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THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN

THE CHRISTIAN BRETHREN RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The material in this issue, together with the earlier paper of Mrs. Harper on 'Women and the Gospel', is bound to stimulate thought and provoke response to the substantial questions raised, both for the interpretation of scripture and its practical bearing on the lives of our churches. For it is clear that here is one issue that must visibly and substantively affect our attitudes and our ways of doing things, if we once grant the force of the arguments used.

I shall be glad to receive responses from members, both to this *Journal* issue and Mrs. Harper's Occasional Paper, with a view to publication in a forthcoming issue. I hope that this will reactivate the principle of member participation, which seems to have fallen into desuetude of late, and will lead to a lively exchange of ideas from which we all can derive great benefit.

In this regard I am anxious to receive suggestions of topics for future *Journals*, and, even better, material for publication. The vitality of the CBRF *Journal* depends on its capacity to provide worthwhile material on topics of concern to you, the members. Any suggestions as to how to make it serve this purpose better will be more than welcome.

Preface

Surprisingly—no, perhaps it's not so surprising—nearly everything which has been written until very recently on the role of women in the church has been written by *men*. Why should *men* be so concerned about the ministry of *women*? Christian women have not been overly active in writing books and learned essays on the role of men in the ministry of the Christian community! It seems rather strange, therefore, that so many men should take it upon themselves to pontificate on what their opposite sex are supposed to do in serving the Lord.

Perhaps his logic was faulty, but it seemed only right to a former member of the Council of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship (himself a man!), who now resides in North America, that women themselves should take the initiative in writing upon this subject. He personally was fed up to the teeth with hearing his fellow-males lecture their sisters in Christ concerning their responsibility before the Lord as members of His body. Thus it occurred to him to invite four gifted women to write a series of essays on the subject and to publish these as an issue of the *JCBRF*.

The authors are Olive Rogers, who is from the U.K. but has for a number of years served as a missionary in India; Gail Taylor, a Canadian who has served in Thailand with the Canadian University Students Overseas and is presently a graduate student at the University of British Columbia; Dana S. Fraser, an American Quaker who is a homemaker and lives with her pediatricist husband in California; and Sharon Gallagher, editor of *Right On*, a student oriented Christian newspaper published in Berkeley, California, and a worker with the Christian World Liberation Front. The articles by Ms. Taylor and Ms. Fraser are adaptations of material written in connection with their study at Regent College in Vancouver, B.C., Canada, where they both received the Diploma in Christian Studies in 1973.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

OLIVE ROGERS

The Cultural Background to the Epistles

When in Old Delhi once, I visited the golden domed temple of the Sikhs. Being a woman, I was taken round to a back entrance and then through several rooms, till I reached the upper gallery where the ladies gathered. I sat on the richly carpeted floor and surveyed the scene. Suddenly, as so often in the East, the Scriptures became alive! We were high above the main body of the temple. The worship—intoning of the Sacred Book, and instructions for salvation—being carried on down below was pertinent only to the men, for they alone have souls to save. I tried in vain to hear what was going on, but the women were sitting around in groups gossiping, amused at the play of their children, careless of the fact that they were in a place of worship. For them a visit to the temple was merely an opportunity to escape from the monotony of an existence behind the four walls of their homes, where they reign supreme in their own quarters, but where their lives seldom encroach upon those of their men-folk, who do all the work involving contact with the outside world.

Not many months later I attended one of the Christian conventions held annually in S. India. Day after day thousands of men and women sat under the large leaf shelter. The men's section of the "pandal" was quiet and orderly as they listened to the Word, taking notes with assiduous care. The women's half was another matter. All the children were there, restless, demanding and noisy, and many of the women were sitting in groups chattering.

The Eastern woman has always been sheltered and kept apart from the mainstream of life in the world, and she has not been encouraged to break from the security which such an existence afforded. She would wear a veil at all times (I Cor. 11: 2-16). It denoted her recognition of the lordship of her husband and also gave her dignity and protection. Even in these days no man would presume to intrude upon the privacy of a woman shrouded in her "burqa" or "pallu"—the end of her sari pulled over her head. In orthodox Hindu or Muslim homes the women are still not allowed to go out freely; they are veiled, and when the men-folk approach, they sidle away quietly into the women's quarters to remain out of sight until called by their master.

A journey in an Indian train can be instructive in these matters. The 'Ladies Compartment' is completely shut off from the rest of the carriage. No matter how hot or airless, the door is closed and no man is permitted to enter other than a close relative of the ladies inside, who will bring all necessary food and drink to the compartment and even he will remain no longer than is absolutely essential.

In the S. Indian language which I speak, in common with other Eastern languages, there is no difference between the feminine and neuter gender.

A woman is “a thing”; “the thing in the kitchen”, a thing to be sold for a price called a dowry, valued in terms of animals, land or money. She has no inherent rights; she is the sole property of her husband, or if he dies, of her male relatives including her son.

I have seen a woman, on the death of her husband, being taken outside a village fully shrouded. There she was stripped of her jewellery and her glory, for her head was shaved. From then on she may never again allow her hair to grow or leave her head uncovered. It is to her shame (I Cor. 11: 6) till she die that she has become a widow. Remarriage is unthinkable; has she not caused the death of her husband? Again, I knew a woman who lived an adulterous life and refusing to heed reproof, she was taken by the elders and had her hair cropped, thus bringing upon herself public dishonour (I Cor. 11: 6).

It is still considered in the East either a disgrace or a misfortune for a girl to remain unmarried. An unmarried life is incomprehensible to the Eastern mind which cannot conceive a single person living in sexual purity. The unmarried women of earlier days were almost invariably “devotees” of the gods, temple prostitutes who were usually lavishly adorned with jewels and often immodestly dressed.

In New Testament times the Jewish and Greek cultures both decreed that a woman was neither expected nor permitted to learn from the Holy Scriptures, and the concept of a woman teacher was inconceivable. This attitude held true in India until as recently as the last century, when Pandita Ramabai’s father was outcaste for daring to teach his daughter the sacred Hindu Vedas.

It was against a background such as this that the apostles wrote to the early churches; and it helps us to understand what the Scripture teaches if we appreciate something of the customs which still prevail in the East where Christianity has not yet shed its enlightening rays in sufficient degree to dispel the darkness and bondage of heathenism.

The Subject of Women in the Epistles

Basically the problems which confronted the early church were no different from those which confront the church today. How much does contemporary society influence the conduct of the church? To what extent should the liberty of the believer in Christ be tempered by local custom in order to maintain a good witness?

This matter is discussed in I Corinthians 11, and it is as part of the whole, that the role of the women in the church is considered. Chapter 14 and I Timothy 2 also touch upon the public ministry of women. Such portions of these chapters which deal with the women’s role should not be wrested from their context, but need to be understood as an integral part of a wider subject.

To gain a balanced view of the Scriptures they should be interpreted not only against the background of historic cultures, but also in the light of

1. What the Bible as a whole says about this subject.
 2. Christ's attitude to women.
 3. The practice prevailing in the early Church.
1. In Old Testament times women enjoyed the same privileges as men in worship. Many sang in the temple choirs (I Chron. 25: 5f; Neh. 7: 67). Women also served in the tabernacle and the same word *sābā* is used of their work as that of the Levites (Ex. 38: 8; I Sam. 2: 22). These may have been wives of Levites or, more probably, widows who had dedicated themselves to the service of the Lord.
 - (a) Anna worshipped and gave thanks publicly in the Temple (Lk. 2: 36-38).
 - (b) Miriam, who led the women in public praise, is specifically identified as a prophetess (Ex. 15: 20; cf. Micah 6: 4).
 - (c) Deborah was not prevented from prophesying by the law and what a graphic song of triumph she composed (Judges ch. 4 and 5)!
 - (d) Hannah's inspired prayer is recorded for us in I Samuel ch. 2.
 - (e) Huldah was acknowledged as the outstanding prophetic figure of her day. When King Josiah sent Hilkiah, the priest, and the elders to consult with her, the Lord revealed His will through her (II Kings 22: 8-20). Both Miriam and Huldah were contemporaries of great prophets: viz. Moses and Jeremiah (cf. II Kings 22: 3 with Jer. 1: 2), which fact refutes the contention that women received the prophetic gift only in the absence of qualified men.
 2. Christ's total attitude toward women showed His unreserved appreciation of them. This was in contrast to the normal custom of those days dictated as it was by Rabbinic standards.
 - (a) He recognised women as persons and accepted their gifts, being supported materially by a group of women who accompanied Him on His tours assisting in the ministry (Lk. 8: 1-3; Mk. 15: 41; Matt. 27: 55).
 - (b) The Sanhedrin taught "indulge not in conversation with womankind",¹ but Christ broke all such racial, traditional and sexual barriers with impunity (Jn. 4: 27).
 - (c) He defied Jewish custom also in permitting Mary to "sit at His feet and learn" in Rabbinic tradition—a privilege granted to men only. He commended her for this, and exhorted Martha to choose the better part (Lk. 10: 42).
 - (d) According to the law, both of those caught in the act of adultery should be put to death (Lev. 20: 10). The Lord being impartial, exposed the injustice and hypocrisy of man as He forgave the woman (Jn. 8: 1-11).

¹ Louis M. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (1942), pp. 107-19

- (e) He entrusted women with the most crucial fact of redemptive history: they were to witness to the disciples of His resurrection. This is truly remarkable since women's testimony was not regarded as sufficient to establish a fact legally in those days. No wonder the disciples hesitated to believe (Lk. 24: 11)!
 - (f) In the economy of the East, a sister could be an acute liability, but Christ declared that giving up a sister for His sake constituted a privation that He Himself would recompense (Matt. 19: 29). This was a most unusual precept for a man of His time, but such was the value He put upon women.
3. In the Early Church it is evident that women took as active a part as the men.
- (a) The Spirit fell equally on men and women (Acts 2: 1-4).
 - (b) The women prayed with the men (Acts 1: 14; I Cor. 11: 4f).
 - (c) There were women evangelists, co-workers with Paul (Phil. 4: 2f).
 - (d) The Holy Spirit used women as well as men as His prophetic mouthpieces (Acts 21: 9).
 - (e) Women taught in certain circumstances (Acts 18: 26-28; II Tim. 1: 5; 3: 14f; Titus 2: 3-5).
 - (f) There were deaconesses in the local churches (Rom. 16: 1; I Tim. 3: 11).
 - (g) Note the impressive list of women commended for their loyal service in Romans 16.

Thus it is clear that nowhere in Scripture is it indicated that women should be wholly silent. Prayer, praise and prophesying were permitted by the law and were also customary in the early church.

There were however two opinions held concerning women in the church in ancient times just as there are today. At one extreme, there was an overlapping of the pagan attitude that a woman was inferior, the property of her husband. This produced an unnatural and improper subjection of women on the part of the men in the church. Many women were content to fill such a role. They were believers, but as women it did not occur to them that they should take seriously the matter of learning all they could about their new-found faith. Religion had always been the prerogative of the men, their place was in the home. At the other extreme, there were those women who were influential in their own spheres, some even owning their own business or properties. They realised that in Christ "there is neither male or female" (Gal. 3: 28b) and that as believers they were equal with men in the sight of God. They thus found the restrictions of the heathen society irksome, especially the hampering veil, and they wished to cast it off.

