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Is the Love of Misogyny the Root of Evil?

Human trafficking is a major issue world-wide. The exploitation of human beings has now become the second largest source of income for traffickers, ranking below drugs but surpassing weapons. In the United States the problem drives the sex industry through pornography, under aged prostitution, pimping, and soliciting sex for money. Faith based institutions have begun to address this issue yet are providing crisis care and rescue work. The academy has consistently maintained that sex trafficking is a symptom of a larger issue, misogyny, oppression, and sexism. However, as a culture we glorify the pimp, show sympathy for the john, and blame the prostitutes.

As a minister and abuse advocate working with prostitution, trafficking agencies, and recovery from sexual addiction groups I see a need for the academy, faith community, and community organizations to partner to address the broader issues of misogyny. Even more, I have found that our communities (and many times the academy) have lost faith in The Church's ability to be a resources, rather than another culture of oppression. Can the Biblical texts also provide help to reorient a culture steeped in misogyny and help therapists, social workers, and ministers work together to challenge cultural masculinity and the oppression of women and vulnerable others?

Misogyny always confronts women with the same dilemma. Whether they are 'good' girls or 'bad' girls, they are forced into the same conundrum, they still arouse lust in men for which they, not those who desire them, are held responsible.¹

Jack Holland's quote, after a historical discussion of misogyny, suggested that this attitude toward women has existed for many millennia. From the early Babylonian texts, which glorified the hypersexual and hyper violent masculinities of the gods, to the Epic of Gilgamesh, where the prostitute civilized the man-beast, females have been the objects of oppression from

¹Jack Holland, *Misogyny: The World's Oldest Prejudice* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2006), 40.

males in antiquity.² Western cultures linked female virtue to appropriateness as well as the strength and purity of the family.³ In addition to this, “gender slippage” was viewed as destructive to manhood and an additional opportunity to oppress femininity.⁴

The Hebrew and Greek texts developed and were written among these misogynistic cultures, sometimes affirming while other times condemning the struggle between masculinity and femininity. However, my belief is that the divine voice behind the sacred texts sought to move the holy people beyond their cultural views of women, femininity, and vulnerable others.

Misogyny

The Greek word misogyny means, “a hatred of women/feminine.” While this literal translation may be offensive to some, or an over exaggeration of its application, misogyny is manifested in “general attitudes one takes toward femininity.” Jacob Anderson-Minshall suggests, “But the fact that men can’t be feminine without being punished by our society is proof that we still don’t value femininity: It’s treated as reprehensible—at least when it appears in men and boys.”⁵

First, the object of misogyny may not be limited to females. While females are typically the focus of misogyny it can also apply to characteristics whenever *gyne* is compared to *aner/andros*. RK Harris has suggested that *aner/andros* not only represent males but male behaviors as well. Male behaviors refer to active/aggressive behavior that is culturally attributed to “real men.” *Gyne*, therefore would represent the opposite or “passive” behaviors culturally ascribed to females and “non-males.” Non-males represent those in a culture labeled as men who have “slipped” out of the “male role” to become feminine. In the ancient world this class represented the poor, elderly, disabled, immigrants, slaves, and children. This did not represent a third gender of human but one located in the *gyne* zones of society. Misogyny, therefore, can affect both females and those labeled “non-males.”

Second, hatred is not the limit of the word. Often in trainings males indicate that they don’t “hate” women, but they are still unconsciously part of complex systems which continue to oppress *gyne* and enhance *andros*. These systems exist to separate masculinity and femininity and make one submissive to the other.⁶

²For a more thorough explanation of this attitude toward misogyny and masculinity see, Ron Clark, *Am I Sleeping With the Enemy? Males and Females in the Image of God* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 1-4.

³Holland, 40. David D. Gilmore, *Misogyny the Male Malady* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 66-67.

⁴Colleen, M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (NY: Oxford University, 2008), 18.

