

Women: Know Your Limits!

Kris King – August 28th 2011

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2011/08/women-know-your-limits/>

I was inspired this week by a post from Xanthe Wyse on her [God Confusion](#) blog (you should definitely head over there and say “hi” – tell her I sent you, and don’t forget to come back! Hello? Oh ... okay, fine, be like that). In [“Good Christian Wife”](#) Xanthe talked about a subject that’s been on my “To Rant About” list for some time; religion’s attitude toward women. If you happen to be a woman (it’s okay, I don’t mind, I hear it’s quite acceptable these days), then I’d like to ask a question of you for which I’ve never received a satisfactory answer. How could any woman, regardless of background, ethnicity, or education level, belong to any of the major faiths and still maintain a molecule of self-respect? Why would you ever refer to, or even *think* of, yourself as being a christian or muslim, for example, when it’s quite apparent from the research I’ve done that your religion **HATES** you?

In previous posts I’ve [calmly, and with great restraint](#) (yeah, right), explored how religion seems to enjoy picking on certain groups of people for whom they apparently hold an irrational, and especially nasty, kind of grudge; gays, atheists, gay atheists, followers of other faiths, gay followers of other faiths, and gays called Faith who follow atheists. Religion loves turning the hate all the way up to 11 for pretty much anyone who isn’t straight and doesn’t loudly, and regularly, profess an eternal love for the invisible man they choose to kneel before in the hope that he will “enter them” (isn’t it odd that they can hold such aspirations, express them in *those* terms and yet **still** have a problem with “the gay”?). But, the one group of people for whom the major religions tend to reserve their most potent venom, the one they *really* have it in for and have expended the greatest energy in oppressing them into submission, are women.

The big faiths, particularly the Abrahamic ones, have been proudly wearing their sexist attitudes since day one, and they’ve done so without any guilt or apology. Right from chapter 1 (paragraph 26), they had god creating man *first* (we’ll ignore, as the religious do, the obvious contradictions in the story of creation where this order differs); the first woman, on the other hand, was usually brought into existence as some kind of afterthought, and often at the behest of the first man who was merely appealing to the creator to give him something to lust after before his urges drove him towards one of the animals he was supposed to be naming. Incidentally, since we’ve so far discovered approximately 8.7 million different species of animal, and current estimates suggest there’s at least a similar amount left to be found, shouldn’t god have warned Adam that he was going to be far too busy for the foreseeable few thousand years to have time to chase girls?

Having introduced the mother of mankind (cost to man: one rib), the authors of the old testament then proceeded to write her as being far more trouble than she was worth, to the point where it’s almost as though they’re conducting a thorough character assassination of the whole of womankind. According to the story (or “stitch-up”, as it should perhaps be referred to), Eve is responsible for the complete downfall of man (via the curious medium of fruit theft), our expulsion from paradise and the subsequent need to work for a living, the demotion of humans to the status of mere mortals, and the bestowing of the pain of menstruation and childbirth upon all women in perpetuity. Talk about pointing the finger, and talk about a massive over-reaction from the man upstairs who delivered Adam a cosmic-sized version of the veiled threat, “you need to put your missus on a lead, mate”.

To further compound this tale’s burdening of all females with such a stupendous quantity of metaphysical guilt, we have the unavoidable fact that the “man upstairs” is absolutely the **man** upstairs; there can be no bigger clue as to which gender has decided it’s in charge down here when the all-powerful law-giver of the universe is referred to almost exclusively with male pronouns (again, I’m ignoring the occasional contradictions that, in this case, involve plurals). As you read further through the books of the bible (particularly the old testament, although the new is not all that much better), you realise that the whole, disgusting tome is shot-through with an industrial-strength sexism that would inspire even Richard Littlejohn to become a radical feminist. Actually, I take that back; Littlejohn wouldn’t touch the bible – in fact he’d probably call Jesus a liberal, unemployed,

foreign do-gooder.

If you want some evidence as to just how badly religion regards women (rather than just taking my vociferous ranting as gospel, no matter how exactly spot-on I may be), have a look at this small selection of choice bits from the bible. While you do that, I have a simple question for you to ponder – what is the name of Lot's wife?

Genesis 3:12-13, 16-17

Adam blames his other-half for the apple debacle (a nobility which sets the example for most of the biblical men that follow), and god punishes womankind with subjection to man (who is punished for stupidly having listened to his wife).