The Apostle discusses this particular issue within a more wide-ranging discourse. I Corinthians 11 is a natural sequel to chapter 10. "Why should

my liberty be determined by another man's scruples?" (10: 29). To this he replies, "Give no offence to the Jews, or to the Greeks or to the church of God" (v. 32). "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (11: 1). Here is the crux of the matter: in all things we should take Christ as our example. But what aspect of Christ's example does the Apostle encourage us to follow here?

For the purpose of bringing redemption to mankind, He who was equal with God, voluntarily became subject to the Father (Phil. 2: 6). He did not act on His own initiative though He could well have done so, but willingly submitted to the authority of the Father (Jn. 8: 28, 42 etc.). Such was the complete oneness and interdependence of the Son with the Father, that Christ declared, "The Son can do nothing of His own accord" (Jn. 5: 19). This was the practical submission of an equal for a specific purpose, and it in no way rendered Him inferior to or unequal with the Father.

This is the pattern for the woman. Equal as she is with the man, she will acknowledge his leadership within the church as being divinely ordained and inter-relate accordingly. This relationship in the days of the Apostle was expressed by the wearing of the veil. Thus in keeping with contemporary custom, the Apostle says that to wear the veil would avoid offence to both Jewish and Gentile communities. For believing women of those times to have discarded the veil would have created grave misapprehension as to the morals prevailing in the church, and this had to be avoided at all cost, especially in the licentious city of Corinth.

At the same time, Paul describes the veil in verse 10 as "authority" upon her head. The Western mind finds this concept strange, that the wearing of the veil denotes *not the authority of the man over the woman but rather her own authority and power* within the divinely ordained hierarchy. Ramsay defines the Oriental view: "Without the veil the woman is a thing of naught, whom any one may insult. A woman's authority and dignity vanish with the discarded veil". He suggests that the nearest equivalent we know is the "authority" which a magistrate wears upon his head vesting him with power.²

The Apostle also implies that since the angels veil their faces in the presence of a thrice holy God, it would offend them to see the unbecoming familiarity and lack of reverence in an unveiled woman worshipper.³ As H. L. Ellison comments, "Every time and clime have had their expression of womanly modesty".⁴ It hardly needs to be said however that the modern hat as worn in Western countries, almost only at church services, has little or no relation to the Eastern veil worn compulsorily at all times, for it carries neither the same significance nor performs the same function.

The Apostle next turns his attention to the men. Jewish men had been accustomed to wearing a head covering during worship. Now they are to discard it in recognition of the divine order, that under Christ the Head, they are appointed to authority in the church (I Cor. 11: 7).

² W. M. Ramsay, *The Cities of St. Paul* (1907), pp 203-5

³ F. F. Bruce, *An Expanded Paraphrase of the Epistles of Paul* (1965), p. 99, note

⁴ H. L. Ellison, *The Household Church* (1963), p. 86

The injunction in I Corinthians 14: 34 that women should keep silence in the church must be interpreted in the light of other Scriptures and should not be isolated from the other two references in the same chapter to keeping silence in the church (vs. 28, 30). The subject under discussion here is order in the church service. It may be clearly seen from Acts 1: 14 and I Corinthians 11: 4, 5 and I Timothy 2: 9 that women are expected to pray and prophesy in the church meetings, albeit they are to be suitably attired. The silence imposed upon women here may not be taken as cancellation of a permission previously granted. It would be idle for the Apostle to prescribe dress when praying if, in fact, public prayer is denied to the ladies.

What then is the silence here? It should be remembered that there were no written New Testament Scriptures in the days of the Apostles, and discussion of the Old Testament Scriptures was an essential part of discovering the truths of their new faith (Acts 17: 2, 17; 18: 4, 19; 19: 8f; 20: 9 etc.). This was known as authoritative teaching, and much of it took the form of dialogue and debate. While it was conceded that women had the right, in fact the responsibility to learn, the apostle declared that they should not intrude into the debate of the teachers. The injunction to silence here is no contradiction of chapter 11. In point of fact, Paul is following the same principle. Once again he says that women, though spiritually equal with men, should cause no offence. They should follow the current practice. In those days girls did not attend public or synagogue schools. If they wished to do so, they learnt at home from their brothers or fathers. In the same way, Paul says, women should learn at home from their husbands. For those of us who live in the East it is easy to imagine the dismay which would be caused if women were to call across from the ladies half of the congregation to their husbands sitting in the men's section. Such flagrant disregard of reverence in the presence of God would call forth a stern rebuke.

When Paul writes later to Timothy to give him instructions for the Ephesian Church he touches upon this subject again (I Tim. 2: 8-15). Having stated that the women should be suitably attired when praying, he gives his reason why a woman is not permitted to teach or take authority in the church. It was when Eve stepped out of her position of dependence upon her husband and acted on her own initiative that she was deceived and sin entered. It was possibly to underline the danger of this in the church that Paul wrote "yet woman will be saved through bearing children" (2: 15). It seems that he was encouraging the Christian woman to realise that despite her new status as a person—with an eternal soul to save, of equal value in the sight of God, as much responsible for the use of the life with which God had endowed her as her male counterpart—she should not despise the traditional function of the woman. Child bearing and rearing remain her primary calling, and as an enlightened believer she has a great responsibility to teach and train her children. For the unmarried there is a similar responsibility in the spiritual realm.

God's Divine Order

It would seem that were the divine order which God instituted in creation rightly understood and accepted many of our problems concerning the role of women in the church would cease to exist. Genesis 1: 27 says so simply, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them". Similarly Genesis 5: 1 reads: "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them . . . and named them Man when they were created". In these simple uncomplicated statements we have the summation of our equality, the complementary nature and harmony of our humanity. We project the image of God as male and female, since God is male-female in His totality. It is necessary therefore to encompass both the male and the female in order to have a balanced projection of who God is.

In creation, God fully harmonized the sexes; and neither male nor female is complete without the other (I Cor. 11: 11f). Thus Adam and Eve reigned together over God's creation as king and queen (Ps. 8: 4-8). Together they fellowshiped with God, and they equally shared the blessings of God (Gen. 1: 28). They were equally heirs of the grace of life together (I Pet. 3: 7). Within this equality lies the authority-structure given by God. Man was created first, then the woman from the man and for the man. Thus man is the head (I Cor. 11: 3). Small wonder is it that when sin entered, this most beautiful of all relationships, meant to display so perfectly the image of the Godhead and reflect the love of Christ for His church (Eph. 5: 21-33), became the prime target of the enemy.

In Genesis 3: 16 we see the results of the Fall. These are not the words of a harsh God pronouncing an unbearable penalty upon His disobedient children, but those of a God of infinite holy love announcing the inevitable and awful consequences of sin.⁵ Man, God predicted, would take advantage of the weakness of woman, bringing a progressive domination over her until she would be reduced to a chattel, a mere 'thing', which is exactly what has pertained in non-Christian religions down the ages.

Christ's Work of Restoration

When Christ came, as we have been reminded, He restored the dignity of the woman and gave to her, her rightful place in society.

In Christ once again she is equal with the man (Gal. 3: 28b).

In Christ she obtains salvation by faith exactly as the man does.

In Christ her body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit even as his. She is fed by the Word as he is.

She may be the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit as he also may be.

She has access to the one common Father in prayer as he has, for she with him is ordained to the priesthood with all the responsibilities and privileges attendant upon such a high calling (I Peter 2: 9).

⁵ Cf. H. L. Ellison, *The Message of the Old Testament* (1969), p. 20

To limit public prayer to the men alone is to proclaim a doctrine of the priesthood of male believers, and to restrict prayer and prophesying to women's meetings alone is to presuppose an inequality which does not exist.

Scripture assures us that spiritual equality is God's intention, and this perspective never varies whether stated in the Old Testament or in the New. Paul in Ephesians 5: 21f says, "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord". For practical purposes, within the equality which God has created, there must be a head. Thus, man as head, with Christ for his example, will take the initiative, not sparing himself. Woman, taking Christ also as her example, submits and co-operates; and her obedience becomes a joy, as both of them are activated by the love of Christ. Just as Christ is the glory of God, that is, the full expression of God, so the woman is the glory of man; she is a prepared complement to his maleness, and without her he is incomplete (I Cor. 11: 7). Each is dependent upon and is necessary to the other. Mutual submission as a wider principle within the church is a spiritual commitment for which we are answerable to the Lord, "for none of us lives to himself".

The tragedy is that for many generations there has been an imbalance in our churches. As a result women generally have been content to remain inarticulate. Many are incapable of prayer in public, and even more serious, they are not able to communicate the truths of their Christian faith to others. And worse, they are not distressed that this is so. This means that a large section of each church has become atrophied, incapable of action, thus seriously hampering the effective witness of the church as a whole.

The steps which should be taken to rectify this position will inevitably vary from place to place and from time to time, but it seems incontrovertible that the women with their homes are the key to the evangelisation of today's unchurched peoples. They need to be given all the loving, gentle encouragement and stimulus that is possible to help them to overcome the inhibitions and fears of the years. The responsibility for this initiative lies with the elders of each local church, who with the deaconesses of their appointment, should make every effort to discover and develop latent gift among the women and thus bring about a total involvement of the church in realistic and effective outreach.

It is certain that if our eyes were open rightly to understand God's order for the church there would be less fear on the part of the men that their position of leadership and authority in the church was being challenged and less apprehension on the part of the women that their activities were being misconstrued. A family is complete and happy when both father and mother work in harmony, each filling his or her own God-appointed role efficiently. So the local church as a spiritual family will be really effective only when both men and women work side by side at the assignment for which each has been called and endowed.

WOMAN IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION

GAIL TAYLOR

The creation story of Adam and Eve “is designed as it is expressly in order to blame all this world’s discontent on the female”.¹ Women are speaking out for their rights as human beings and often this involves speaking out *against* what purports to be the biblical view of women. This is cause for concern on two fronts. Firstly, the faith is under attack in an important area from what is becoming an increasingly influential movement of women, and Christians are thus called upon to give adequate defence.² Secondly, traditional interpretations made exclusively by men concerning the status and role of the female *do* cause very real difficulties for Christian women, and these need to be re-examined.

In this paper I hope at least to raise some questions about certain of these traditional interpretations. I will begin by providing one or two more examples of how certain secular (some not so secular) women view the Christian faith, and suggest a direction response might take. Then, I would like to do a surface exploration—certainly a valid exercise in archaeology—of the creation story because it is here that much of the attack has been directed and here that we find most of our clues about the “created order”. Paul, too, has been a problem for some. So, I wish to interact with I Timothy 2: 9-15 and I Corinthians chapters 11 (the opening section) and 14 as they refer to women.

