

Do now: What do you already know ?



**Complete the key word grids,
both the definitions and
contextual sentences.**



5:00

Women in the Church before the 19th Century

For most of this time, the views held by secular society about women were similar to those held by the Church.

In the early centuries of the Church's existence, some Church leaders held views that were often sexist and sometimes misogynist.

- Tertullian referred to women as 'the devils' doorway.
- Augustine and others blamed Eve for the fall
- After the 5th century, a number of Church councils banned women from being ordained as deacons, and the Pope stated his opposition to women's involvement in celebrating the Eucharist. **This suggests that women had been acting in leadership roles in some churches.**
- The role of women was generally restricted to marriage and motherhood. According to Martin Luther, women should 'remain at home, sit still, keep house and bear and bring up children.

Some medieval women became highly influential, and have been regarded as feminists:

- **Hildegard of Bingen** (12th Cent) was not only in charge of her convent, but was also a respected musician, poet and naturalist whom many medical men consulted about herbs that were useful from healing.
- The writings of **Mother Julian of Norwich** (14th Cent) and still in print.

19th Century Changes...



- In one respect, little changed at first. Because of the industrial revolution, men went out to work and women remained at home to carry out domestic duties.
- However, changing ideas about the nature of humankind as endowed with reason encouraged the spread of education, and this included women.
- Women gradually became accepted into professions such as medicine and many of those with money and influence became involved in charity work. Catherine Booth (the wife of the founder of the salvation army) claimed that women were particularly suited to public speaking and preaching.
- In the 20th Cent. first WW meant that women played a key role in keeping the country going whilst the men were fighting. This led to a reassessment of their status.
- Gradually women acquired equal employment rights, such as equal pay, though women are still a minority in senior management positions.
- Women gained more political significance, with many female MP's and members of high office e.g. Theresa May.

Biblical criticism & Challenges

Features:

- Studying the language in which the text was written, including differences in the early copies of the text.
- Literary genres. For example, considering whether a given book is a historical account, poetry, early liturgy or a letter.
- An understanding of the cultural views from which a text sprang. E.g. female subordination.

Criticisms:

- **Karl Barth** rejected the liberal approach. He said that the Bible passes judgement on human reason, not the other way around. The Bible should be allowed to challenge secular views, rather than having its interpretation driven by them.
- Many **fundamentalist Christians** reject anything but a literalist interpretation of the Bible. They believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God, so the role and status of women in the Church is not a matter for debate.

Biblical passages for and against equality

For:

- In Romans 16:1-2 Paul introduces a female deacon to the Church.
- Galatians 3:26-28 says "There is neither Jew nor gentile, neither slave nor free, nor there is male or female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ".

Against:

- In Ephesians 5:22-23 Paul says "Wives, submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord".
- In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 Paul says "Women should remain silent in the Churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says".

1 Timothy: Significance and interpretation

Passage:

⁸ Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. ⁹ I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, adorning themselves, not with elaborate hairstyles or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰ but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

¹¹ A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man;^[b] she must be quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women^[c] will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Responses:

- Many Biblical scholars argue there was an issue in the Christian community to which 1 Timothy was addressed.

- Ephesus was the most important for fertility worship in the region, and many converts would have come from that background; some women may have been temple prostitutes in the cult of the mother goddess.

- This is supported by the Greek word translated as "assume authority". It is the only time it occurs in the NT. In the time in which 1 Timothy belongs, it had sexual connotations in the sense of "leading someone on".

If this was the case, it would explain why the author of the letter wrote as he did.

Priesthood of all believers



- Many protestants believe in the priesthood of all believers. They do not believe in ordination to the priesthood since all vocations are of equal value.
- Many protestants have an egalitarian approach. This means that women may hold positions of leadership, just as men may. For example, in the united reformed church, women have been ordained since 1917.

Role of women today



The social status of women varies greatly in different parts of the world, influenced by the economy, culture and religion. The place of women in the Church is partly decided on theological grounds, but discussions are influenced by the social and political situation.

In the UK, it is illegal to discriminate against women in terms of employment. However, there still seems to be a "glass ceiling" for women in many industries, particularly achieving senior roles. One of the main reasons for this is that women often take a career break to have children.

Legally and socially, men and women should be treated equally – that is a principle deeply embedded within democratic societies.

Female ordination: Arguments for and against



Background:

There has been a debate around the ordination of women in the Church of England since 1920.

- In 1944 Florence Li was ordained a priest in China because there were insufficient men available who could serve the Anglicans there.

In the UK, there was decades of debate, but in 1994 the first ordination of women as priests took place. It is thought that by 2025 there will be as many women priests as male priests.

Again, after much debate, the first Church of England Bishop (Libby Lane) was consecrated in 2015.

Some priests have felt unable to remain in the Church of England since 1994. Many have received ordination in the Catholic Church.

Feminist theology: Hampson & Reuther

Feminist theology: Strands

1. The liberal approach that views Christianity's patriarchal beliefs and structures as problematic, since it denies women's fundamental rights to equality with men.
2. The Biblical approach that draws upon texts. Biblical scholars who are Christian feminists may ascribe God qualities typically associated with women. It also emphasizes the importance of women in the gospels.
3. The radical approach which claims that the Christian story is a patriarchal myth, and which wishes to speak to God in other, gender, inclusive terms.

Hampson – Rejects Christianity

- It is based on the belief that there was a uniqueness to the person of Christ or a unique resurrection; a revelation in history. This has been discredited by the enlightenment.
- The bible is imbued with patriarchal imagery which perpetuates sexism.
- Christians should change their religious expressions because of this.
- Christianity is irredeemably sexist.

Reuther

- More concerned with the biblical message of liberation.
- Jesus sided with the marginalized in society, many of whom were women.
- Reuther denounces traditional theology as patriarchal but has remained within the Catholic Church.
- She expresses God as free from Gender
- Jesus embodied both masculine and feminine aspects of human nature, so can be seen as androgynous.

Marriage



In the earliest days on the Church, Christians were expected to either marry or remain celibate. Marriage became the norm for almost anyone.

- Marriage was seen as a sacrament and Rasing a family was regarded as a vocation. This is still the view of the Catholic Church. If couples divorce, they may not remarry. An annulment is the only option.

- Protestant Churches see marriage as an ordinance and not a sacrament. Divorce and remarriage are therefore accepted.

Other traditional views include:

- The purpose of marriage is to procreate.

Homosexuality and Transgender issues

