

**Symposium  
on the  
Role of Women  
in the  
Church**

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### Guide to Transliteration

The consonants of biblical Hebrew and Aramaic words or phrases are transliterated and printed in italics as follows:

#### Hebrew Alphabet

א = ' <i>a</i>	ד = <i>d</i>	י = <i>y</i>	ס = <i>s</i>	ר = <i>r</i>
ב = <i>b</i>	ה = <i>h</i>	כ = <i>k</i>	ע = ' <i>e</i>	ש = <i>ś</i>
ב = <i>b</i>	ו = <i>w</i>	כ = <i>k</i>	פ = <i>p</i>	ש = <i>ś</i>
ג = <i>g</i>	ז = <i>z</i>	ל = <i>l</i>	צ = <i>ṣ</i>	ת = <i>t</i>
ג = <i>g</i>	ח = <i>ḥ</i>	מ = <i>m</i>	צ = <i>ṣ</i>	ת = <i>t</i>
ד = <i>d</i>	ט = <i>ṭ</i>	נ = <i>n</i>	ק = <i>q</i>	

#### Greek Alphabet

α = <i>a</i>	ζ = <i>z</i>	λ = <i>l</i>	π = <i>p</i>	φ = <i>ph</i>
β = <i>b</i>	η = <i>ē</i>	μ = <i>m</i>	ρ = <i>r</i>	χ = <i>ch</i>
γ = <i>g</i>	θ = <i>th</i>	ν = <i>n</i>	σ,ς = <i>s</i>	ψ = <i>ps</i>
δ = <i>d</i>	ι = <i>i</i>	ξ = <i>x</i>	τ = <i>t</i>	ω = <i>ō</i>
ε = <i>e</i>	κ = <i>k</i>	ο = <i>o</i>	υ = <i>y</i>	‘ = <i>h</i>

# THE ROLES OF WOMEN

Gordon M. Hyde

## Introduction and Overview

The Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has been involved since 1972 with committees, councils, and research papers on the roles of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At times they were encouraged to believe that the papers written on the subject could be published for the benefit of concerned individuals within the church and the information of similar persons outside the membership of the church.\*

Until the present time there have been various factors which have led the administrative leadership of the church to postpone such publication. The general reason given for the reluctance to publish was the fear that certain countries in the world family of Adventist churches would be embarrassed, if not offended, by actions that could result in placing women in leadership roles in the church, the home, the school, or the family.

Persons or organizations hearing of the existence of these papers could purchase copies from the Biblical Research office. Some copies have been distributed under these terms. Now the BRI's Administrative Committee has voted to publish this set of papers. The following provides an overview of them so that the reader may better anticipate their contents.

One of the issues receiving the attention of Christian churches in the past fifteen years has been the roles that the women of these churches can best fulfill. This subject is of particular concern to those women who feel that they have been, or are, prevented from carrying out certain roles in the church, for which they believe they have a competency or a potential capacity. Others share their concern.

It is of interest also to those—both men and women—who are aroused by present-day agitation in society for women to be freely admitted to those areas from which custom and tradition have hitherto excluded them. Such persons want to know whether and how the church is affected by, and is relating to, this general movement in society—how it is treating its women. For many, the church's profession of Christ is judged on this issue.

It is also of interest to those in the church—both the leadership and the general membership—who have a genuine interest in all those elements making up the total church, and who sincerely desire and urge that such shall have every opportunity to contribute their full potential to the completion of the church's mission in the world. Discerning leaders who believe in the NT concept of the "priesthood of all believers" have been asking themselves if they have adequately sensed and thoughtfully related to the fact that at least 60 percent of those "believers" are women—and in many local and smaller congregations they may make up 75 to 90 percent of the membership.<sup>1</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always seen itself as a reforming body, one that is interested in the fullest potential of men and women, boys and girls, everywhere. It has had a worldwide vision that has courageously leaped many barriers to the communication of the gospel message. It is encouraged by its outreach to more races, tribes, and languages than possibly any other single Protestant body in the world.

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\*Although this set of papers was basically completed in 1975, it is felt that their publication has value for the church living in the eighties.

<sup>1</sup>See LaVonne Neff, "The Role of Women in American Protestantism, 1975" (chap. 9 in this volume).