Examination of these passages appears, in my view, to confirm that the “women’s liberation movement errs when it dismisses the Bible as inconsequential or condemns it as enslaving” and that in “rejecting Scripture women ironically accept male chauvinistic interpretations and thereby capitulate to the very view they are protesting”.³ However, this examination also raises at least two problems for Christian women in our day. First, as so much of the Scripture is predicated upon the assumption that male-female relationships occur within the marriage bond and/or that all single females are part of some social unit at the head of which is a male, do we not, considering the current structure of our society, need to break some new ground in determining the implications of ‘headship’ and roles for single men and women who live and work quite independently? Secondly, if what Paul says about roles within the church should be observed today, can today’s working woman relate to society outside the church in the same way as it appears she is to relate within the church?

Women’s Liberation Comments and the Beginnings of a Response

I wonder how many Christians are aware that many in the women’s movement see Christianity as oppressive and reject it on these grounds.

1 Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (1970), see pp. 51-54.

2 I Peter 3: 15.

3 Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLI/1 (March 1973), p. 31.

Statements like Kate Millett's in the opening sentence of this article are far from uncommon in women's writings, even in theological journals. Mary Daly, for example, comments in the *Andover Newton Quarterly*:

As the women's revolution begins to have an effect upon the fabric of society . . . it will become the greatest single potential challenge to Christianity to rid itself of its oppressive tendencies or go out of business.⁴

Janice Raymond actually feels that it was "through St. Paul, or the writings that have been attributed to him, anti-feminism again emerged".⁵

More disturbing, perhaps because they are not attacks, are the off-hand statements of what secular writers feel is simply an obvious fact about the whole Judeo-Christian tradition. The *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* illustrates this type of statement as it casually notes in an introductory chapter that:

The three principal influences which have shaped Western society—Greek philosophy, Roman law, and Judeo-Christian theology—have each held almost axiomatically that woman is inferior and subordinate to man and requires his domination.⁶

I find such statements disquieting because I believe them to be distortions of what is recorded in Scripture as a whole. As Krister Stendahl points out, "the patriarchal structure of society is not a Jewish or Christian invention, but the Bible and the church have come to enforce it in many ways".⁷ Bearing in mind that the Bible has been interpreted by men still bearing the marks of their fallen natures probably moves his statement fairly close to the truth.

It is not too difficult to see that statements such as those cited above are not wholly unjustified;⁸ and it is here that the problem begins. The woman who brings herself and her wonderings about what it means to be woman, to the Christian faith, finds that God himself is always referred to in male language and metaphor.⁹ Jesus was a "he", all the disciples were men, Paul feels women must be silent in the presence of men in church and cites as the justification for her remaining silent the fact that

4 Mary Daly, "The Spiritual Revolution: Women's Liberation as Theological Re-education", *Andover Newton Quarterly*, 12/4 (March 1972), p. 165.

5 Janice G. Raymond, "Nuns and Women's Liberation", *Andover Newton Quarterly*, 12/4 (March 1972), p. 208.

6 *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa, 1970), p. 10.

7 Krister Stendahl, "Women in the Churches: No Special Pleading", *Soundings* 53 (Winter 1970), p. 375.

8 William L. Holladay, "Jeremiah and Women's Liberation", *Andover Newton Quarterly* 12/4 (March 1972), p. 222. Holladay says, "We must admit what is obvious, namely the overwhelming bias towards maleness in the Bible . . ."

9 Phyllis Trible. *art. cit.* Trible shows in her article that this is *not* so in fact. The Old Testament, which came out of Israel's patriarchal society, uses some startlingly feminine imagery when speaking of Yahweh, who transcends sexual distinctions and unlike the erotic gods of the ancient Near East has no need of a woman. I acknowledge a certain debt to this article in the formulation of my own thoughts.

“Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression”,¹⁰ thereby “blaming all this world’s discontent on the female”. Thomas Aquinas felt women were “misbegotten men”; Luther considered woman’s original function was purely as a procreative device and only after the Fall, when Adam became weak and dependent, did companionship, now associated with sin, begin to have a place in man and woman’s relationship.¹¹ Even relatively modern commentaries on Genesis still inform the student of Scripture that “the person who was tempted was the woman . . . , therefore we may suppose her inferior to Adam in knowledge, and strength and presence of mind”.¹² Needless to say, it is not easy in the face of such as this to feel dignity in being a woman and hardly surprising that at times the question has been asked, *Are Women Human?*¹³

Women who consider themselves present-day disciples of Jesus Christ face, then, an uncomfortable dilemma which they may resolve in one of three ways. The first, often suggested by men, is simply to be silent and submit in all things.¹⁴ The second course of action open to Christian women, if worst comes to worst, is to reject association with the church and in frustration join the secular sisters in their attempts to gain equality—which can be tempting as “they promise them liberty”.¹⁵ The third alternative, the correct one I believe, has been clearly delineated by Phyllis Trible. It involves first affirming that

The intentionality of biblical faith . . . is neither to create nor to perpetuate patriarchy but rather to function as salvation for women and men;¹⁶

and then further, to recognize that “the hermeneutical challenge is to translate biblical faith without sexism”.¹⁷ The pursuit of this alternative is only beginning, and it must involve women both interpreting Scripture and asking relevant questions along with men.

¹⁰ I Timothy 2: 14.

¹¹ Jaroslav Pelikan (ed.), *Luther’s Works, Vol. I. Lectures on Genesis* (1958), p. 116. Luther exhibits some interesting contradictions in his view of female status; notice the tension in the following statements:

(a) “it (referring to the female sex) is inferior to the male sex” (p. 69, comment on Genesis 1: 27.)

(b) “Eve was in no respect inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind” (p. 115, comment on Genesis 2: 18).

(c) “Satan sees that Adam is the more excellent . . .” (p. 151, comment on Genesis 3: 1).

¹² Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, Vol. I [published originally 1708], pp. 21-22.

¹³ Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (1971).

¹⁴ This one has its dangers because it looks very scriptural; but I wonder whether this is biblical submission. Those who might advocate this alternative do not take into account such biblical principles as “submit yourselves to one another”—instructions to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5: 21.

¹⁵ Women’s liberation in its most militant form carries with it the dangers outlined in II Peter 2: 19 ff.

¹⁶ Trible, *art. cit.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Genesis 1 - 3¹⁸

Genesis One¹⁹ gives us a theological overview of the whole created order. Although the account is rich in its full content, for our purposes it is necessary only to notice that the Lord God created ‘man’ or the *’ādām*, which term in Hebrew means human being and embodies the idea of both maleness and femaleness together. The *’ādām* was created in God’s own image, after God’s own likeness (Genesis 1: 26), and God said,

Let *them* have dominion over the birds of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth (Genesis 1: 26, RSV, my italics).

After consulting in his person, God did this, and the Scripture goes on to elaborate, “. . . in the image of God he created him, male²⁰ and female²¹ created he them” (Genesis 1: 27). God blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion—together as the *’ādām* (verse 28). To the end of chapter one, although we are not told anything about the relationship between the male and female, there is certainly no hint whatsoever that one is in any way subordinate to the other. We are told only of *their* relationship to the rest of creation, that of stewardship under God and dominion over it; and that both male and female are created in the image and likeness of *’elōhīm*, God.

Chapter two moves on to elaborate on the creation of mankind. Places and animals begin to have names, and we are given more information concerning the relationship between those two images of God which make up the *’ādām*. Neither are called forth with merely a statement from the Creator of the form “Let the earth bring forth . . . etc.” (see Gen. 1); but each has a unique birth and is formed (man) or built-up (woman) with care by the Creator of all things.

It has been argued that the fact that woman was created as “help” or “helper” for the man means she is subordinated automatically; but this idea is simply false and arises from the connotation of the word “helper” in English. The Hebrew contains no suggestion that the woman is an underling; without her the man is alone and God observes that this is “not good” (Gen. 2: 18). A “helper fit for him” expresses the ideas of equality, fitness or complementariness instead; and it is valid to see in the account God himself as the “helper superior to man; the animals to be the helpers inferior to man; and woman the helper equal to man”.²²

18 The account I have put together is dependent on Tribble, although I had explored much of a similar substance before her stimulating article appeared.

19 “Genesis is also foundational for much basic doctrine . . . because it is the foundation upon which the whole Bible is built”. From C. J. Ellicott, *An Old Testament Commentary for English Readers* (1897), p. 3.

20 The Hebrew word for “male” is *zākār*.

21 The word for “female” here is *neqēbā*. It should be noted that Augustine cited Genesis when he wrote that only men were created in the image of God in *De Sancta Virginitate*, see Raymond, *art. cit.*, p. 209.

22 Tribble, *art. cit.*, p. 38.

Although woman is made from the same stuff²³ as the man, built up from his side,²⁴ her first and primal contact is with her Maker! Woman herself knew God before she knew her counterpart, the man. We read that “The LORD God . . . brought her to the man” (Gen. 2: 22). Woman, having been taken from man’s side, does not in any way depend on the man for her relationship to God.

The first human being, man, had long searched all the animals for his counterpart to no avail (Gen. 2: 20), but when he sees God’s new creation he instantly recognizes not only her but *himself*. The poem recounting the dawning of his awareness of who she is is most interesting as it appears to contain also the dawning of his awareness of his own sexuality. The man says (Gen. 2: 23),

This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman (*’ishshā*)
Because she was taken out of Man (*’ish*).

The occasion of the creation of woman calls into being the *’ish* as the poem contains the first occurrence of the Hebrew word *’ish* (male).²⁵ “Maleness” then, did not exist in the philosophic sense, in that first being which God had formed out of a clod of earth, until the female was born. The record here suggests to us that male and female, as such, came into being simultaneously and only in relation to one another.²⁶

The poem associates the calling of the new being a woman with the man, as he notes that “she shall be called woman”. This might suggest at first glance that he exercises authority over the *’ishshā*. It does not seem possible, however, to reconcile this idea with God’s giving *them* dominion in chapter one; nor is it likely that the man would intend dominion over the one he recognizes as his very self and with whom he is to become “one flesh”. On a more technical level, Tribble analyzes in some depth what appears to be a particular formula used in the account, for giving something a name does imply the giver’s dominion, but notes that Adam does not use this formula in the poem.²⁷

It is not clear who is speaking in verse 24, but it is interesting to note that it is the man who leaves his family to cleave to his wife. One might expect the subordinate member to do the leaving of father and mother to cleave to the other.

23 “Bone of my bones” means “my very own self”.

24 The verb used implies a “thought-out skilled work, requiring both time and care on the divine artificer’s part . . .” (Ellicott, *op. cit.*), if not the very climax of his creative work. For the “climax view”, see Letha Scanzoni, “The Feminists and the Bible”, *Christianity Today*, February 2, 1973, pp. 10-13.

25 Tribble, *art. cit.*

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38.

27 *art. cit.* When authority is intended, a particular formula involving both the verbs for “name” and “call” is used, e.g. “X called Y’s name Z”. Adam follows this pattern in calling the animals—“Whatever he called every living creature, that was its name”. It is only after the fall, and as a punishment, the Lord tells the woman “your husband shall rule over you”, and then, “the man called his wife’s name Eve” (Genesis 3: 16).

