



TRACI
Reflections
Theological Research And
Communication Institute



GENDER CONCERNS AND BIBLICAL EQUALITY

Socially constructed gender norms have produced gender inequalities which clip wings and dwarf personalities. While gender injustice is the fallout of the Fall, deep-rooted gender prejudices masquerading as Scriptural arise from a failure to let Scripture interpret itself to reveal God's big story. The overarching narrative of Scripture is God's kingdom being lost to humans through Sin, and Jesus through His death and resurrection restoring this Kingdom. He now partners with those redeemed in growing His kingdom and healing the brokenness of this world. The finished work on the cross and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth through transformed lives and churches capable of transforming society is now God's unceasing work of restoration.

Long before Jesus introduced a counter-cultural kingdom, God included women who had faced injustice and abuse into Jesus' earthly lineage. Mary's reaction to the annunciation contrasts with that of the learned officiating male priest Zachariah to a similar announcement, revealing her understanding of God's purposes. Jesus' theological discussion on worship with a woman of questionable character makes her His ambassador. Women disciples travelled with and provided financial support for his ministry. They remained at the cross while the male disciples fled, 'sharing in Jesus's suffering' and 'in His glory' long before Pauline theology explained it. The democratization of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost visibly ushered in the Kingdom of God.

The distortion of the distinctiveness and complementarity of the two sexes through gendered overtones is sin's effect on creation. Much prejudice against women is rooted in seeing Eve as the one who was tempted and Adam as an unwilling participant in the Fall. God addresses Adam and Eve together in Genesis 1-2 as he gives out blessings and responsibilities. However, God's words to Eve about child-bearing and her subjugation is His predictive pronouncement of Sin's effect on the man-woman relationship and not a prescriptive curse. The guilt imputed by prejudice on women as the first to sin is removed as man and woman are co-participants in the Fall. Further, the "whoever" in John 3:16 and the "all" in Romans 3:23 are inclusive of genders.

A common argument for male hierarchy is Scripture's use of masculine terminology for God and Jesus's incarnation as male. But God is Spirit (non-matter) and God is Love (relational). The creation order, rather than denoting hierarchy, highlights the complementarity of the sexes to be image bearers together. The glory of Christian marriage is that husband and wife together represent God to the world. The Fall facilitated the misrepresentation of who God is, positioning man-woman as competitors instead of co-workers. God's relational nature is built into His kingdom and His redemptive act demolishes hierarchical structures of gender (male & female), culture (Jew & Gentile), power (slave & free), emphasizing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit based on grace and faith alone (Ep.2:8-9). The Old Testament covenant of circumcision restricted to men becomes the empowering covenant of Baptism & Holy Spirit dispensed to both men and women. The damage of Genesis 3 is redeemed in Acts 2 and this process of restoration continues today!

Participating with God in ushering in the new order of equality and justice is the greatest calling we have. The mandate for us is to make our homes and churches launch pads of the charter of the Kingdom of Jesus! The influence of non-biblical worldviews over sound theology has resulted in the worldview that accords dignity to humans also being used to oppress them. Now more than ever, the church should take the Word into the world and become a safe place where human equality and dignity are foundational.

Janet and her husband Prem live in Bangalore. She works as System administrator with The Survey of India. Janet is a participant of the TRACI Online Course on Gender and Biblical Equality.

Trinitarian Theology: Basis of Equality

Inequality exists in all human relations and it is manifested in society through casteism, racism, regionalism, nationalism and so on. Many levels of social and economic inequality also are rampant in our society. In fact, gender inequality is inherent in all these. How do we engage with these inequalities as Christians? First of all, we need to counter these issues of inequality theologically and scripturally.

The foremost reason for us Christians to uphold equality is the firm foundation of Trinitarian theology. As we understand the self-existent nature of the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the most basic attributes of co-existence, co-eternal and co-equality, we are enlightened to see the glimpse of perfect love, harmony and unity within the Trinitarian relationships. And here, it is important to look at the short definition of God by Apostle John: God is love (1 Jn 4:8 & 16). The co-equality in Trinity is relational and it is manifested by the perfect love within the triune God. And this Trinitarian theology has great implications for gender equality. In the triune God, we see a model or pattern for all human relationships because "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

However, Trinitarian theology could be misunderstood to promote gender stereotypes. Trinitarian subordinationism – that the Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate or inferior to the Father in terms of position and nature – is a distortion and misunderstanding of Trinitarian theology. The submission within the triune God is that of togetherness and of unified purpose

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.....Trinitarian Theology: Basis of Equality

without any power struggle. And, Christ's submission was redemptive, willing and voluntary and thus exclusive. So, it implies that since redemption is for ALL (without any gender distinction), the model of the redemptive submission of Christ is also applicable to ALL. The failure to understand this will have serious ramifications in promoting 'gender inequality' which is disguised and imposed as 'subordination or submission of women', and thus fosters male superiority or domination under the guise of theology which in reality is twisted theology that suits us. So, in short, Trinitarian theology implies that 'submission' is a divine virtue which needs to be affirmed and practiced by all Christians without gender discrimination and simultaneously upholding the equal worth, value and dignity of men and women, for harmonious living in the home, church and society.