⁵Jacob Anderson-Minshall, “The Enemy within: On Becoming a Straight White Guy,” *Men Speak Out: Views on Gender, Sex, and Power*, ed. Shira Tarrant (NY: Routledge, 2008), 35.

⁶Minshall also indicates that misogyny exists even in female to male transpeople. Those becoming “male” find power in oppressing their female partners, even though as “trans” they once identified as female. *Ibid.*, 33.

Misogyny occurs when *gyne* is directly oppressed, devalued, and degraded for the enhancement of masculinity. Misogyny also supports institutions and cultural views which aid others in creating a climate of oppression where behaviors which are deemed “feminine” are labeled negatively. Misogyny involves reinforcing behaviors which prevent femininity from being empowered and viewed as a valuable partner in the development of *andros*.⁷

Applied Misogyny

Misogyny is enforced in western culture. I will limit this work to my experience in North America as a minister, educator, and domestic, sexual, and trafficking advocate. My involvement has been with victims of abuse and prostitution, as well as males who support that oppression through their involvement as solicitors of prostitution, pornography, and other sexual forms of oppression. I see firsthand the damage this does to both victim and consumer.⁸ Misogyny not only directly damages victims it indirectly damages those related to victim and consumer, by scarring those in relationship with these individuals. Misogyny also damages future relationships of victim and consumer and those on the receiving ends of their relationships. “Rather than being a model for healthy relationships, patriarchy is actually the very force responsible for their demise.”⁹

Gyne Zones

Misogyny creates a climate of oppression and shame for those considered *gyne* by limiting their emotional and physical development. Jeffreys has indicated that the beauty industry continually limits women’s normal growth and development through fashion, cosmetic surgery, dieting, and portrayal by the media.¹⁰ The fashion and cosmetic industries continually support the reduction of females’ bodies, hair, or other body parts to encourage them to become smaller. One can visit a store where boys’ and girls’ toys are sold and observe that male action figures are becoming larger and more muscularly defined, while female dolls become smaller and more enhanced in breasts. Females are expected to cut, tear, bleed, wax, and walk on smaller shoes in the name of fashion.¹¹ Females are expected to remove body hair, excluding the scalp, in order to appear feminine.

While females are restricted males become uninhibited. Pornography has continually increased with the explosion of the internet. Themes in pornography continue to mix violence

⁷“Until being called pussy, girl, fag, and pansy isn’t the worst thing in the world, we won’t eliminate misogyny.” *Ibid.*, 35.

⁸Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 25.

⁹Ewoare X. Osayande, “Redefining Manhood: Resisting Sexism,” *Men Speak Out*, 37.

¹⁰Sheila Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*, (NY: Routledge, 2005), 6.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 2.

with pleasing and serving males.¹² Pornography suggests that all women want sex from all men, that women desire the sex (even if it is degrading to women) that men want, and that force can help women who resist become compliant¹³. While there has been an important discussion concerning the distinction between pornography and erotica, pornography continues to grow in the number of products and in the male market, which further supports male privilege. As with the beauty industries, male size becomes larger, while women as free individuals become restricted in their movement and ability to resist unwanted sexual encounters in pornography. Pornography serves to satisfy males and continues to create a climate that is unsafe for women both on the camera and off.¹⁴

Prostitution continues to increase in North America. In addition to this, under aged prostitution has also increased in numbers and financial value. Police and FBI agencies are reporting that underage prostitutes bring substantially more income to a pimp while aged prostitutes and strippers have decreased in value. I see these statistics manifest as an everyday reality. In my neighborhood strip clubs continually post “cheap nights,” “cheaper dancers,” and earlier hours in the day. Those we are working with in/leaving prostitution inform us that “quick” money is possible on the streets since costs have dropped. As costs decline, pimps use victims more frequently and work longer hours. The role of the victim is to serve and enhance the “male ego.” Males are taught to be in control, on top, and must penetrate others in order to be real men. ¹⁵Pimps also break the spirits of the victims so that they will obey them.