To this point, then, we have the man and the woman, naked and unashamed, both made in the image of God; and the emphasis is on their oneness and fit-ness together as the *'ādām*—the *'ish* and *'ishshā*. Let us move on to the narrative of the fall and its consequences. First, the serpent appears to the woman. We are not told why the serpent approaches woman and not man. The narrative reads only that “the serpent was more subtle than any other creature” and that “he spoke to the woman”.²⁸ (Gen. 3: 1) Conjectures concerning why can only be conjectures and cannot be made without demeaning one sex or the other.²⁹ We must leave the why here as a mystery. It takes the serpent some considerable time and effort to deceive the woman; and when he does after an extensive discussion of a theological nature, he succeeds because she desired beautiful wisdom, and this more than the command of God: “the tree was a delight to the eyes and to be desired to make one wise and she took . . .” (Gen. 3: 6). The oneness of the original relationship is underscored when she gives the fruit to her husband, and the only comment the inspired writer gives is “and he did eat” (Gen. 3: 6). Only then does the awareness of what *they* have done dawn on the *'ādām*. The man here obeys the woman in direct contradiction of the law of God and apparently without question.

Even to this point in time subjection does not enter in unless added to the narrative. Woman from her special birth is directly related to God, and there is a free-wheeling mutuality and a unity evident in the man-woman relationship—although the focus of the narrative has come to dwell quite evidently on the female personality.³⁰ The only obeying mentioned on the human level is again subtle; it takes place easily and naturally where man obeys woman. Beyond this analysis, not a great deal can be said about the created order and the original relationship as it was divinely conceived to be between a man and a woman.

What happened when man and woman sinned against God? God's nature was violated, and for God to be complacent towards sin was impossible as He cannot deny Himself. Reproof, condemnation and punish-

28 From this statement we are not entitled to conclude that women are more subtle than men. It is a trait often associated with women and at times used to accomplish God's purposes; see II Sam. 14: 1-24 and comments by J. Hoftijzer, “David and the Tekoite Woman”, *Vetus Testamentum* 20, 1970, p. 444.

29 Such as “the person who was tempted was the woman, [therefore] we may suppose her inferior to Adam in knowledge, and strength and presence of mind”, Matthew Henry, *op. cit.* Or the reverse kind of sexism, such as “Woman's being 'first in the transgression' could be viewed as a point in her favour. Why? Because it required a personal appearance of Satan himself, disguised in celestial-like beauty, to persuade her to sin! In contrast, Adam was “influenced by no other motive than a bare pusillanimous attachment to a woman!” Scanzoni, *art. cit.*, p. 11 as she illustrates Judith Murray's eighteenth century interpretation of the fall. Both interpretations are demeaning to one sex, and the inferences drawn are both invalid.

30 Ellicott, *op. cit.* notices that “the demeanour of Adam throughout is extraordinary. It is the woman who is tempted—not as though Adam was not present, as Milton supposes, for she has not to seek him—but he shares with her at once the gathered fruit. Rather she is pictured to us as more quick and observant, more open to impressions, more curious and full of longings than the man, whose passive behaviour is as striking as the woman's eagerness and excitability”.

ment were by definition necessary acts on behalf of an holy God. Alienation was the result. Although sin was committed by man and woman, its consequences moved beyond the two of them as is wont to happen. It affected God and his actions, man and woman and their status with regard to God, to say nothing of their own relationship which appears at this point to lose its mutuality and one sex begins to rule the other. Man and Woman were expelled from God's direct presence, and it was thus that all future men were born into a state of alienation from God and naturally and inevitably therefore into sin.³¹

It is vital to notice the specific results of the fall for woman, because they have sometimes been confused with the created order or the way things were meant to be. The consequences are clearly in the form of a punishment or curse. They are negative and represent an undesirable situation. The consequences strike woman deeply—though she never becomes like other women found in primal myths of the ancient Near East who are relegated to the ever-present harlot-temptress role.³² Adam now “calls” her “name” Eve, indicating his new authority over her; but the title is honorific, portraying her as “mother of all living things”.³³ The practical and unfortunate consequences for her are, first, increased pain in childbirth; second, her desire shall be focused on her husband; and this latter is somehow connected with his ruling over her.

It is absolutely clear in the Genesis account that the husband's rule over his wife is connected with the fall, with the beginning of humanity's history of sin and rebellion against God and not with the created order as God established it.

Further to this, both the Old and New Testaments contain suggestions that this state of rule is a temporary one at best. Jeremiah makes the intriguing statement that it is possible for a time to arise when “the Lord has created a new thing in the earth, a woman protects a man” (Jeremiah 31: 22)³⁴ Christ himself, replying to a Sadducee verbal trap, reveals that in

31 Although not directly concerned with the topic of this paper, the only possible way to be born “without sin”—which may result from this alienation from God, as Adam and Eve were expelled from his presence—would be to be born and yet be very God, as was Christ.

32 Woman's status did suffer in ancient Israel, yet there are signs of equality as well. The same sacrifices are offered for cleansing both male and female children (Lev. 12: 6); women participated in religious gatherings and brought individual offerings; they were permitted to take Nazarite vows to dedicate themselves to Yahweh; if sold as slaves, they were freed in the seventh year as a man. Old Testament women were to be honored (Ex. 20: 12), feared (Lev. 19: 3), obeyed (Deut. 21: 18) and to name and educate their children in their early years; see M. Beeching “Women”, *New Bible Dictionary* (1962), p. 1336. See also “Women in Ancient Israel” by Dana Fraser in this issue of *JCBRF*. For a comparison with other ancient Near Eastern literature, see John Bailey, “Initiation and the Primal Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 89 (June 1970), pp. 149-150.

33 Bailey, *art. cit.*

34 W. Holladay, *art. cit.* Holladay discusses Jeremiah 30 and 31 and feels that the prophet perceives that “as God can re-create man's heart fit for engrafting of God's will, so God can recreate the whole pattern of male and female . . . ; that is to say there is nothing inevitably fixed about sex roles . . .” (p. 221)

the resurrection time man and woman will no longer need the institution of marriage (Matt. 22:30). This statement and his startling care and respect for the women he met and taught suggest woman will not always be ruled over by her male counterpart.

Before leaving Genesis 1 - 3, we may ask several questions which may serve to put the hermeneutical issues into perspective. In view of Genesis 3: 19, which places on man the burden of the sweat of his face as he toils to make a living, is it contrary to God's plan to attempt to make work easier by means of technology? In the light of Genesis 3: 16a, which speaks of the pain experienced by women in childbirth as a result of the Fall, is it wrong to use medicine to seek to ease the pain of the mother in labour? Accordingly, does Genesis 3: 16b, which speaks of the husband's rule over the wife, make it wrong for Christ's church to take steps to reduce the extent to which women are ruled over in that body?

Paul and Women and the Church

Paul's statement that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal. 3: 28) is a basic statement of theological truth concerning our redemptive status. Is this a principle which applies only to the individual's standing before God for personal salvation? or does it also apply to the church, the body of Christ?

A basic canon of theological thinking is that the clear truths given us in Scripture and the large themes which relate to what God has done in redemption should be one's guide in seeking to understand more difficult or apparently contradictory passages. This would seem to apply to what Paul says about women in the New Testament. The truths and themes which are fundamental are the ordered creation by God of our universe and the related biblical theme of order as opposed to chaos; the seriousness of sin against a holy God and the extent to which sin affects mankind; the completeness of our redemption through the death of Christ ("redemption" being a very important theme in both the Old and New Testaments); and the essential worth of mankind in the 'ādām sense, implied by the fact that God would do all this to accomplish 'ādām's redemption. This list does not exhaust the essential teaching of the Bible, but it would seem that the deportment of ladies in the church building is of somewhat lesser importance than these doctrines, and that these truths should be considered normative.

Let us now look briefly at three controversial passages from Paul's letters and attempt to put what Paul is saying into perspective so that it might reasonably be applied to today's world.

I Timothy 2: 9-15

In the church gathering concerning which Paul is speaking in this passage, it appears that for some reason there is male and female. The females are to behave in accordance with certain behavioural injunctions, including:

- (v. 9) the wearing of modest dress;
- (v. 9) not braiding the hair, wearing pearls, gold or costly attire;
- (v. 10) the doing of good deeds;
- (v. 11) learning silently (*en hēsuchia*)
- (v. 12) not being permitted to teach, or have authority over men;
- (v. 12) and keeping silent.

To justify verses 11 and 12, Paul reminds Timothy that while Adam was first to be created, Eve was the first to be deceived and therefore to sin. Woman however will be saved through bearing children (or “by the birth of a child”) if faithful, loving, holy and modest.

Three questions present themselves. First, what is meant by ‘silence’ *hēsuchia*? Secondly, why are women not to teach? And, thirdly, what difficulties are raised by an overemphasis on Eve’s transgression?

‘Silence’, it seems to me, is an overly restrictive translation of *hēsuchia* at best. Paul must be referring to an attitude or state of mind rather than the absolute silence which has caused most women to play the part of the mute in church for centuries. It is instructive to look at how other New Testament passages make use of the word *hēsuchia* or its cognates. The closest occurs in the same chapter, I Timothy 2: 2, and refers to a quiet and peaceful life—‘tranquil’ perhaps. The same form is used in II Thessalonians 3: 12, where certain persons are exhorted “in the Lord Jesus to do their work with quietness (*meta hēsuchias*) and to earn their own living”. It would seem unlikely that the brethren were being admonished to observe rigid silence in their occupations. Acts 22: 2 reads that the crowd was “the more quiet” (RSV) (*mallon pareschon hēsuchian*); while it is possible to become the more quiet, it would be difficult for a gathering to become more silent. Thus it appears that the word is strictly translated as ‘silence’ only in those passages which concern women.³⁵ Is this a valid translation here? I suspect not.

As if in support of this claim, Abbot-Smith defines *manthanetō*, the word used in verse 11 for “learning” (which the woman is to do in “silence”), as “to learn especially by inquiry”.³⁶ If a woman is to learn by inquiry, how can she do so in absolute silence? I submit that she can do so *en hēsuchia*, but not “in silence”.

Dibelius and Conzelmann notice the parallel structure of verses 11 and 12—they are opposites repeating the same idea. Concerning subordination (*authenein*) in learning (verse 11) they point out: “to be domineering would be the opposite . . . and would mean in this context that they should not ‘interrupt’ the men who speak in the church”.³⁷ It is probable that there were even particular women causing some trouble at Ephesus,³⁸ as I Timo-

³⁵ Luke 14: 4 is the exception; and the verb form is used as Jesus silences those who question him regarding his healing on the Sabbath.

³⁶ G. Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (1964 edition), p. 227.

³⁷ Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (E.T. 1972), p. 37.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

thy 5: 11-15 and II Timothy 3: 6 suggest, and that such trouble was the prime reason for Paul's advice. It seems valid to see here a respectful attitude in learning as appropriate, but not the universal silence of one sex, which may, in fact, inhibit learning.