Genesis 7:2, Exodus 20:17, 21:17, Jeremiah 6:12

In the bible, females are the property of males (not just humans, but animals too), so much so that a father can even sell his daughter and receive money from a man who entices his unmarried virgin daughter into sex.

Genesis 19:5-8, 30-38

Rather than hand over his male dinner guests to a rapey mob, Lot instead offers up his two virgin daughters in the hope that they might suffice – because that would be better, obviously (only the bible could have a comparative rape scale). Later, the daughters get all sexual assaulty with their dad.

Genesis 16:1-4, 25:21-26, 29:31, Judges 13:2-3, Luke 1:7

It's only ever women in the bible who are described as barren (clearly all biblical men are packing a veritable ocean of tadpoles in their trousers).

Genesis 38:24, Exodus 34:16, Leviticus 21:7, 21:19, Deuteronomy 23:17-18, Psalms 106:29-30, Proverbs 6:24-26, 23:27-28, Isaiah 57:3, Jeremiah 3:2-3, 13:26-27, Ezekiel 16:15-17, 16:30, 23:1-49, 23:7-8, 23:11, 23:17-19, 23:30-33, Hosea 1:2-3, 2:2-5, 4:10, 4:13, 5:4, Amos 7:17, Revelation 17:1-5

It's only ever women in the bible who are described as whores (biblical men obviously don't really want, or even like, sex – they just do it out of some kind of duty).

Exodus 22:18

This verse stating that one shall "not suffer a witch to live" has been used to justify the murder of thousands of innocent women.

Leviticus 12:1-5, 12:2, 12:4-5, 12:7-8, 15:19-30, 15:33, 18:19, Deuteronomy 24:1-4, 2 Samuel 11:2-5, Job 14:4

Women are unclean, dirty, sinful.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21, 22:23-24

If a man decides that he hates his wife, he can claim she wasn't a virgin when they married and, unless her father can prove that she was, she is to be stoned to death. This fate is also reserved for any betrothed virgin who doesn't cry out loud enough when raped.

There are many, many more passages like those above but I thought that these few were more than enough to get my point across. And, to be perfectly honest, I've got far better things to do this bank holiday weekend than extracting every last piece of woman-hating prose from this prime example of weapons-grade misogyny. I haven't even begun to contemplate how much extra time I would need to do the same for the qu'ran.

From this one would, quite rightly, conclude that the bible (and, similarly, the holy books of Islam and other religions) sees women as property, the enslaved possessions of man, sub-human, often even inferior and of less worth than animals; it considers them filthy, degraded whores, whose purpose is, if not to produce the children who will follow in their father's footsteps as emissaries of the divine, to be debauched, deceitful, distrustful cauldrons of sin that corrupt and lead men away from their holy duties to serve, worship, dominate, and murder in the name of their lord. For

centuries, the laws of many nations had been written by, and in favour of, the church, and you can see how many of these reflect religious attitudes towards women. Marriage laws always favoured men, and the prohibition of abortion and contraception both show a deep desire to control the female half of the species through the restriction, or even, complete denial, of their reproductive rights.

As always, theists will defend, or at least try to dismiss, all of this as being anachronistic – that, while it might have been appropriate for the time (it was once *appropriate* to sell your daughter?), it doesn't really apply in the modern age. Again, we have the old-fashioned selective morality that theists love so much here, since they don't explain by what criteria they judge certain biblical passages to be "no longer applicable" (here's a clue – if the passage supports a pre-existing belief that was arrived at independently of scripture, it's applicable). Alternatively, they may try to brush these things aside by saying that it was the author putting in his opinion, and not that of god, which then creates an instant and epic fail for biblical inerrancy. Or, they may simply say a true believer wouldn't believe such things, without realising that everyone has a different opinion of what a true believer is.

But, let's suppose for a moment that the believers are telling the truth when they say that the religious no longer hold such attitudes, that they're more tolerant and more respectful toward women than their desert-dwelling counterparts. This would mean that women are no longer treated as second-class citizens by their faith, no longer abused, oppressed, or enslaved to a patriarchy with spurious and unverifiable claims of a divine mandate. I think we all know this is bullshit, and it doesn't just apply to the most obvious perpetrator of crimes against women, Islam; Christianity is equally as guilty, it's just that, as the world has grown more secular, it's had to learn to be far more subtle. It is often said, for instance, that the religious right in America would love to take the country back to the 1950s, and there's a very good reason for that; the decade that followed the 50s challenged the established order like nothing that had come before.