It has traditionally carried a great burden for the health of the family as an institution—the foundation unit of society and the church. This is reflected in its system of weekly Sabbath Schools, and its complete system of day schools (many K-12) and other aspects of its educational outreach. Those women who have opportunity for marriage, home, and family, and desire its joys and responsibilities, have always been urged by Adventists to consider that sphere the most sacred and influential that they could occupy.<sup>2</sup>

Some demographic factors of today, however, challenge the church to reassess the family situation and reconsider the roles which the women of the church might fulfill. For example, within the membership of the Adventist Church—for a number of reasons—outnumbering of men by women in the general population is particularly marked. Unfortunately, no available demographic studies provide statistics; but a fair estimate might be, as mentioned above, that there could be twice as many women as men in the church. The disproportion could be even more marked away from the large denominational centers.<sup>3</sup>

Marriage and family within their own faith are therefore not available to thousands of Adventist women. This fact needs to be considered by those who note that the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy both stress woman's calling in the home and family—that there she is queen. One has neither to deny nor diminish the sacredness of the role of wife and mother when admitting the plain, undeniable fact that this particular calling is available to only a limited proportion of Adventist women, especially in some countries, and more particularly in some areas of those countries.<sup>4</sup>

It is a fact, also, in the industrialized nations at least, that women complete their family role much earlier in life than ever before, and yet they are living longer than ever before—outliving men in general almost everywhere. So it is not uncommon today—with the diminishing number of children whom parents find that they can adequately support and educate—for the wife to have 20 to 30 years between the close of her child-rearing responsibilities and her years of complete retirement. And for the most conscientious, it is a serious and significant issue as to what they shall do with these afternoon and evening years of life. There is so much that they could and would like to do in the church.<sup>5</sup>

It is likewise a fact today that wage scales virtually assume that the wives in families will be wage earners in addition to the husbands. The relentless pressures of high interest rates and other economic factors give little prospect of relief in the foreseeable future to the need for wives to work, if a reasonable standard of living is to be maintained.

Thus the church of today should take measure of the fact that women in general are thinking more and more in terms of a career, with marriage and family as a possible element or interlude in that career. The church may need to be more aware of this fact and consider how best to use this new situation to the better fulfillment of the church's urgent mission.

There may be some Adventist women caught up in the strong feelings of certain segments of the women's liberation movement in some countries (and again there are no valid studies to cite), but it does not *seem* as though the majority are directly involved or more than mildly concerned from a personal point of view. This may not be as true for those under 30, and that could be a factor in the near future.

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<sup>2</sup>See Betty Stirling, "Society, Women, and the Church;" 3T 483; WM 158 (chap. 10 in this volume).

<sup>3</sup>See E. Marcella Anderson, "The Roles of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: A Study of E. G. White Writings" (chap. 8 in this volume.)

<sup>4</sup>Anderson.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

There was a persistently voiced conviction—even on the part of non-supporters of “liberation”—that wage discrimination (overt or covert) against women in the church’s employ constituted a denial of the basic sense of justice and fairness which should mark all Christian transactions. But the church has taken steps to bring itself into line with national wage policy. Discrimination that is based on sex alone never enhances the church’s image.

It remains an indisputable fact, however, that women have had little or no role in the decision-making functions of the church. There are those also (some women as outspoken as some men) who declare that this is as it should be because, they say, it is just not in a woman’s nature to weigh matters objectively and to be able to reason and debate without deep emotion and personal involvement.

Then a whole battery of premises begins to be invoked at this point—the woman is supposed to be subservient to the man; no woman was ever called to be a priest, nor head of a tribe in Israel, nor an apostle of Jesus Christ; nor were they to speak out in church; therefore!—and the conclusions drawn have been interesting both for content and variety. Even the fact that all three Persons of the Godhead are spoken of in the masculine gender in the Scriptures is seen to have some bearing on the limitations of what a woman can do in the service of God (although no one quite wants to attribute “maleness” to the Persons of the Godhead).

There is a factor that needs to be considered carefully by the church as it continues to study the whole question of women’s roles—that is that the leadership of the worldwide church tends to run in the 45-65 age bracket, and that factor governs the background against which leadership attitudes toward the roles of women have developed. To fail to be appropriately responsive, however, to reasonable concerns of women is to risk a deepening loss of credibility in church leadership on the part of the “under-thirties.”<sup>6</sup>

So where does this leave us in the search for legitimate, scriptural, appropriate, permissible, or tolerated roles for women in the church? If we survey the OT, we find a mixed status for women after Eden. A Hebrew woman had some rights to call her own (she fared better than her contemporary “Gentile” woman). She was under the jurisdiction, and therefore protection, of her father or husband (and possibly her owner in some cases). Given a bill of divorcement even for a trivial reason, she was returned to her father’s jurisdiction unless marriage should come again.<sup>7</sup>