Why does Paul say "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over men"? Again, it is helpful to consider the parallel in verses 11 and 12 noted by Dibelius and Conzelmann. Learning and subordination go together (v. 11) as teaching and domineering (or 'usurping authority'³⁹) are closely associated in the parallel statement (v. 12). Paul, we know, holds to the idea that the acknowledgment of male 'headship' in the church is important (see I Corinthians 11). Is not Paul saying that by teaching a woman would be 'usurping authority' and that this is a basic issue? The specific problem here is teaching or speaking out of turn; in I Corinthians 11 it is the removal of veils—but the issue, the failure to acknowledge male headship in the gathering, is the same. It should be noted that in the Corinthian passage just mentioned, women are praying and prophesying at the time the behavioural problem of veils arises, and they are not censured for speaking. The activities of praying and prophesying certainly required the most audible use of the female speech organs.⁴⁰ It should also be noted that in II Timothy 4: 19 Paul sends his greetings to Prisca and Aquilla, the husband and wife team who *taught* Apollos correct doctrine (Acts 18: 26).

As Paul so often does, for the purpose of giving added weight to his argument, he grounds it in an Old Testament reference. His brief reference to Adam's creation suggests his concern for order; as above, he feels male headship ought to be acknowledged. He refers then to Eve's sin, and here it is important not to add anything to the text which is not there and to call upon the surety of the large thematic truths as they have been given elsewhere in Scripture. His statement, "not Adam but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor" (v. 14), seems to imply that even in a world where redemption has been fully accomplished, women still bear *more* of the marks of sin than men. Before all readers object and say "God forbid, no one would imply such a thing!", let me illustrate with two examples—one rather more ancient and one rather disturbingly recent. Luther is said to have put forward, even with all his great theological insight, the belief that "by submission to her husband, the wife atones for Eve's transgressions . . ." ⁴¹ (What about "Redemption and the Single Girl" just for a start?!) The second example is from a more recent and quite popular commentary which advocates the silence of women on the basis of I Timothy 2: 14 because "the tragedy of the fall establishes the general truth that

³⁹ The word *authentēō* is a very strong one and used only this once in the New Testament. Its translation can carry the idea of 'lording it over another' or usurping authority. See Abbott-Smith, *op. cit.* p. 68.

⁴⁰ Marsh, P., "Corinthians", *A New Testament Commentary*, ed. G. C. D. Howley, *et. al.*, (1969), p. 407, defines prophecy as: "primarily not foretelling, but telling forth the Word of God with power to meet a specific need".

⁴¹ See J. Raymond, *art. cit.*, p. 209.

a woman is more easily deceived than a man".⁴² Such interpretations have no place as representations of Pauline thought; both are demeaning to the female sex and severely limit the doctrine of redemption for the 'ādām. The second is an empirical statement which Paul does not make and which would certainly take more than eternity for the author to document. In their suggestions that woman suffers more of the consequences of sin than man, Luther and Stibbs appear to be completely out of harmony with the principle "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female".

At the time Paul writes, the women in particular were experiencing a new freedom in Christ; they were also in all probability less educated than most men. In view of these facts, Paul's rules, if followed, would result in the best and most ordered state of affairs in the church: if not followed, men might reveal a prideful inability to be taught by a mere woman, and the women might be unable to cope with such a teaching situation without 'lording it over' the men. Even redeemed men and women exhibit sinful attitudes, and Paul recognized this. I believe I Timothy 2: 9-14 should be interpreted along these lines.⁴³

I Corinthians 11: 2-16

Another behavioural injunction is given to the Corinthian church in a passage which reveals more of Paul's thoughts on the relationship between husbands and wives⁴⁴ in the church. Paul has just commended the Corinthians for holding fast the traditions that he delivered to them or the essentials of the Faith (verse 2). Could he be commending them for holding to our "large themes and truths" before he moves on to a matter of a different order? It is fairly certain that it is not so much the actual veil that Paul is concerned about here as the implications of its removal in a public gathering.⁴⁵ Scholars are not agreed on customs concerning the head covering of women in first century Corinth. However, we do know that Corinth did have a considerable number of pagan cult priestesses and a far-flung reputation for licentious living. It is possible that in a new Christian church which offered so much in terms of spiritual and personal liberty the women embracing this new religion would have to take care

42 F. Davidson (ed.) *The New Bible Commentary* (1953), p. 1068; the author is A. M. Stibbs. The same commentary goes on to acknowledge that women can teach children and younger women (on the basis of II Timothy 1: 5, 3: 14, 15; and Titus 2: 4). If they cannot teach men because "they are easily deceived", why release them on children and the young women whose minds are so very receptive? [The revised edition of the *NBC* (1970) remains essentially unchanged. Ed.]

43 Paul closes this section (v. 15) by saying to redeemed women that they should not fear that original punishment, pain in childbirth; the evidences of Christ in their lives (faith, holiness, etc.) will see them safely through the trial.

44 "All through this passage . . . St. Paul is speaking to married women", Ellicott, C. J., (ed.), *A New Testament Commentary: Acts to Galatians* (n.d.), p. 328. Marsh concurs, *art. cit.*, p. 407, where he says, "Paul has . . . in chapter 11, married women in mind".

45 It is inconceivable that the Paul who writes so passionately to the Galatian church to tell them that they are not bound by legal restrictions and need not be circumcized to satisfy the Judaizing party would advocate women wearing a head covering unless some obvious issue were at stake.

that their public participation in religious gatherings where men were present was completely free of any practice which might be misinterpreted in cultic terms. Whatever the reason for Paul's strong feelings on the subject, which seem culturally lost on the twentieth century reader, it is obvious that to the Corinthians the lifting of the veil was deemed "disgraceful" behaviour. To underscore his point Paul equates taking this kind of liberty with being shorn.⁴⁶ Words like 'disgrace', 'dishonour', 'improper', 'degrading' are used over and again in this short passage. Removal of the veil disgraced not only the woman, but the man and God.

The basic issue here as already noted seems to be the acknowledgment of the 'headship' of the male in the church gathering (verse 3ff.), and the behavioural signal which establishes this is the wearing of a covering over the head. The problem is not one of silence, but proper dress when praying and prophesying in public (v. 5). As Paul lays out the order for the meeting, he chooses words and phrases with special care in order to make certain there is no ground for smugness on the part of the men; the order here is probably symbolic and hardly constitutes a rigid hierarchy. Here Paul says that the head of a woman is her husband (v. 3); in Ephesians he says to wives and husbands "Be subject to one another" (Eph. 5: 21). Paul says the head of *every* man is Christ (v. 3) and that the headship of man to woman is that same difficult-to-define relationship as God's being the "head" of Christ, who is also very God and one with Him. Had he meant a rigid line of authority, Paul's thought could be illustrated thus:

God → Christ → Man → Woman

But instead he maintains the fluidity and balance evidenced elsewhere in his thought which is more appropriately illustrated thus:

Christ → Male → Female: Christ ← God (verse 3).

Paul makes numerous statements about man and woman, but not one is left without its equalizer: "man was not created for woman but woman for man" (v. 9) is balanced by "man is not independent of woman" (v. 11).⁴⁷ "Man was not made from woman but woman from man" (v. 8) is complemented by "(now) man comes (literally) out of woman" (v. 12). "Man is the image and glory of God" (v. 7)⁴⁸ is clarified by "woman is the glory of man" and "all [both man and woman] things are of God" (vv. 7 and 12). Because of man's pre-eminence, Paul says in verse 10 that a woman ought to have this "power" on her head. The word for "power" is *exousia* and emphasizes the fluidity in the order; the word cannot be used to indicate her husband's authority over her, but rather an authority which is her own.⁴⁹ The reference to angels is uncertain.

Women here too, then, are to acknowledge a headship; they have a

⁴⁶ In a city like Corinth, a woman cropped or bare-faced was "exposing that part in which the indecency is manifested . . . She makes herself one with the woman shaven either as a disgrace for some scandalous offence or out of bravado".

⁴⁷ Nor woman of man.

⁴⁸ Paul is not saying woman is not made in the image of God; "here Paul using *anēr* refers only to the male, not with the intention of degrading the woman, but with the purpose of defining her relationship to man". Marsh, *art. cit.*, p. 398.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

power or authority of their own somehow associated with angelic beings (v. 10); and they are permitted to speak in the gathering.

One difficulty arises from the recognition that “all through this passage . . . St. Paul is speaking of married women”.⁵⁰ Which man does the single female acknowledge as her “head”? It would appear from I Corinthians 7: 34 that it is the Lord. Then how does this work itself out in practical terms in the twentieth century church?

I Corinthians 14 and Pauline Principles

In chapter 14 of I Corinthians Paul says, with some considerable emphasis, that women ought to be silent, asking any questions they might have to their husbands at home (verses 34f). This time the word for silence is *sigāō*, and other usages in the New Testament suggest the ‘keeping of a secret’ or ‘holding one’s peace’ and, at times, ‘silence’.⁵¹ It is apparently “shameful” or a base thing (the same word is used for “disgraceful” in I Cor. 11: 6) for a woman to speak in this particular instance. The idea is scandalous and an upset to the *order* which ought to prevail.

One of the very basic principles Paul seems to be working from in all these passages is “order” as opposed to disorder. The context in I Corinthians 14, for example, suggests chaos on every level. Verses 5ff speak of the non-edification which results if someone speaks in tongues without an interpreter. Notice verse 9, where Paul asks, “If you . . . utter speech that is unintelligible, how will any one know what is said?” In verses 26 to 31 it becomes particularly evident that there was utter confusion and a proliferation of people who wanted to speak all at once and proceeded to do so. The situation is so bad that in verse 33 the apostle exclaims: “God is not a God of confusion, but a God of peace”—certainly the very “antithesis of the chaos and commotion that currently reigned in the church at Corinth”.⁵²

In this context, Paul admonishes the women, part of the reigning confusion, to “hold their peace”. “For [women] are not permitted to speak . . .” The word translated “speak” is *lalein*, a word “too general to refer to any particular kind of speaking”.⁵³ Marsh notes that:

the suggestion that Paul is merely referring here to irregular talking, be it chattering, calling to children, soothing or more often rebuking babies, or interjecting a remark or query, cannot be ruled out . . . Few things are so conducive to confusion and disruptive of peace as the noise which emanates from the women’s section of the congregation—the sexes being segregated—in an Asian worship service.⁵⁴

The same commentator also points out that in Paul’s day “to have asked

⁵⁰ Ellicott, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

⁵¹ Abbott-Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 405, 406.

⁵² Marsh, *P. art. cit.*, p. 407.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

one's husband in church would have involved calling across the room, creating disorder".⁵⁵

Again, it must be asked whether the emphasis on silence of women has been overworked in Christendom. In all three passages we see either direct reference or allusions to the creation of man and woman which imply that there is an ordered way of behaving and being. The Old Testament begins with God bringing order out of chaos (Gen. 1: 2) as his creation unfolds in an orderly manner, plants yielding seed after their own kind, etc. It would seem then, that *order* is important. Both men and women, not yet made entirely perfect, are able to upset that order.