Finally, work with batterers and sex offenders indicate that males who oppress females do so, not out of anger, but misogyny. These males are deficient in empathy and compassion and struggle to respect those in *gyne*.¹⁶ *US News* recently posted research with “Johns” and those viewing pornography as compared to males who have done neither.¹⁷ Those in the first

¹²Ann Simonton and Carol Smith, “Who Are Women in Pornography? A Conversation,” Christine Stark and Rebecca Whisnant, ed., *Not For Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography* (N Melbourne, Australia: Spinfex, 2004), 352-62. Robert Jensen, “Just a John? Pornography and Men’s Choices,” *Men Speak Out: Views on Gender, Sex, and Power* (NY: Routledge, 2008), 64-69.

¹³Jensen, 66.

¹⁴Avaren Ipsen, *Sex Working and the Bible* (Oakville, CA: Equinox, 2009), 91.

¹⁵Rus Ervin Funk, “What Does Pornography Say About Me(n)?” How I Became an Anti-Pornography Activist,” *Not for Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography*, ed. Christine Stark and Rebecca Whisnant, (North Melbourne, Australia: Spinnifex, 2004), 339-40. “In prostitution, the john performs the sex act with the unwilling victim, but subcontracts the intimidation and violence to another man, the pimp. The john would like to believe he is paying for sex, but the person he has sex with gets little or none of the money. The money goes to the pimp to pay for the force needed to keep prostituted women and children working.” Joe Parker, “How Prostitution Works,” *Not For Sale*, 7.

¹⁶Lundy Bancroft, *Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men* (NY: Putnam, 2002), 42; Clark, *Setting the Captives Free: A Christian Theology for Domestic Abuse* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2005), 39-51; Jackson Katz, *Tough Guise*, (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 1999); Paul Kivel, *Men’s Work: How to Stop the Violence that Tears Our Lives Apart* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1992), 21, 44.

¹⁷Leslie Bennetts, *The John Next Door*, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/07/17/the-growing-demand-for-prostitution.html>.

group saw women as “non-human” objects. While male privilege is a common attitude of many batterers, it is also common in elder, child, and abuse with people having disabilities. Misogyny can also be re-enforced by other females. While they are still victims, their support of others who oppress women is an act of collusion with male oppression rather than female oppression of males, neither is it justification for misogyny.¹⁸ Yee suggests that ideologies against females exists when the dominant group secures support in the loser’s opinion.¹⁹

Gyne are oppressed through industry, sexual objectification, sexual abuse, and IPV. Males have privilege to oppress those considered *gyne* because we live in a culture that permits not only this behavior, but many times encourages it.²⁰ Males have power to also choose femininity as cross dressers, however those in *gyne* are typically forced into passive and submissive roles by these males.²¹ Misogyny does not only involve male attitudes toward females, it operates in systems, institutions, and underlying attitudes that support the elevation of *aner/andros* to the degradation and expense of those considered *gyne*.

Ideologies against females are not only circulated by the dominant culture (oppressor/males) they are legitimated or naturalized by mistreating the oppressed.²²

Zone Offense

While many in the *gyne* zone have opposed misogyny the painful truth is that misogyny must also be confronted by those in the *aner/andros* zones of society. Males must join their partners in the *gyne* zones to oppose these forms of oppression and call for radical shifts in male privilege and definitions of masculinity and femininity. As ministers and academicians this shift must also be reinforced in our own faith communities, seminaries, and academic institutions.

First, misogyny begins at childhood. Feminine and homosexual terms are used to teach boys to live in “the man box.” Boys who do not represent the qualities ascribed to *aner/andros* are labeled and warned to change their behavior. Those who do not live in the “man box” are accused of gender slippage and called to “man up,” “grow a pair,” or “act like a real man.” In childhood boys not only learn what “masculinity” is they learn that those “*gyne*” are the enemy and to be oppressed. As the boy suppresses emotion he learns to suppress those who show these emotions.

