



Women vs. Organized Religion

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The witch-hunting craze in Europe and America was a direct result of the publication in 1486 of *Malleus Maleficarum*.

Written by Dominican friars Heinrich

Kramer and Jakob Sprenger and endorsed wholeheartedly by Pope Innocent VIII's papal bull (official authorization and seal), it became the reference tool by which women have been subjugated and terrorized by law and official church doctrines for centuries.

In it, "woman" and "witch" seem to mean approximately the same thing, with only the degree of guilt at question.

I quote this from the Malleus:

"All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman..."

It is not good to marry: What else is woman but a foe to friendship, an unescapable punishment, a necessary

evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic danger, a delectable detriment, and an evil of nature, painted with fair colors."

My first inclination was to ask: Didn't these idiots have mothers? Why were such rantings taken so seriously by organized religion that they became fundamental to the laws of the time and church doctrines ever since?

Why would any woman be a member of such a religion?

Well, the church of that time was the unquestionable, total authority and power and was somewhat riddled with corruption.

You could kill someone and pay varying sums to the church (or local representative) to avoid punishment.

You could be put to death for knowing how to read if you weren't of noble rank or imprisoned without charges and held indefinitely.

You could be burned at the stake simply by the accusations of a cleric that you spoke against the church *or acted against nature by trying to heal the sick and injured.*

Read that last line again.

Helping to heal was a crime, unless performed by church-sanctioned practitioners in church-sanctioned methods, which mostly boiled down to

bleeding the victim and prayers.

If he lived, it was god's will. If he died he didn't have enough faith.

It was a perfect Catch-22.

Women have been the collective repository of healing arts and knowledge since the cave days. Every tribe and village had a medicine woman or midwife to assist with injuries, births, and illnesses, and many were spiritual advisors in various ways.

Each of these women was a danger to the local power of the church every time prayers and bleeding with leeches failed to save a loved one.

On a grander level of thinking, the church wanted to control the source of

future membership, labor, money, and power, all of which require large numbers of people willing to do and be as the church wants.

In a world largely decimated by plagues and wars, helping a woman avoid or stop pregnancy became a death-penalty crime. Control of women has been a cornerstone of religion, law, and society for centuries, but that is about to change dramatically.

Think about it. Only recently were women able to break into the medical professions in any serious numbers, medical professions that began hundreds of years ago in Europe's church-dominated world and remain tightly-

controlled to this day.

Only recently have the courts had either the power or inclination to open those and other doors to women.

On the picket lines, men and women rant against abortion and contraception in the name of god.

I'm sure the rank and file believe what they scream at the rest of us. I'm also quite sure that they're being used.

The real issue is still membership numbers, whether by births or by polarizing public sentiment, and the money and power that comes with those numbers. As they see it, any woman who isn't a broodmare and domestic servant is evil.

A woman who wants to determine her own path in life is evil.

A woman who thinks for herself is still considered a witch.

By the year 2000, close to 60% of the population of the Western world will be female, literate, working for a living, and VOTING.

To further complicate matters, over 50% of the population is expected to be over age 50, which puts a large number of women outside the reproductive stage of life. A religion or government which denigrates women is doomed to a minor role in our future.

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