Another element that figures prominently in Paul's writings is the "headship", under Christ, of the male in relation to the female in the church, as in marriage, as in the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. Therefore, it appears that the female sector of the church (at least the married sector), the body of Christ, for the sake of order, should recognize male headship—meaning a woman should not be in an authoritarian position in relation to men.

Conclusion

What does this mean for today? Where comes this ambiguity between church and society of which I have spoken? The behavioural injunctions Paul makes to women were to discourage them from disgraceful, shameful, or shocking behaviour (I Cor. 11 and 14 and implied in I Tim. 2). Would it be a "disgrace" or "shameful" today for a woman to speak in an orderly church? Does teaching necessarily mean assuming authority over men? On cultural grounds, the answer to the first question would seem to be a clear "No". Concerning the second point, we have seen that Paul closely ties teaching with assuming an authoritarian-manner-attitude towards men. Today, with the cultural milieu so different and the education level of women so vastly improved, it would seem that a woman would not be "usurping authority" if she were a competent teacher and the church leadership agreed that she should teach [even men] in her field of competence. Customs which indicate "headship" will differ with the times and from culture to culture; "the principles of Scripture must be worked out within the framework of contemporary society".⁵⁶

Now, an ambiguity arises. If a woman is to acknowledge the "headship" of men in the local church, does this mean she acknowledges that same order of things *outside* the church? If the answer is affirmative, what are the implications of female supervisors having male employees, or speaking out on societal issues which affect both sexes? If negative, is there not a kind of schizophrenic tension for the woman who works or is socially active in the fact that she must relate to men in one way at church and another way at the office or in the council meeting?

The beginning of an answer to this tension can perhaps be glimpsed by observing that the order set out in Pauline teaching concerns the relation-

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

ship of man-woman to God, and that men and women in society at large do not necessarily relate to God in the same way. This still leaves a certain tension, but perhaps it can be relieved a little further by recalling the difference in constitution and purpose of the church as an institution as opposed to secular institutions. The 'church' is the only institution which comes to mind, which by definition involves the whole family and relates them as they are—man, woman, boy, girl, and 'family'—to God in worship, fellowship, teaching, prayer and outreach. It is a body divinely constituted and made up of members who relate to Christ as "neither male nor female" but who are relating to each other in such a 'personal' institution as the 'body of Christ' in their maleness and femaleness. In contrast, twentieth-century institutions are constituted for very different purposes and often are the very antithesis of the 'personal'.⁵⁷ A female supervisor and her male salesman are not relating to one another in their maleness and femaleness, but simply as supervisor and salesman—very cogs in what should be, according to its purpose and function, a sexless machine.⁵⁸ Maleness and femaleness is not part of the definition of the twentieth-century bureaucracy, and a female supervisor's authority over men is that of a supervisor, not a woman. She can wield it, usurp it, domineer, as a man can; but any such behaviour would be wrong.

I think one of the beautiful aspects of the church is its maleness and femaleness, which should be reflected and preserved in the institution itself. Let us make sure that its manifestations give glory to God and are appropriate to what it means to be a male or a female today. This means that the specific manifestations will have to be defined and redefined in light of the potentials of both men and women *as they are now and in light of biblical principles* such as those we have examined together. I believe new ground needs to be broken or the emerging woman of today who is discovering new things about herself will not find a place suitable for her and the church will be poorer for it.

57 A glance at a work such as Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society* (E.T. 1964) should be sufficient to convince anyone who has not experienced such impersonality of its ubiquity.

58 I say, "should be", in the sense that discrimination in hiring or promoting on the basis of sex is wrong.

WOMEN IN ANCIENT ISRAEL

DANA S. FRASER

At the present time, both Christians and non-Christians have a 'stake' in the biblical view of women. The temptation for eisegesis is strong for both in this fiery subject of woman and her value. This can be partially overcome by attempting to understand the Scriptures in the light of their original setting. In the Scriptures, ancient Israel claims to be unique in the world of her time, and it is at this uniqueness we must look if we are to really understand the special revelation that comes to us through God's dealing with her. The New Testament claims for Christians a similar uniqueness. We are connected to ancient Israel by a mutual election as God's people. Perhaps we can look again at the implications of that elected relationship for some new light on the subject of woman and her value within God's plan.

Israel's claim to uniqueness rests on her religion in which she is the covenant people of the one Creator, God, not primarily on legal or cultural distinctions, although these are present. Israel is unique, too, in her understanding of creation, wherein both the natural world and man are the special works of a Creator. In both creation and covenant, woman plays an important role.

The specific creative attention given to humanity is unique to the Genesis account, but the central role of woman here is especially unique in ancient Near Eastern literature. Here, unlike other A.N.E. creation epics, she is creation's crown and a morally responsible human being. Her immediate relationship with the man is one of unity. He receives her with joy:

Now this, at last-/bone from my bones/flesh from my
flesh/this shall be called woman/for from man was this
taken. (Gen. 2: 23)

The words that follow this response emphasize the unity of man and woman in creation as they link marriage with the creation event. Having originally been one and alone, man is made two. Prior to the Fall, this duo does not mean division. But even subsequent to the Fall, in marriage man in some sense again becomes one. (See Gen. 2: 24) John A. Bailey in an article contrasting the Genesis account with the Gilgamesh Epic emphasizes the real uniqueness of the biblical view of woman in creation:

Whereas the man's creation is described in one verse (7), the woman's creation (v. 22) comes with man's response to it (vs. 23), as the climax of vss. 18-23, and indeed of the whole account of creation; she is the crown of creation. This is all the more extraordinary when one realizes that this is the only account of the creation of woman as such in A.N.E. literature.¹

¹ John A. Bailey, "Initiation and the Primal Woman", *J.Bib.Lit.* 89 1970, p. 148

Eve is created with independent choice. Prior to the Fall she doesn't function in an inferior position to her husband, quite the contrary. Why does this change when she sins? In sinning she covets the authority of God, and presumes to grasp it. The Serpent tells her that they will "be like God . . ." (or gods). It is therefore appropriate that the curse Eve incurs strikes directly at her position of authority: "You shall be eager for your husband and he shall be your master" (Gen. 3: 16) Yet, even subsequent to the Fall, she retains a position of honour as mother of humanity. It is after the Fall that Adam names her: "The man called his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all who live". (Gen. 3: 20)

Both man and woman are affected by her choice, and the roles that they are to live are significantly altered as a result of her sin. Not only will Eve be mastered by her husband, but she will endure pain in her unique role as mother. So, even in her role of special value, she will feel sin's consequences. Her creation purpose as partner for man will suffer division, and she will know pain. Adam will know trouble and resistance from the land. Having been, prior to this, God's appointed master of the garden, he loses his natural mastery of the earth and must in sweat and work re-establish it in order to live. The substance of the curse on Adam and Eve has to do with children and land (the very substance of life). The substance of the promise and covenant which come later to Abraham and then Israel also have to do with children and land. Both of these in Genesis 3 become the substance of sin's distortion of life. But in Promise and Covenant, both will become again the substance of renewed life. The pain and the work will continue, but if they are obedient to Yahweh, children and land will be Israel's blessings in a special way. In obedience the curse will be changed to blessing, though still considerably altered from the Edenic situation. The promise will be fulfilled in many children, i.e. nations, and consummated as they inherit the land of promise. Creation and covenant are consistent, and woman plays a vital role in each.

The covenant with Israel is based on a promise God makes to Abraham. That promise is a promise first of all of a family. God says to him: "I will make you a great nation". To do this, God will work through the family as established in creation. Not only Abraham, but Sarah, his wife, receives God's promise. God changes Abraham's name in relation to the giving of the promise. He also changes Sarah's name, and it is her child that becomes the child of the promise. (See Gen. 17: 15-17)

Motherhood for Sarah is a blessing both culturally and within the context of covenant. Culturally high value is placed on children throughout the A.N.E. at this time. Within the covenant relationship, to participate in the fulfilment of promise is also to be a recipient of that promise. For both man and woman children are an important source of personal value. Prior to the birth of Ishmael, Abraham laments to God, "I have no standing among men . . . thou hast given me no children". For Abraham this lament is also on two levels, cultural and covenantal. Covenantally it is exclusion from the promise. Besides ritual defilement, is this perhaps implicit in one of the Deuteronomic laws?

No man whose testicles have been crushed or whose organ has been severed shall become a member of the assembly of the Lord. (Deut. 23: 1)

Many times in the Old Testament, a faithful or a chosen woman is singled out for God's blessing. She is granted a child. As in the cases of Hannah, Leah, or Naomi, God is responsive to a woman's prayers, and the granting of a son is a special blessing. For the woman as for the man, it is through the son that a person continues to have a part in the growing family of Israel. Barrenness is elimination from one's part in the promise. It is removal from the family of Israel. The promise of blessing in the new land, given in Exodus 23: 25f, includes a promise against both miscarriage and barrenness:

None shall miscarry or be barren in your land. I will grant you full span of life. (Ex. 23: 26)

The horrible antithesis to this blessing and fruitfulness is the grotesque picture of the situation that Israel can expect if she disobeys God. Then not only will she experience barrenness, but the people of Israel will devour their own children. Not only does sin's curse here become painfully explicit in the parent's devouring of the children, but it involves the complete breakdown of the 'family' sense of Israel. It is the utter destruction of Israel, present and future, forever. The Promise is dead:

Then you will eat your own children, the flesh of your sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, because of the dire straits to which you will be reduced when your enemy besieges you. The pampered, delicate man will not share with his brother, or the wife of his bosom, or his own remaining children, of the meat which he is eating, the flesh of his own children. He is left with nothing else because of the dire straits to which you will be reduced when your enemy besieges you within your cities. The pampered, delicate woman, the woman who has never even tried to put a foot to the ground, so delicate and pampered she is, will not share with her own husband or her sons or her daughter the afterbirth which she expels, or any boy or girl that she may bear. She will herself eat them secretly in her extreme want, because of the dire straits to which you will be reduced when your enemy besieges you within your cities. (Deut. 28: 53-57; NEB).