He also is given a very stunted and unrealistic model of manhood. Males should broaden their understanding of masculinity. Sacred texts suggest that Yahweh displays compassion, love, and gives birth. Jesus also displays compassion, love, and nurtures (*ektrepho*) the “church/bride” (Eph. 5:25-33). The apostle Paul called males to nurture their

¹⁸Walter S. DeKeseredy, *Violence Against Women: Myths, Facts, Controversies* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2011), 43-58.

¹⁹Yee, 16-18.

²⁰Clark, *Am I Sleeping With the Enemy?*, 1-8.

²¹Jeffreys, indicates that “men can choose femininity but women can’t...” 65.

²²Yee, 10-18.

wives and children and be involved in their families.²³ Fatherhood has the role of teaching children, especially boys, that *aner/andros* and *gyne* work together in maturity and adulthood.

Misogyny is also reinforced in adolescent males. As young males develop they are introduced to “male privilege” through pornography, some sports, media, and other male clubs that provide misogynistic peer pressures. Pornography consumption is highest among males this age as males are introduced to objectification of women through sex, masturbation, and their sexual development. Boys who do not “man up” are labeled, not only by their fathers/care providers, but their peers and other adult males. Instead of women and those in *gyne* being the enemy, they are now objects for rights of passage. Dating violence, sexual abuse, coercive sex, pornography, and gendered violence become proving grounds for masculinity.

Empathy and Compassion are also qualities that are suppressed in adolescent males. These young males also experiment with at risk behaviors to prove that they are not *gyne*. For many males this becomes a time when they are identified as belonging to *aner/andros*. Shame, guilt, and confusion are experienced by males who have “failed to man up,” as well as those who “man up” and struggle with the painful cost of “being a real man.”²⁴

“In pornography, the pimp is called a publisher or a video producer, and the john is called a fan or a pornography consumer. But that doesn’t change the nature of the relationship: It involves one person (usually a man) selling another person (usually a woman) to a third person (usually a man). What this means is that pornography is a mass – mediated conglomeration of pimps and johns. When you masturbate to pornography, you are buying sexual pleasure. You are buying a woman. The fact that there are technologies of film or video between you and the pimp doesn’t change the equation. Legally, it’s not prostitution and, legally, you’re not in trouble. But you are still a john.”

Adolescent males have the opportunity, in safe environments, to learn critical thinking skills which challenge cultural views of masculinity. In Proverbs, the *na`arim* (young male apprentices) were taught to resist violence, gangs, drunkenness, dishonesty, and sexually exploiting females. Wisdom (*hokmah*) was portrayed as a beautiful woman who both taught these males life and provided them with advice to become responsible adults. It is interesting to note that Proverbs is unique among ancient Wisdom Literature in that only here, was a female allowed to teach the young scribes.²⁵

The apostles Paul also encouraged his young apprentice to treat women and the elderly with respect and honor. Sexual purity was a challenge in the ancient Roman world yet Timothy was expected to resist “cultural manhood” for a life devoted to helping others (1 Tim. 5:1-7; 2 Tim. 2:22-26).

Finally, misogyny does damage to males as they surpass midlife. Many batterers have high levels of drug and alcohol use not because they become violent under the influence, but

²³Clark, “Family Management or Involvement: Paul’s Use of *Prohistemi* in 1 Timothy 3 as a Requirement for Church Leadership,” *Stone Campbell Journal* 9 (Fall 2006): 243-52 .

²⁴Robert C. Dykstra, et. al., *Losers, Loners, and Rebels: The Spiritual Struggles of Boys* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 42.

²⁵Clark, *Am I Sleeping With the Enemy?*, 100-102; “Schools, Scholars, and Students: The Wisdom School *Sitz im Leben* and Proverbs,” *Restoration Quarterly* 47 (2005): 161-78.

because they are ashamed of their behavior. Violent males struggle in relationships with those to whom they “are attached” as well as with other males. Shame and control prevent them from having healthy non-violent and non-sexual relationships with other females. Those addicted to pornography or have sexual addictions become unable to maintain relationships that provide empowerment, love, and value to their lives and the lives of others. Their addictions to sex, power, or control drive them further into isolation (something internet pornography suppliers appreciate). These males no longer fit in the “man box” because the box was a myth. They have become damaged men, broken not only by their unrealistic/unhealthy abuse of others and themselves, but by their cultural definitions of a masculinity that males could not live. “Defensive posture leaves us detached from our feelings. Society sees us as predator and prey we must always be on guard and develop protective postures, manifested by hyper masculinity and dominance, which sees violence as primary option to resolve problems.”