It is Graeco-Roman world against which the times of Jesus and the apostles must be seen. Jewish women may have been better off in some respects, but the way Jesus related to women was quietly revolutionary—likewise for Paul, even in declaring that in Christ “there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28, RSV).<sup>8</sup> The fuller development of this concept had yet to be fulfilled—as with “neither Jew nor Greek, . . . neither slave nor free.” These were then ideals, not realities, even “in Christ Jesus.” But they pointed toward a goal. For in Christ Jesus, “you are *all* sons of God, through faith” (vs. 26, RSV). Perhaps the full weight of these words has yet to be perceived and translated into the restored partnership not only of husbands and wives, but of men and women.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>See Kenneth Vine, “The Legal and Social Status of Women in the Pentateuch” (chap. 2); Jerry Gladson, “The Role of Women in the Old Testament Outside the Pentateuch” (chap. 3).

<sup>8</sup>See Julia Neuffer, “First-Century Cultural Backgrounds in the Greco-Roman Empire” (chap. 4); Walter F. Specht, “Jesus and Women” (chap. 5).

<sup>9</sup>See Frank B. Holbrook, “A Brief Analysis and Interpretation of the Biblical Data Regarding the Role of Woman” (chap. 7).

Could it be then that the message and the example of Jesus were intended to restore the partnership of man and woman as it was before sin? Genesis 1:27 and 5:1-2 declare the unity, the oneness, the partnership of the male and female within generic mankind. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created” (RSV).<sup>10</sup>

Adam and Eve were first male and female, then husband and wife. It was after sin that the woman as wife was told, “he shall rule over you” (Gen 3:16, RSV). In the biblical picture of the man-woman relationship, it is significant that most often the subordination factor was presented in the context of the marriage relationship. It is illuminating to see how often God called a woman to sacred leadership—interestingly in the prophetic role more than others. What Jesus did for women and allowed them to do for Him (Paul likewise) is highly challenging. One could justifiably see in these relationships a pointing toward a greater partnership relationship between men and women in the Lord, just as there was also a pointing to a diminution of the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, slave and master, in Christ.

Here it could be highly informative to note in what ways the apostolic church dealt with these three relationships and what their vicissitudes have been since. Has the worldwide Christian church really emancipated the slave? What is the tolerance quotient of Christians toward Jews? And how far has the church come from more primitive attitudes toward women?

It is the writings of Paul that are invoked most by those who feel that the limited role a woman plays in the church is a matter of divine commandment. And it is true that some strong prohibitions are laid upon the woman in a few Pauline expressions, especially if taken in isolation from context, or generalized without consideration of other relevant statements. One has to consider also whether prohibitions called for in the NT setting were intended to be universal principles. Frequently there are time and place factors that demand consideration.

How carefully, then, are *all* the words of Paul concerning women considered? For example, if Christ declared of Himself, “But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27, RSV), and Paul states that a husband is to love his wife the way Christ loves the church, who really is subservient to whom in the marriage? Are the constraints in the marriage relationship to be carried into church life without modification? Is the man-woman relationship in the church identical to the husband-wife relationship?

There were some problems in the Corinthian church in general and some especially involving women. They were departing in some particular ways from the acceptable patterns of womanly conduct in the Christian assemblies, and Paul was addressing the problems without describing them exactly. He was answering some inquiries from anxious people in the Corinthian church; but we do not have their questions, and it is hazardous to generalize from an attempted assessment of the answers only.

We *can* read Paul as silencing women in the assembly forever and everywhere (1 Cor 14:34-36; Eph 2:11-15). But if we will be fair to Paul, we must also point in the Corinthian letter to ch. 11:13-16 where he is reminding the Corinthians of the conditions and/or customs to be met by a woman who would pray or prophesy (vs. 5) in the assembly of the saints. And that is not only the same apostle writing to the same church, but it is testimony within one letter.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>See Gerhard F. Hasel, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3” (chap. 1); also Fritz Guy, “Differently But Equally the Image of God” (chap. 11).

<sup>11</sup>See Sakae Kubo, “An Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and Its Implications” (chap. 6); also Holbrook; Specht.

Apart from scriptural injunction (to which only elementary allusion has been made here), it is extremely difficult to filter out all the sociological influences that have affected the thinking and attitudes of each human being—of each church member. What impact do all these strands of influence from the past have on our reading the Bible?