To be barren is to be cursed or punished. Such is the case with Michal, David's wife. In contrast, a blessed woman, Hannah, in answer to her prayer receives a son who not only insures her participation in the continuing Israel, but as a special blessing becomes particularly important to Israel. So it is with Naomi, whose grandson is the grandfather of David, the great king. (Ruth 4: 15-17)

While important to the fulfilment of promise, women are subordinate to men, not by creation, but by sin. Her subordination, particularly in

a society so vulnerable to disease and natural disaster, on a physical level is secured by the simultaneous curses that she will be mastered by her husband and she will have pain in childbirth. Her physical vulnerability insures her subordination. Emil Brunner, commenting on motherhood and its natural consequences, links this vulnerability with societal subordination:

The woman, through her natural calling as wife and mother carries a far heavier burden than the man does, as husband and father. The growth of the new human being forms part of the life of the woman far more than it forms part of the life of the man. The wife must give her heart's blood to the new being: she must bear it, she must bring it into the world, not only with pain, but with danger to life itself, and she must nourish at her own breasts that which she has brought into the world. By this natural determination she is far more closely connected with the natural process of life, impregnated with it, restricted but also preserved by it. Far less than her husband can she order her own life as she would like; but this is not her husband's doing; it is simply due to the fact of her motherhood. This difference penetrates into the very depths of her nature.²

The promise of the land as well as the promise of children is relevant to the subject of woman and her place within Israel. Barrenness and fruitfulness are results of either curse or blessing and each extends vertically beyond the individual to his descendants as well as horizontally to his own possessions. In terms of personal identity there is not a clear distinction made between a man, his possessions, his wife, his animals. Not only is a woman's identity meshed with her place as wife and mother, but a man's identity, too, is meshed with his place as husband and father and all that 'belongs' to him. When he experiences blessing and cursing it is in relation to these 'belongings'. And that blessing and cursing relates to life in the land:

A blessing on you in the city, a blessing on you in the country./ A blessing on the fruit of your body, the fruit of your land and of your cattle,/ the offspring of your herds and of your lambing Flocks. (Deut. 28: 3f, NEB)

This interrelatedness of personal identity and 'belongings' may help us to understand the sense in which the woman is classified among a man's 'belongings' in the decalogue, (Ex. 20: 17). The listing of the wife along with an ox says something quite different to us. It carries the connotations of 'possession' with all the overtones of callous misuse. This isn't the meaning here. While there most certainly is cruel misuse of women in Israel, this is never biblically sanctioned. In Israel even a foreign slave with whom an Israelite man has intercourse becomes a part of the circle of familial care. She can no longer be sold as a slave, and if the man does

2 Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, Philadelphia, Westminster, 1964, pp. 352-3

not want her as part of his family, she must be given her freedom, (Deut. 21: 10-14). In a sense, every person within the boundaries of Israel is to be included in the circle of familial care. The Deuteronomic laws are full of this concern.

Closely connected with the land of promise is the demand for holiness. God's demand for holiness having to do with sexual cleanness, among other things, makes a mighty difference for women in Israel. Sexuality in creation is the means for unity between man and woman and fulfilment of God's promise in children. And, the good use of sexuality in the covenant relationship is important to receiving and keeping the land. Leviticus 18: 23-25 makes the connection between sexual cleanness and the land. As in Eden, the land is responsive to them as they obey God. The land of promise, like Eden will cast them out if they sin:

You shall not have sexual intercourse with a man as with a woman; that is an abomination. You shall not have sexual intercourse with any beast to make yourself unclean with it, nor shall a woman submit herself to intercourse with a beast; that is a violation of nature. You shall not make yourselves unclean in any of these ways; for in these ways the heathen, whom I am driving out before you, made themselves unclean. This is how the land became unclean, and I punished it for its iniquity so that it spewed out its inhabitants (Lev. 18: 22-25).

There are indeed times of idolatry when Israel practices these things, but she is punished. Sexual defilement is a reproach to God as Creator because it corrupts His gift for unity, procreation and promise. It is against Israelite law to exploit the woman as prostitute, in contrast to Israel's neighbours. The fertility rites of other A.N.E. nations are connected with their understanding of the gods and creation. In Israel the concept of holiness and sexual cleanness is connected also with her understanding of God and creation. In other areas of the A.N.E. a father often gives his daughter as a sacred prostitute. In Israel it is an abomination to God on two levels: that she be prostituted in religious worship and that a father should make his own daughter a prostitute. Both are perversions of God's creation and man's part in Promise and Covenant.

While it is generally true that the man in Israel has more freedom than the woman in choosing a spouse (this is not always the case, i.e. Rebekka is chosen for Isaac), the accusation that he is free to use women as he pleases is not quite true. The women with whom he has intercourse are by law to be members of his household, and by definition he cares for them. Sexual promiscuity is never a good thing in Israel, and as we see here, it is associated with defilement of the land of promise. In the rest of the A.N.E. sexual behaviour both in marriage and in sacred prostitution is regulated, but without the connotation of holiness.

In comparing Israel with the rest of the A.N.E., one often finds laws that favour women more than those in Israel. Some quite clearly recognize her as a more distinct person, and some demonstrate greater concern for

her personal welfare. The Lipit-Ishtar Law Code and the Code of Hammurabi, both allow the woman to inherit along with her brothers.³ In Israel the woman can only inherit if there are no male heirs (Num. 27: 6-8). This may in part be explained by the concept of the 'family of Israel' in which she is not seen in distinctly individual terms, and where the family line is continued through the male. Unlike Israel, in the Laws of Eshnunna a man cannot divorce a wife who has given him children.⁴ Not only does the divorce law in Israel not protect the mother, it does not include material provision for her if she is divorced by her husband. The Code of Hammurabi does.⁵ This apparent lack of concern for the woman is a problem. Perhaps it finds partial explanation in a hesitation to regulate a practice God considers wrong; yet divorce is regulated here and to the advantage of the man. The grounds for divorce are not limited and explicit as they are in other codes. It is possible that the laws are incomplete here and that other stipulations exist that are not recorded. The book of Malachi is much later than the Torah, of course, but it does have an interesting section on God's attitude toward divorce (See Mal. 2: 9, 14f). Perhaps it is also significant that the divorce law is the law that Jesus changed.

Another difference in the laws of the A.N.E. generally and those of Israel is that elsewhere a woman could operate a business. There are no laws regulating such practice in Israel.

Dr. Jewett, in his paper on man and woman, views the levirate law as a significant example of the lack of freedom of the Israelite woman:

If the husband of a woman died and had no son, his brother was to take her as his wife and raise up seed to his brother. Though the man could refuse such Levirate marriage, the woman could not (Deut. 25: 5-10). This freedom of refusal on the man's side worked favourably for the Moabitess Ruth who thereby became the wife of the devout and affluent Boaz (Ruth 4: 1-12). But this happy turn does not alter the fact that the law did not consider the woman to have any freedom of choice in the matter, whereas Christian doctrine says that self-determination is the essence of the divine image, and that the woman shares equally with the man in this endowment.⁶

Perhaps Dr. Jewett overstates his case here. Does this one instance give him sufficient grounds for setting up this dichotomy of value between the Old and New Testaments; or give us a basis for saying that the O.T. views woman as less than human; or prove that the kind of freedom of choice that the N.T. talks about is in any way analagous to the freedom he finds missing in the levirate law? Let us remember that it is the New

³ J. B. Pritchard (ed.) *Ancient Near Eastern Texts relating to the Old Testament*³ Princeton 1969, p. 160b, § 24; p. 174b §§ 179-181.

⁴ ANET, p. 163b, § 59.

⁵ ANET, p. 172a, §§ 137f.

⁶ Dr. Jewett, Course Outline for Systematic Theology, (Fuller Seminary): The Doctrine of Man: The Divine Image, Man as Male and Female.

Testament that encourages slaves to submit to their masters. In the passage he cites from Deut. 25, the law is pictured as establishing the rights of the woman, as well as those of the dead man, for the perpetuation of the name. It is she, when he refuses, who has the right to take her next-of-kin to the elders (Deut. 25: 7-10). One must also remember that in this case, the dead man's name is her name as well. Also, in the case Dr. Jewett refers to, the marriage and the birth of the child by levirate marriage are seen as a special blessing to another woman besides Ruth, Naomi. Her name continues in Israel.

One last thing that I would like to discuss is the Bible's empathy for women in difficult circumstances. Sometimes it is only the inclusion of a small detail that reveals the pathos of her difficulty. One excellent example is the raping of Tamar, David's daughter, by her brother. The record of their dialogue shows the injustice and painfulness of his action toward her:

. . . he caught hold of her and said, 'Come to bed with me, sister'. But she answered, 'No, brother, do not dishonour me, we do not do such things in Israel; do not behave like a beast. Where could I go and hide my disgrace?—and you would sink as low as any beast in Israel. Why not speak to the king for me? He will not refuse you leave to marry me'. He would not listen, but overpowered her and raped her.

Then Amnon was filled with utter hatred for her; his hatred was stronger than the love he had felt, and he said to her, 'Get up and go'. She answered, 'No. It is wicked to send me away. This is harder to bear than all you have done to me'. He would not listen to her, but summoned the boy who had attended him and said, 'Get rid of this woman, put her out, and bolt the door after her'. She had on a long, sleeved robe, the usual dress of unmarried princesses; and the boy turned her out and bolted the door. Tamar threw ashes over her head, rent the long, sleeved robe that she was wearing, put her hands on her head and went away, sobbing as she went. (2 S. 13: 11-19, NEB).

The last statement in v. 20 is very powerful, indeed: "So Tamar remained in her brother Absalom's house, desolate".

Another record of the Bible's sensitivity is that of the Shunammite woman in II Kings who helps Elisha and who receives a child as God's blessing in return. Later the child dies and the mother comes seeking Elisha. Both the grief and the persistence of a mother in pain and fear are recorded:

. . . When she reached the man of God on the hill, she clutched his feet. Gehazi came forward to push her away, but the man of God said, 'Let her alone; she is in great distress, and the LORD has concealed it from me and not told me'. 'My Lord', she said, 'did I ask for a son? Did

I not beg you not to raise my hopes and then dash them?' Then he turned to Gehazi: 'Hitch up your cloak; take my staff with you and run. If you meet anyone on the way, do not stop to greet him; if anyone greets you, do not answer him. Lay my staff on the boy's face'. But the mother cried, 'As the LORD lives, your life upon it, I will not leave you'. So he got up and followed her . . .

Elisha got up and walked once up and down the room; then, getting on the bed again, he pressed upon him and breathed into him seven times; and the boy opened his eyes. The prophet summoned Gehazi and said, 'Call this Shunammite woman'. She answered his call and the prophet said, 'Take your child'. She came in and fell prostrate before him. Then she took up her son and went out. (2 Kings 4: 27-30, 35-37, NEB).

The Old Testament often recognizes wisdom in the mouth of a woman. David is prevented from a foolish killing of Nabal by the wise words and intercession of Abigail (IS. 25). David not only does not kill Nabal, but he recognizes his debt to Abigail for preventing him, and he expresses his gratefulness to her. Another similar instance is the intervention of the wise woman in the pursuit by Joab of Sheba son of Bichri. (2 S. 20: 16-22). She saves her village from Joab by convincing him to wait while she convinces the people to kill the guilty one: ". . . her wisdom won over the assembled people, and they cut off Sheba's head and threw it to Joab". The wisdom and timely effectiveness of both Deborah and Huldah are well known.

God in the O.T. is responsive to the prayers of women. Hannah in great grief prays to the Lord. A man, Eli the priest, ridicules her, thinking her drunk, but God hears her and responds. Samuel is born and she gives him back to the Lord. A tiny detail is inserted in the text that shows a mother's love and sacrifice; otherwise this detail really has no 'practical' value:

Every year the woman made him a little cloak and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice. (IS. 2: 19).

Leah, the unloved wife of Jacob, is given children by God in compensation for her lack of her husband's love:

When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he granted her a child; but Rachel was childless. (Gen. 29: 31).

