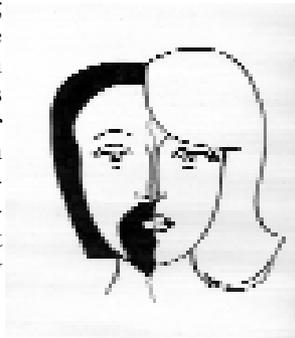


By contrast, I suspect that my great-grandmother might find her world very far removed from *mine*—a life punctuated by higher degrees, the stresses of professional life, and international travel, though unencumbered by the demands of children or household management. Nevertheless, I hope we would be able to celebrate together the choices and opportunities her activism opened up to the daughters of subsequent generations.

The other perspective I hope my great-grandmother and I could share would be the recognition that the far-reaching political and economic changes brought about by the campaign waged by her and her sisters were hard-won and keenly contested. The most significant changes to the position of women did not come about due to some civilized discussions that led to a neat consensus.

Quite the contrary, there were big arguments, a hard-fought struggle and bitter divisions before women gained the right to vote, gained access to universities, and started to enter professional life. Many men played a positive part in that struggle, but ultimately women had to lead it for themselves. Then as now, we should not expect our stance on gender equality to make us universally popular.



MOVING FORWARD

To return to the question I posed at the outset, does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights make a difference for women? At the end of the day, international legislation enshrining human rights does not, on its own, change anything very much. But people do make a difference, by how they live and how they act.

As human beings with a shared understanding of our collective responsibilities, we can *use* the framework of human rights to assert the equality and dignity of all people, and to challenge the terms of any cultural discourse that posits women's subjugation and marginalisation as either natural, inevitable or ordained. That in itself is a significant step forward.

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Bogdan POPESCU

Human Rights in Early Christian Writings

Human rights are not simple secular inventions. The Christian Church also fought for these values even before the edict of Milan (313 A.D.) during the time of the persecutions. Christian communities spread and developed in the Roman world—the centre of civilisation but also an unjust empire. The inhabitants of this state were not equal, women and slaves being the exploited social categories. In those difficult conditions, courageous Christian writers raised their voices against oppression and discrimination.

THE CONDITION OF WOMEN

Women certainly had better conditions within the Christian communities than in the traditional Roman society. For this reason, Adalbert HAMMAN stressed that “women embraced Christianity also because the new religion offered them the chance of equality and emancipation, freedom of decision and expression.”

Over the centuries there were attempts to improve the condition of women in the Roman world, but the results were not that visible. The Stoics and the Platonists realized the importance of this step, but they didn't succeed in changing the old traditions.

Girls were forced to marry when they were very young and they had to choose between the authority of their husbands (*cum manu*) and that of their fathers (*sine manu*). According to Roman law, the other possibilities were: *usus*—they had to accept the authority of the husbands after one year of marriage; and *coemptio*—in this case they were bought by their future partners.

The adultery committed by a woman was punished through the *Lex Julia de adulteriis*, while men were free to have concubines. The wives were forced to eat separately, together with their children, and had no access to education. The feminine descentance (*cognatio*) was accepted only in the year 178, during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, while before only the masculine (*agnatio*) was accepted.

Men were able to divorce and the procedure was quite simple. According to the Law of 12 Tables, they only had to ask for the key of the house and to banish their wives (*claves ademit, exegit*). This procedure was, however, much more complicated in the case of women and the post-marital situation was very hard for them. They were not accepted in public life, in politics, administration of justice, literature or sport.

The Christian writers of the first centuries condemned the discrimination of women, particularly their image as “possessed objects,” and defended their freedom to marry the persons they loved. Clement of Alexandria stressed that women must be treated the way men are treated. They should love their husbands by conviction and not by force.

According to the same writer, women are different only from the physical point of view, but they are endowed with the same nature that men are. There is only one human nature (*mia fisis*). There is not a good and bad nature, but there are good and bad persons, men or women, who belong to the same nature. Virtue must be

achieved by women as well as by men (Stromata II.25, IV.8).

In the Roman Empire women had their own religious life, dedicated to a Magna Mater, while men observed masculine religions like Mithraism. Within the Christian communities, women had the right to join men in the same religious life. Clement showed that there was only one God for men and women (Pedagogue I.4).

Concerning children, women had also limited rights. Only *pater familias* had the right to accept or to abandon a child. The situation was different for the Christian families, which never accepted the practice of abandonment.