Mr. Issacc Thomas, Director-Training (TRACI)

Gender as a social construct has legitimized gender bias leading to gender discrimination in every sphere of life. This has resulted in a gendered world where, "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine." (Acker, 2003).

Despite the Christian contribution to the empowerment of women, we find a world pointing fingers at the church and the Scripture for being perpetrators of gender injustice. What is the message of gender that we as Christians communicate to the world both in our perspectives and practice?

The model that we depict is of immense significance to the women who are oppressed, deprived and abused just on account of being a woman if our message has to be considered seriously. TRACI invites scholars and practitioners to write papers reflectively and critically on various facets of this theme that will enable us to engage the gendered world as Christians. See more details about the conference and download the concept note from the website: <https://traci.in/traci-conference/> The conference will be held over Zoom.

Important Dates and Information

Conference Date: 11-12 February 2023

Last Date for Abstract Submission: 30 November 2022

Last date of Full-length Paper Submission: 30 January 2023

Contact Info: Ph No: +919289642711 Email Id: traci.conference@gmail.com

TRACI CALL FOR PAPERS

The **Research Scholars Workshop** will be held on the 25th and 26th March 2023. It is organized by TRACI and is a platform for research scholars both young and old to give voice to the questions, concerns, and perspectives produced by the encounters between their faith and their own fields/disciplines/subjects. The Workshop is designed to be a space for nuanced discussion and detailed feedback from fellow participants and seniors associated with TRACI, essentially enabling us to further shape our academic vocation.

TRACI invites papers of 3500 words that attempt to articulate these concerns of the nexus between faith and scholarly practices through personal reflection and academic rigour. The topics can range from issues within disciplines that faith speaks to or vice versa, the challenges that Christians face in the university, reflections on entire disciplines or on specific theories, research questions, or methods of research. The papers submitted will be presented at the workshop.

Important Dates and Information:

Workshop Dates: 25-26 March, 2023

Last Date for Submission of Google Form : 15 December, 2022

Last Date for Full Length Paper Submission: 25th February, 2023

Contact Info: Ph No: +919289642711 Email Id: tracipramabai@gmail.com

Do find the link for Google Form: <https://forms.gle/FZQMbjfm7ZvNE8Nc6>

TRACI CONFERENCE: ENGAGING THE GENDERED WORLD AS CHRISTIANS, 11-12 February 2023

Research Scholars Workshop-TRACI 25th and 26th March, 2023

TRACI MONTHLY REFLECTIONS

(Sept –Oct 2022)

Evangelical Reading of the Cross in the Context of Political Violence

Dr. Amritraj Joshua Paul, Professor at SAIACs, led TRACI's Reflection session for September on the topic "Evangelical Reading of the Cross in the Context of Political Violence." Dr. Paul encourages an 'evangelical' or 'gospel affirming' reading of this political violence to respond to and engage with it in its contemporary context. This he does so by bringing in the transformative and transcontextual function of Christ-event namely the life of Jesus Christ.

The reconciliative-humanity of the Cross needs to be deeply understood and assimilated in order that we, as individuals and communities, emulate the very characteristics that Christ showed so that we may partake in empowering and liberating oppressed communities in the very manner that Christ would. Dr. Paul concludes by encouraging the church to undergo a similar transformation so that it may become a "reconciliative church affirming the humanity of every single member."

Let the Earth Hear Her Voice: Pandita Ramabai Her Life and Work

TRACI was privileged to have Anna Jacob a Research Scholar at the University of Delhi and Board Member of TRACI lead a discussion with Dr. Keith J. White, Professor and Writer of the book 'Let the Earth Hear Her Voice: Pandita Ramabai her Life and Work.'

The conversation focused on the life history of Pt. Ramabai and engaged with the social and historical reality of India and the various events and issues that were central to her time. Pt. Ramabai engaged with and even contested - the caste system, the oppression of women, patriarchy, religious beliefs as well as the resistance that she faced in terms of her works and ideas. Her unique location as a woman in a traditional Hindu society in British India provides much force to her work as a woman with women, children and her effort to champion for truth and education. The legacy that Pt. Ramabai left behind is immense. And in honoring that legacy, may we, by being Christ-centered, become transformed as communities who are inclusive, compassionate and reformative.

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FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION ACCOUNT

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