The Scripture records the detail of Leah's constant hope that with the birth of each new child she would win her husband's love. Again we see the pathos of her situation.

Throughout the Bible, women are not in the forefront, but they are important as persons within the covenant, and the Scriptures never sanction their exploitation. On the contrary, evil done to them is never covered in the telling.

There seems to have been a decline in the position of women during the post-Old Testament period. This shows up in the rabbinic writing, as well as in the prevention of women from full status as worshippers in Herod's temple. This decline seems to happen along with the decline in Israel's religious vitality. As God's covenant people, she has broken the covenant, lost the land, been exiled, and returned. After the last destruction of the temple, her vitality as the vehicle of God's revelation disappears, and the value of women as important members of the covenant community is forgotten. We hear rabbinical prayers thanking God one is not born a woman.

We Christians, like the Israelites of the Old Testament, are God's covenant people. How is the substance of the New Covenant different from the Old? Perhaps we can look again at the substance of this New Covenant that we have in Christ in order to discern the value we all have as persons within the covenant community. Paul tells us that we are all recipients of the Promise. To be recipients of God's promise now, as in the Old Testament, is always more than a passive thing. It is to be able to make active creative contribution to the lives of others. Are we perhaps guilty of limiting the contributions we allow women in our body to make? Are we so sure that we really understand what these contributions can be? We have all been given gifts to contribute to the building up of the body, but do we fully utilize these? Our vitality as a body that is responsive to the Lord is reflected in the value we give to all our members. Do we really count all of our members, both men and women, as equally valuable? What are the implications of the New Covenant in terms of practical contributions? We Christians affirm the human family as divinely instituted, and rightly; but the New Covenant extends beyond the human family of father, mother, and children. We are reminded by Paul that membership in the Christian Family is not a matter of the flesh. In the Old Covenant, woman had unique value as a contributing member of Israel in her role as mother. Many in our communities are single women. Just where does the single woman fit as a creatively contributing member of the Christian 'Family'? Let us look again at the New Covenant, and then at the needs and perhaps silent frustrations of the women in our Family. Both Abraham and Sarah received God's Promise, and both participated in its fulfilment.

THE LITERATURE OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

SHARON GALLAGHER

Beginnings

Although there have been isolated 'liberated' women throughout the centuries, the first organized movement for women in North America was founded in 1848. Women who were involved in the Abolition movement logically extended their arguments for human equality to include themselves.

The movement began as one of broadly-based feminism, but eventually focused on suffrage. A book worth reading on this era is *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*, edited by Miriam Schneir (1972). Most leaders of the early Feminist Movement were Christians, some of them Quaker preachers, and based their arguments on Scripture. This book gives short glimpses into the lives and writings of some fascinating women and may lead one to read more of the authors represented.

When American women won the right to vote in 1920, the women's issue seemed dead and the movement set into decline. Kate Millet has called the period from 1930-1960 the counter-revolution. Then, in 1953, Simone de Beauvoir wrote a book called *The Second Sex*. In her wrestling with freedom both as an existentialist philosopher and as a woman, she encountered some of the problems which she went on to develop in the book. The work was acclaimed and read as a philosophic statement. Ms. de Beauvoir did not attempt to start any kind of movement, however, and only recently attached herself to the Women's Movement in France.

A major breakthrough for the feminist cause came with the publication in 1963 of Betty Frieden's sociology inquiry entitled *The Feminine Mystique*. This work was based on a survey Frieden took of her fellow graduates (of the class of '42) of Smith College, a prestigious women's university in Massachusetts.

During the 1940's women had been forced into the work world because of the war; but when the men came back, equality having been established, there had to be a rationale for women to return to their kitchens. So the culture produced an image of the happy housewife heroine—to be truly feminine meant to be bearing children and baking cookies. Women's magazines were inundated with stories about frustrated career women, discovering real happiness when they gave up their unnatural functions and married the boy next door.

Yet, in 1960 when *Redbook* magazine asked for a response to an article titled, "Why Young Mothers Feel Trapped", the editors were shocked to receive 24,000 replies. There was a disparity between the real and the societal ideal. Frieden discovered that the guilt she felt at wanting to do more than stay at home was shared. So she came to make the revolutionary statement: "I want something more than my children and my home".

Ms. Frieden's practical treatise set off a chain of women's books and groups, with Frieden herself heading the political National Organization of Woman. Women suddenly became a topic of vital concern.

Of the books that followed, two of the most influential were Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*. Both books are based on literature and offer a critique on the state of the sexes. Both of them offer some kind of revolution as the answer, with Greer being more specifically Marxist.

Ms. Greer, who lectured in English at Warwick University, uses bits of literature to make her points. Ms. Millet analyzed the works of four male authors, three of whom she attacks as men who set about to establish their own power through sexual politics. The fourth, Jean Genet, a homosexual, she uses as an example of the feminine/masculine roles as caricatured by a male homosexual society.

The Problem of Goals

A fifth book which seems to be gaining influence in this realm is Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex*. Although the Feminist Movement, for the most part, bases itself on revolutionary theory, this author is more explicitly dialectical in her analysis than the previously mentioned authors. Ms. Firestone feels that politics began with the male/female distinction. By defining women as those people who have the burden of bearing children she proposes that the solution to sexual inequality will be test-tube babies.

When secular feminists, who at times offer brilliant critiques of our societal sex roles, reach the point of attempting to suggest solutions, they suddenly sound incredibly naive. Ms. Firestone goes the furthest toward discussing goals and so ends her book on a more patently absurd note. She recognizes that the thought of artificial reproduction is frightening to some people because:

. . . in the hands of our current scientists (few of whom are female or even feminist) any attempted use of technology to free anybody is suspect. But we are speculating about post-revolutionary systems, and for the purposes of our discussion we shall assume flexibility and good intentions in those working out the change.

In her plan for the future, Firestone sees, as a final step, communistic anarchy leading to achievement of Cosmic Consciousness.

Beauvoir's Analysis

Simone de Beauvoir's analysis, *The Second Sex*, which has been the philosophical basis for the chain of secular feminist thought, is probably the most serious and intellectually honest treatment. To Ms. de Beauvoir, the problem is that man sees himself as Subject and woman as Other, or the Second Sex. When defined in this way, woman is cheated of her right to personhood. Beauvoir sees the problem as centering in the man-

woman relationship and the solution as lying in their working together toward being fully human. This is in contrast to feminists like Jill Johnson who, in her book, *Lesbian Nation*, advocates separatism and possible Amazon rule.

Ms. de Beauvoir denounces Christianity for encouraging women's subjugation. Yet whenever she begins to frame a solution she talks about Christian theory. In discussing the possibility of marriage (she has never married Sartre, although they have spent a lifetime together and he has apparently wanted them to marry), she quotes Kierkegaard as saying that marriage is something so mysterious that it can be explained only by divine action. In quoting Kierkegaard at length, she seems to say that if miracles were possible, there could be marriage, or, if marriage were possible, there would have to be a miraculous dimension.

Although Ms. de Bouvoir puts down attempts at individual salvation, she admires St. Theresa.

In a single process [St. Theresa] seeks to be united with God and lives out this union in her body; she is not the slave of her nerves and her hormones: one must admire rather, the intensity of a faith that penetrated to the most intimate regions of her flesh. The truth is, as she herself understood, that the value of a mystical experience is measured not according to the way in which it is subjectively felt, but according to its objective influence.

At this point, Ms. de Beauvoir sounds like St. James: "Faith without works is dead", and "whoever says he loves God and hates his sister is a liar"—which leads one to wonder what her position would be if the truth of the Gospel had been fleshed out before her, if Christians around her had granted women the dignity due a creature made in the image of God.

Mailer's Backlash

At this point it might be good to look at one of the best "back-lash" books on the women's movement. In his book, *The Prisoner of Sex*, Norman Mailer sees fit to take on the women and their arguments. Mailer, who feels threatened by the attempt to deny or eradicate sexual differences, is forced to argue spiritually for that difference. It is the only way to combat the truth in the cries of Millet, *et al.* that "We have been dehumanized. We must radically change the existing order of things".

Mailer states,

It might be more natural to believe that God has established man and woman in some asymmetry of forces which was the life of the aesthetic . . . Yes, certainly that must be in the conception of the human project if Man [with Woman] loomed large in the works of the Lord.

So Mailer argues, if woman (or man) is self-sufficient, why did God make two sexes?

In reacting to statements by women like Ti-Grace Atkinson, who asserts that women are men who bear the burden of the reproductive process, Mailer says:

For [intercourse] either had a meaning which went to the root of existence or it did not; sex, finally, could not possess reasonable funds of meaning the way food does . . . Yet try to decide there is design in the universe, that humans embody a particular Intent, assume just once there is some kind of destiny intended—at the least! intended for us, and therefore human beings are not absurd, not totally absurd, assume some Idea . . . is in operation and then sex cannot comfortably prove absurd.

Mailer does not claim to be a Christian; his imagery and language is bawdy. And yet his thinking is on the razor's edge and has led him to use words often missing from secular vocabulary, words like "fornication" and "lust". In using this language he affirms, with the Christian, that everything is not in one category of "making love".

Conclusion

The movement whose roots in the earlier Feminist Movement were radically Christian, was reborn under Marxist auspices and became unable on that basis to answer the questions it raises.

In Christianity there is a rationale for equality and difference between sexes. The materialists, on the other hand, are trying to eradicate physical differences in order to justify changes, because the physical, for them, is all there is.

Within the Christian faith we can fight for truth and freedom and yet love the oppressor. In the secular Liberation Movement the male becomes "The Enemy". And when he is defined as such it becomes impossible to sleep with him and so women become political lesbians, that is, lesbianism becomes a political imperative rather than a natural inclination. This is not to say all radical feminists are 'gay'. Many women are trying to work out the type of marriage described in George and Nena O'Neill's *Open Marriage*. But a good many of the leaders and political group members are moving toward "the lesbian nation" in a gesture of total contempt for the male system.

In Christ we can relate to our sisters in love without making love, without its being sexual. We have a basis, as part of God's family, for caring for each other.

In Christ we not only have a basis for negating cultural stereotypes of woman's role, but we have positive patterns of what woman should be and can be (e.g. Deborah, the woman of Proverbs 31, etc.). And we have the power to move toward what we would be.

The secular Feminist writers break down when it comes to goals, or a positive statement on what is to be achieved. They have no historical model, except for a fantasy construct of "Amazon Society", and are embarrassed by the Marxist historical record—the failure of the feminist cause in the Soviet Union and Cuba.

As Christians we have a history that at times denies the radicality set forth by Jesus and Paul ("in Christ there is neither male nor female" Gal. 3: 28). But where pagan philosophies have crept into Christianity we have fallen short of Christ's radical feminism.

It is time, now, when women and men are floundering with their sex roles, often reacting negatively against one another in their baseless search for identity, for followers of Christ to reaffirm what it means to be liberated men and women of God, in our way of thinking and in our daily interactions with one another.

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