faith from the revealed word of God, which regulates all aspects of life down to the smallest detail, creating a very solid structure interaction, where fit aspects such as politics, social or spiritual (Mogra, 2010).

We can say without fear of contradiction that, following the doctrine of Muhammad, women received greater consideration in society. As was the case with the word of Jesus, Muhammad also elevated the position of women than of men. He told the men: "*The best among you is he who is best to his wife. A Muslim woman in relation to the property, has the same freedom as her husband. Can do with their money what they want without to consult with him*" (Bashirud-Din Mahmud Ahmad 1989:12).

The Holy Prophet said that if a man has a daughter and takes up good, she was saved from the fire. Mohammed

got women are considered full members of the Islamic community again. Following this major concern for women, we must stress the great importance given to education and the education of girls in Muslim doctrine, especially in regard to their future role as wives and mothers (Martin, 2003). The Qur'an states that men and women were created as equals in the eyes of God/Allah, therefore, have the same rights and receive the same reward (Qur'an 3:195 and 9:71 and 72).

*“On another occasion Mohammad said: remember that I have commanded you treat women kindly. Said also: The husband should not have an aversion to his wife. If she hates something, there must be many good things in it that are pleasing to him”* (Bashirud-Din Mahmud Ahmad 1989:7). In this critical transcendental level, there are no differences between men and women, but both are equal in their submission to God/Allah and performing good deeds.

All believers are an egalitarian community in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Prophet. However, we can add that, while accepting the existing inequality between races, from the perspective of faith and “*uma*” (or “sacred community”), this is overcome because being a Muslim makes everyone equal. Yet within this equality, differences between men and women are still evident, particularly at the level of the tasks in this world (Ghulam, 1987). Where is clear the explicit existence of the supremacy of men over women, and the separation the female world (the family home) from the male world (public affairs). Firstly, superiority or male supremacy is expressed in various ways in the form of “protection” or “control”, such as:

*“Men are protectors of women because Allah has made some of them excel over others ... the righteous women are the obedient”* (Qur'an 4:35), *“your wives are a tilth for you, therefore, draw near to your field when and as you wish ...”* (Qur'an 2:224).

Similarly, male superiority seen as a handicap, less price of women is also reflected in the low value given to the testimony of these: *“And call two witnesses from among your men, and if there are not two men available, then a man and two women ... so that if one of the women errs in memory, the other can make her remember ...”* (Qur'an 2:283). The Qur'an, taking the same line of superiority and privilege, governs inheritance rights, granted by the male in all cases a portion equal to that of two females (Qur'an 4:12, 13 and 177). In addition, we find other male privilege over women, expressed in the Qur'an, such as polygamy, divorce and adultery. Polygamy (Qur'an 4:5), although regulated under certain conditions (Qur'an 4:130) and even tend to restrict it (Qur'an 4:4), is always a male privilege established to provide a response to the needs of man, while obviating the women. However, modern theologians have seen the regulation of the Qur'an (when referring to polygamy) as an argument in favour of monogamy, a position that is gaining strength in many Islamic circles.

Although Muslim society as a whole can give the impression of being strongly imbued with a sexual nature, the fact is that, outside the domestic sphere, women have to refer primarily to other women. Men and women are not alone when they converse, thus avoiding sexual contact (Qur'an 24:31-32) and *“when they go out requiring Muslim women who wear the Yilbat, this is, outer garment that surrounds them, they must cover their heads and chests so that the garment down from head to chest, covering the entire chest”* (Qur'an 2044 note –a–). Separation in such spaces is organized in terms of time and activities. Such separation must be absolute, as in the case of the public baths, where women usually go in the evenings and men in other times of day, and more frequently in the case of the house (Owen, 2005; Llorent, 2009).

Thus, we find that women have their own space, and that includes everything related to the inner workings of the house. Muslims consider themselves the role of women as important as that of her husband. However, it is excluded from public affairs (Qur'an 33: 34). This verse is but an interpretation detrimental to women, such as attempts to limit their activities to the domestic world, primarily as wives and mothers, prevail (Stowasser 1984:25-28 and 32).

According to the Qur'an women are subordinate to men, although this is due to the increased responsibility of the latter (Sura al-Baqarah 2:228). From one perspective, and taking into account that the prophet's word is immutable and sacred, have developed all aspects of social life. So Islam has laid down forever the forms of existence of the woman, which revolve around its basic role within the family out.

Moreover, women are beginning to match in some Islamic countries, with a facet of modernity which is expressed in women to acquire new space for their activities, joint spaces, while the functions are still carried out by the men. However, the model in which both sexes are separated, depending on circumstances, there remains in urban areas (Hawkins, 2005).

#### **4. Social Roles and Women**

Now once seen the contrasts between the two religions, two social hidden curricula, we will refer briefly to some

specific comparative aspects, then, are some of the ideas, questions, conjectures and other issues raised by this study, in order to shed light on the implications for education and upbringing that arise from the different approaches of the role of women (Kentli, 2009).

Before review, we must be aware that in Islam all references to women were written and produced by the man in a time and a very different context, when from a historical perspective-social, the woman was considered little more than a possession, such as land or animals. Thus, Islam has historically favoured interpretations of the roles of women that put women at a disadvantage. In fact, they are defined from the perspective of man and his relationship with him, not as an independent being. It's easy to find male characteristics in the readings of the Old Testament and in the Qur'an attributed to God/Allah, respectively; these readings reinforce the androcentric most patriarchal societies, which emerged. And despite the fact that the Jesus movement was a break with the patriarchal structures of the time, Christianity and Islam are still marked patriarchal lines (Recasens, 2001).