Through a series of cultural revolutions, the 1960s irrevocably changed everything that the white, western religious hierarchies had known for over 1500 years. The development of the contraceptive pill truly emancipated women, allowing them, for the first time ever, to set the sexual agenda and reclaim a fundamental reproductive right. Additionally, abortion was becoming a realistic possibility, with the 1967 Abortion Law in the UK (although America would have to wait until 1973, the 60s saw a progressive increase in the number of procedures performed as it became more acceptable). And, while they are both subjects for another time, the civil rights movement of the 1960s saw both people of colour, and those of alternative sexualities, make enormous, orthodoxy-threatening cracks in the centuries old belief that white was right and straight was great.

All of these changes were driven by secular principles – not religious ones; it was, and still is, the religious right that resist these upheavals most fervently because they have the most to lose. Whenever, and wherever, a campaign to secure equal rights for any group of people emerges, you can bet your life that those who pop up to oppose it will do so on religious grounds. We constantly hear of how the traditional family is being "eroded", that people aren't getting married any more and, for those that are, the "sanctity" of their union is somehow "under threat" from the fact that a couple of guys three streets away that they've never met want to get married. As a result, we get retarded organisations like the American Family Association (AFA) and the National Organisation for Marriage (NOM) lobbying to keep gays out of sight and women in the home (where they belong, apparently).

We also get the planet-fucking irresponsible Quiverfull movement who believe that a woman's singular role is to treat her uterus like a clown-car by trying to squeeze out as many little soldiers for Jesus as possible; such groups are only possible because of the effective indoctrination techniques religion employs in order to convince women (mostly) that treating one's reproductive system like a factory-line is in some way laudable. We get catholics who have similarly large families due to the prohibition on birth control, again seeing women as little more than dedicated baby-ovens for the lord. Catholics also, somewhat perversely, have a massive thing for venerating a woman, Mary (the Jewish girl with the amazingly gullible husband who believed her when she said god knocked her up), yet utterly deny the right of women to be ordained as priests (recently they even despicably [compared it to child abuse](#)).

The religious insistence that a woman's position is that of a lower order has given us the grossly backward opinions promoted by appalling bigots like Pat Robertson, who famously said, "[Christ is the head of the household and the husband is the head of the wife, and that's the way it is, period](#)". We get young girls growing up in christian households having the idea of subservience to, and dependence on, a man, through the supposed "holy" idea of matrimony, drilled into them as a virtue

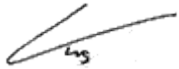
from an early age; as a result, we get generations of women who have no real sense of self outside that of their life with their earthly "lord" and the heavenly one who allegedly appointed him as her superior. We get people, both religious and secular, who defend women that claim to *choose* such positions, without explaining how a perceived lack of options can ever be considered a choice.

When the culture in which you were raised is stacked very much against you, it's impossible to divorce yourself from it sufficiently to make an informed decision regarding that culture. Would, for example, a woman in Tehran who was raised in an entirely secular environment ever wear a burka as a symbol of cultural pride? I find it highly unlikely – it takes some pretty serious religious indoctrination to instil the delusion that one is doing it out of choice. If religions were to stop promulgating deeply sexist ideas regarding a woman's place in the world, we wouldn't have books that teach someone how to be a "good christian wife"; there are simply no secular equivalents – seriously, try finding a book that promotes female marital subservience written by an atheist. While you're at it, why not try the extreme end of the scale and find a predominantly non-religious country that stones women to death for adultery?

In response to the question of solving the problem of world poverty, Christopher Hitchens answered that the religious emancipation of women would be the most effective way of achieving that aim, and I can't agree with him more. How many fewer children would be born if women weren't compelled, or even forced, by their faith to have so many? How much less of a strain would there be on the countries of the world to feed, clothe, and house their citizens if the dominant religion's arcane ideas about contraception didn't mean there would be more of them to begin with? There's only so many people our planet has resources for; there's only so much that can go round ... someone, somewhere will be going without ... that's the definition of *poverty* and, when there's no more to go around, you have to make it go around fewer people. When women are truly free to decide whether they bring life into this already crowded world, they will have the power to eliminate poverty in a single generation.

Oh, did you figure out the name of Lot's wife? That's right ... *she didn't have one*. She wasn't considered important enough to deserve a *name*; and, by being known only as someone's wife, she has nothing of her own which a man had not given her. Religion teaches women that they don't own anything, not even their bodies, their hearts, or their minds, and I call bullshit.

Your body, your heart, your mind ... YOUR RULES

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ang', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.