The Letter to Diognet stressed: "Christians get married like all the people do but they don't banish the children" (c.V) and Tertulianus accused the Romans: "You abandon your children in the street!" (Apologeticus IX). Minucius Felix suggested that the Romans learnt this sad tradition from their immoral gods: "You leave your children in front of the beasts. You learnt that from your gods. It is true that Saturn didn't banish his children but ate them" (Octavius XXX).

The equality of men and women is stressed after the edict of Milan by many other writers. Ambrose of Milan emphasized this idea in his Letters (LXIII), considering that women must be partners of men and not servants; and Gregory of Nazianz condemned the laws made up by men for men:

"Why did they punish the woman but considered the man innocent? The wife is considered sinful while the unfaithful man does not suffer. I don't accept this legislation. I don't accept this tradition. Men are legislators and all the laws are against women." (Sermon XXXVII).

THE CONDITION OF SLAVES

In the case of slavery, the Christian Church did not attempt to initiate a revolution in order to change the social structure of the empire. The transformations started only within the Christian communities, where the slaves were considered brothers and sisters, children of the same God.

In the Roman world, the slaves played the role of objects (*res*) and their situation was regulated by the laws concerning animals and objects. One famous expression went: "slave or other cattle." Until the 2nd century, masters were allowed to kill their servants without any explanation (*ius vitae necisque*).

The Law of the 12 Tables also considered the slaves

simple tools. Their marriages didn't receive official recognition and according to the laws they lived in *contubernium*—concubinage, their children becoming properties of the masters.

The Christian writers condemned the institution of slavery but didn't ask for sudden changes that could have compromised even more the sensitive relation between state and the Christian Church. The Teaching of the 12 Apostles advised masters to respect their servants because they are children of the same God (c. IV).

Ignatius of Antioch recommended the same attitude but emphasized the importance of inner freedom. According to this writer, the moment of general liberation (*manumissio*) hadn't come yet and such an attempt could lead to greater persecutions. Therefore, slaves must be treated in a different way within the Christian communities (Letter to Policarp IV.3).

As in the case of women, Clement of Alexandria emphasized the importance of a common nature. Slaves were not considered objects but human beings who shared the same nature with their masters. The same author said: "Take away the robes and the jewellery of the masters and you'll see, they are not different from their slaves, they are not superior at all. They are even inferior because their bodies are weak and they get sick more easily than the servants."

Clement also emphasized the right of slaves to a free religious life. The real master is God and God must be obeyed even when the masters of the earth forbid this attitude. Christians must also learn how to work without slaves. They have to consider the servants as equals and love them (The Pedagogue I.12, III.6,11).

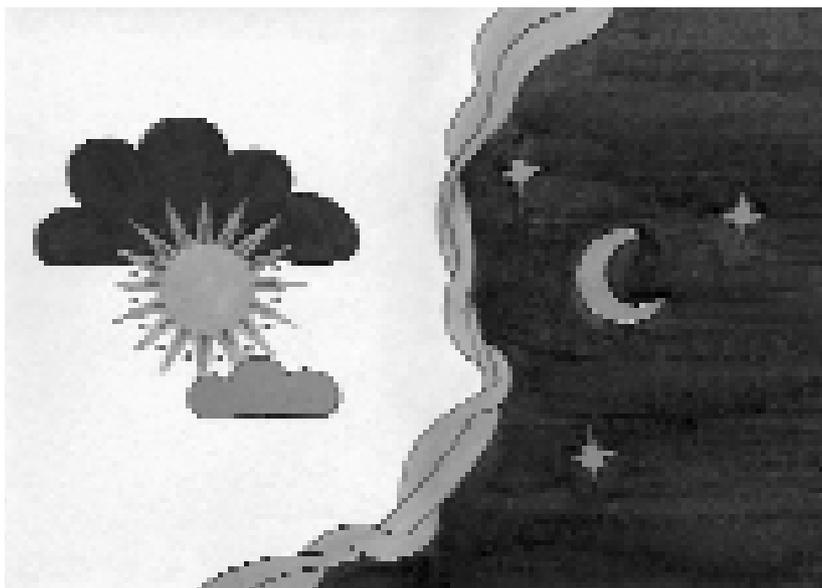
After the edict of Milan the attitude of Christian writers became more radical. Gregory of Nazianz interceded for a slave who had been ordained bishop in order for him to be liberated, and John Chrysostom considered slavery a mark of sin because God created human beings to be equal.