While the Biblical texts do discuss male violence, war, executions, and revenge; the Christian scriptures contrast the Caesar of God’s kingdom with the Roman Caesar. Roman Caesar was a warrior, king, and god.²⁶ Jesus, however, was a victim (slaughtered lamb), executed Messiah, and bringer of peace and justice. His justice was one that was extended to the poor and oppressed. Matthew’s Gospel suggests that the righteousness of Jesus involved compassion, acts of mercy, loving enemies, and reaching out to the poor (Matt. 1:19; 5:17-20; 19:20-21; 23:23). Jesus’ was located among the poor, oppressed, prostitutes, and sinners (Matt. 25:40; Luke 1:53; 4:16-19; 5:30; 7:34). The apostle Paul wrote that Jesus was willing to cross zones of power to live among the humiliated (*tapeinos* Greek, ‘*ani* Hebrew) and expected the Christians to be patient and caring for those on the margins of society (Phil. 2:1-11; Rom. 12:16). The early Church focused energy on reaching those in the *gyne* zone and indicated that those who lived this way manifested spiritual maturity, also known as Agape (Matt. 5:43-48; 1 Cor. 13).²⁷

Adult males have the opportunity to develop empathy and compassion for others through the sacred texts. These texts represent a divine will that not only manifests love, empowerment, and compassion; they represent the struggle of others who try to resist cultural views of masculinity to be “real men” in the eyes of the creator. Misogyny creates dissension, abuse, and destruction to relationships and those created to “complement” the first human. In Genesis 2:18 humans were to complement each other (Hebrew *neged*, usually translated suitable, meet, etc.). Unfortunately, cultural views of masculinity have taught males to compete with, oppress, and control our partners, intimate lovers, and friends.

“At the same time, sex is said to be the ultimate act of intimacy, the place in which we expose ourselves most fully, where we let another see us stripped down, not just physically but emotionally. Certainly sex can be all those things to different people at different times. But isn’t that a lot to ask sex to carry? Can one human practice really carry such a range of meaning and purpose? And in a male – supremacist culture in which men’s violence is still tacitly accepted

²⁶Compare Jesus’ portrayal in John’s *Revelation* (before the mighty war) as compared to the Roman Caesar who would have been viewed as a conqueror of land, sea, and heaven.

²⁷For more on 1 Corinthians, maturity, and agape see, Clark, *The Better Way: Paul’s Letter to the Corinthians in Emerging Corinth* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009).

and men's control of women is often unchallenged, should we be surprised that sex becomes a place where that violence and control play out?"²⁸

Male and female were to support, complement, and work together as a team. However, time and culture have changed the behaviors which could enhance one another into emotions to be suppressed and attacked. This suppression enables males to reject the *gyne*, something they need to be complete. It is not good for the *aner/andros* to be alone nor is it good for him to oppress his complement.

Therefore, misogyny not only hurts men, it affects our ability to have healthy relationships with women and vulnerable others. It truly is at the root of much evil. Faith communities, and leaders, are in an important position to confront misogyny in males (and females) who encounter our pulpits, classes, and spiritual sphere of influence. While Genesis suggests that males are not to be alone, misogyny suggests that males do not need females. While Genesis 3 suggests that females and males were naked and not ashamed the evil serpent of misogyny indicates that nakedness brings shame, guilt, and oppression. Not only is misogyny a root of evil, it is the child of the evil one who divides male and female from their divine unity, cleaving, and harmony. In this, the image of Yahweh is not reflected but oppressed.

²⁸Jensen, 68.