Moreover, and in line position analysis attributed to women in the scriptures, we find that in the Qur'an, the woman is presented as a seductress and a potential source of temptation that men should avoid, while in the New Testament appears as a temptation, although at no time Jesus calls his disciples' attention on what kind of woman could represent temptation for them (Bernal, 1998).

Thus both Islam literally faithful to the message of the Qur'an, which has remained intact forms of existence throughout the history of women, believing the Word of God/Allah is the same in all times and in all. Instead, like Christianity, true to the content of his message, that is lost in positions anchored in the past, are open to the signs of the past in terms of women is concerned.

Although both religions under their special nature, each role is slightly different nuances in the present moment, have played an important role in assigning women the basic mission of caring for the family (Murray, 2009). Islam remains convinced that public functions are of men. The Church, which basically coincided with this position, has been showing a positive attitude in recent years towards greater socio-cultural integration of women, without compromising its mission in the family.

To conclude this list of contrasts, indicate the differences in specific standards for the education and upbringing in general that can be deduced from Muslim sacred texts. Furthermore, we note that there is no specific regulation for teaching in the New Testament, but that the role of the hierarchy is the application of moral and religious principles in a more specific and as befits a member of the particular circumstances -historical.

Remarkably, for Muslims, the man born "good" by nature, from the Christian point of view, man was created "good", but the sin of the first couple affected their descendants, who had to be regenerated by baptism. So, from birth, in general, the position of men and women in Muslim and Christian religions is at the same level in terms of their personal dignity and salvation to God/Allah, but not with respect to functions and tasks performed in the social sphere, where the nature of each sex plays an important role.

Thus, if we consider the need for a differentiated educational system based on the differences observed by both religions, we have to consider what qualities seen in women and in men, to understand how to develop such a system. To understand this, we clarify that the human quality most prized in prehistoric would certainly not be the same as in the Egypt of the pharaohs, in Muslim Spain or Europe in XXI century, since the needs and aspirations of societies in each historical moment would change. In this course of events, educational goals pursued continue to change in a continuous process of adaptation to the context of the moment (Allievi and Jorgen, 2003). For this reason, possibly, could be more effective in the long-term fight for a change of values instead of a role reversal. However, one must take into account, in the words of Miyares (1997, p. 15) this implies an enormous social impact of rare magnitude:

*"Political events more cruel, bloody-wars, slavery, murder ...-do not appear to alter the order of the world, but it cracks if women leave the realm of morals."*

At this point, we should note the studies by renowned anthropologist, Mead (1972, 1982, 1994), who tried to prove through their observations of a natural affinity between the sexes did not exist for certain tasks. That makes us wonder whether the position of religions is then correct. To our understanding, and following what has been studied by Marrero (2007, p. 73), is that:

*"The balance between the possibility of individualization in education and enculturation and adaptive function to the network or social and cultural fabric that creates the bonds of belonging, have to define the meaning of education in a global society."*

The current position of the Church on this issue could be termed as moderate opening, as seen in the practice of their religious centres, most of which are mixed. In Muslim countries there are two major trends: the first follows

a modernist western (Morocco, Turkey, and Lebanon), and the second, whose theses are based on fundamentalist arguments, is in favour of primary and secondary education, which not only differentiates between boys and girls, but also taught in different physical spaces, particularly during adolescence (Pakistan and Saudi Arabia). In education and in school, the role of women, from a religious point of view, is not neutral, neither for students nor teachers themselves (Martel, 2007, p. 156; Burke, 2012).

The vast majority of those living in Muslim countries, men and women alike, are more or less in accordance with existing social patterns between men and women at the same time, such a different model as the West is happily accepted by most Europeans. That is, generally speaking, Muslims believe that social relationships are the norm in the Western world and which are harmful, while the second model sees the Muslim as anachronistic and outdated. So, the question is whether a woman has to be given an education for integration in socio-cultural context, or to be an agent of social change. Should we leave education in the hands of the State, excluding religious positions, or we must find space for school initiatives for all different religions, or only the most important?

“... *The guarantee of*” autonomy “*is no simple matter religious at a time when modern governments provide such a wide range of services to its citizens? Religious freedom is encouraged to provide members of a particular religious community services such as tax, education subsidies or exemptions to certain laws?*” (Jelen & Wilcox, 2006, pp. 415-416).

Hence the importance of religion in this matter, the purpose of education, as each religious belief involves other worldview. If these effects are determined by the worldview of the community it is, the concept of woman who enters the educational model must be subordinated to the culture in which it will be applied (Llorent & Ivanescu, 2013). For example, education emanating from Muslim doctrine seeks to integrate women into the existing social structure. In fact, “in the traditional social order for the truly dominant woman is not religion but patriarchal social norms ... It is only upon completion of their duties in the home when the woman takes the phrase” (Martin, 2003, pp. 58-59). In conclusion, an education to change social structures and religious is something that is very far, since clearly the model has passed by the Prophet as the ideal.

From the point of view axiological, two very different attitudes can be adopted. First, if you follow a synchronous relativism relativist position-in this case, it is easy to infer that the values that should be taught will depend on the culture and society in which teachers and students are engaged. On the other hand, if based on axiological absolutism, a question mark is raised ethical concept what is the “best”? And what values should be taught? Should be inherent in the Islamic religion or the Christian? The question arises, as it is clear that each religion is proclaimed as true. In any case, cultural diversity does prescribe a unique recipe for education, since this position is unreachable.

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