In the Homily XXII on the Ephesians, the patriarch showed that "slavery is a fruit of covetousness, of degradation, of savagery, since Noah...had no servant, nor had Abel, nor Seth," and stressed that the Church should not adopt this unnatural institution. He often protected the slaves and accused the officials who wanted to be Christians but wanted to preserve this "sinful" institution.

In case of Augustine of Hippo, dominion over human beings is considered a regrettable consequence of the

Fall: "This is prescribed by the order of the nature: it is thus that God has created human beings. For "let them," God says, "have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the creeping thing that creepeth on the earth. God did not intend that a rational creature, who was made in God's image, should have dominion over anything but the irrational creation, not human being over human being, but human being over beasts. ...The righteous human beings in primitive times were made shepherds of cattle rather than kings."

Thus slavery is a non-natural institution of *civitas terrena*. Augustine stressed that the word "slave" couldn't be found in history until Noah branded the sin of his son with this term. Possessed by the *libido dominandi*, the children of this world tried to exercise



their power by conquering and subduing, because they don't like to share and live in harmony (The City of God XIX.14,15).

CONCLUSIONS

I intended to emphasize this early contribution of Christianity in order to prove that human rights don't belong only to natural law. Freedom, equality of chances, and mutual respect are not just secular products. In a new Europe, if we want to defend human rights, we must not forget the importance of Christianity.

Of course, throughout the centuries, rulers, political or even ecclesiastical structures tried to justify injustice through Christian ideas. The writings of the first centuries prove that injustice does not have Christian roots. On the contrary, Christianity succeeded gradually in changing the pagan society, fighting for the rights of women and slaves.

It is true that there is injustice within the contemporary world, mainly because the two pillars of the Roman

Empire, the Oriental mentality and the Western pragmatism, survived. For this reason the Christians of our days have to pay attention to the heritage of the first centuries, to continue the direction initiated by early Christian writers.

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Thorsten NILGES

Gender Inequality in Politics

Gender inequality is a problem not only across Europe—all over the world there is a power gap between men and women. Women have less access to parliamentary and executive power; they are less educated, have fewer good jobs and are less wealthy than men.

The underlying reasons for gender inequality can be found in the patriarchal structure of the cultural background of every ethnicity, nation or people. Also all religious communities, whether Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, traditional or Christian, give more power to men than to women.

Lots of Europeans think that gender inequality is not as much of a problem in our generation as it was in our parents' and grandparents' generations, or not as much of a problem as in developing countries or Arab countries; but we Europeans are also living under unequal gender conditions.

This article aims to analyse gender inequality in the political system. Democracy—rule by the people—should include all segments of society.

One instrument for the empowerment of women in the government is a quota system, since aside from the aforementioned cultural, economic and social and historical reasons, female participation also depends on the electoral system.

MEASURING GENDER INEQUALITY

To measure inequality the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed two indicators: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM).

The GDI measures (the same as the Human Development Index, HDI) life expectancy, knowledge and the quality of life. The indicators are (1) the life expectancy at birth; (2) the adult literacy rate and the combined gross enrolment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools; and (3) the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP).

The GDI was developed in 1995 and measures women and men separately to show the differences in status between the genders. The outcome is a figure between 0 and 1; the perfect score of 1 (equal conditions) has not yet been reached by any country of the world (see table 1).

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) has the following indicators: (1) Seats in parliament held by women; (2) female legislators, senior officials and managers; and (3) female professional and technical workers. The scale is between 0 and 1, with 1 as well being the perfect as-yet-unreached score. Only six European countries have a GEM of more than 0.8. This result shows the extent of the problem of empowering women in Europe.

WHY GENDER EQUALITY IS NEEDED IN POLITICS

First, the Universal Human Rights Declaration of 1948 (HRD) states in Article 2, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status..."

Equal dignity, rights, power, and possibilities for all human beings are written down in many international declarations, conventions and treaties. Also lots of national constitutions call for equality and especially gender equality.

Every citizen of a liberal democracy should have human rights; like the right to freedom of opinion and expression (Art. 19 HRD), the right of peaceful assembly and association (Art. 20 HRD), and the right to take part in the government of her or his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives (Art. 21 HRD).

Human rights like the right to work, the right to free choice of employment, the right to equal pay for equal work (Art. 23 HRD) and the right to education (Art. 26 HRD) are important requirements of society and pertain directly to the issue of gender equality.