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization women have served effectively in such roles as nurses, secretaries, and teachers. Bible instructors, welfare leaders, Sabbath School teachers, literature evangelists—no question. But in management, as members of boards or commissions—seldom. On local, union, or General Conference committees—a sprinkling. One may wonder why. Has the womanly approach to issues nothing to offer? Should her difference from man be seen as inferiority? Is that Christ's view? The "priesthood of the believer" concept is limited, in women, to the more supportive roles. Where leadership roles are concerned, the priesthood of all believers is limited to males. And yet Peter gives no intimation of such a limitation. (See 1 Pet 2:5, 9.)

In this respect it is interesting to contemplate denominational history. Women were quite frequently treasurers and departmental leaders in conferences—local, union, and general—more so than today. Not a few carried a fruitful pastoral and evangelistic role—short of conducting a baptism—even though they labored under some other designation. One wonders why the retrogression since then. Were there problems or was it just that more men were getting theological training?

It is pertinent to consider the role of the best-known woman among Seventh-day Adventists—Mrs. Ellen G. White. Some might wish to minimize the significance of her being a woman since the call to a prophetic ministry among us was first given to two men—one of them "a mulatto"—before Ellen Harmon was called. Should this fact be understood to show that God would have preferred a man? Or should it be presented to show that God was *equally* willing to call a woman? Might it even be used to show the greater willingness of a woman to bear the cross involved?

Be that as it may, this church has been taking various readings on this question of the roles of women during the past five or ten years. And invariably the question of ordaining women to the ministry seems to become the focal point at issue. And what the church, through the Annual Councils of 1973 and 1974 and the Spring Meeting of 1975, has so far decided on that question is "indicated" in the following:

VOTED, 1. That we continue to recognize "the primacy of the married woman's role in the home and family, as repeatedly emphasized in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. . . ." (1974 Annual Council actions, page 13, paragraph 5), and that

We also recognize that there are many women in the church without family responsibilities who are capable and free to dedicate their full time to the service of the church in many spheres and on many levels.

2. That we agree that potential leadership roles, on all levels of administration not requiring ordination to the gospel ministry, be open to suitably qualified women whose home and family responsibilities make this possible.

3. That, therefore, we request church and institutional administrators on all levels to make continuing efforts to place qualified women, as well as men, in the categories of work referred to in the preceding paragraph.

4. That the way be opened for women elected to serve as deaconesses in our churches to be ordained to this office and that the Church Manual Committee be requested

to give study to a statement of the qualifications of deaconesses and suggestions in regard to a suitable ordination service.

5. That in harmony with the spirit and intent of paragraph 3 of the Annual Council 1974 action (pages 12-14) the greatest discretion and caution be exercised in the ordaining of women to the office of local elder, counsel being sought in all cases by the local conference/mission from the union and division committees before proceeding.

6. That we recognize that the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church provides precedents for women to fill roles of leadership. However, on the matter of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry we believe that the world church is not yet ready to move forward. Therefore, until this question becomes clearer we recommend that every endeavor be made to use women in the numerous positions many of them are well qualified to fill.

7. That we further recognize the considerable contribution that women have made to the church as Bible instructors and in other soul-winning capacities, and recommend that where Bible instructors or other women with suitable qualifications and experience are able to fill ministerial roles, they be assigned as assistant pastors, their credentials being missionary license or missionary credential. (1975 Spring Meeting actions, p. 153.)

As the church looks at the broader aspects of the roles of women, it is interesting to contemplate that for nearly 90 years the church has had inspired counsel to set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands selected women who could give leadership in a type of welfare-deaconess lay role.<sup>12</sup> The church has yet to implement this counsel.

In 1898 and 1899 the church was counseled that (a) a woman who engaged in soul-winning work, and (b) a minister's wife working with her husband (making satisfactory arrangements for the care of their children) should be paid separately in addition to the salary of her husband.<sup>13</sup> This counsel, generally, has yet to be implemented.

The church was instructed that women, as well as men, were to be called as physician-pastors or pastor-physicians. In fact, women were to be preferred as physicians ministering to women. Physicians showing the Lord's call to medical missionary work in soul winning and spiritual responsibility were to be ordained as ministers (no exclusion of women ever implied). But Adventists have apparently no greater proportion of female physicians than the world around them.<sup>14</sup>

Is it conceivable that if Adventists had followed the inspired counsel on the roles of women in these three areas 85 years ago they might have been led into further areas during the remaining 20 years of Mrs. White's life? In any case, had they been obedient to the light given, would they not have been so far in advance of the "liberation" movement that it could have lost its appeal? There might well have been no basis for government agencies to accuse Adventists of discrimination.<sup>15</sup>

The ordination of women to the ministry is an integral part of the present context, even if an individual's personal preferences would not include it. Let it be noted at the outset that inspired writers, ancient and modern, nowhere *explicitly* discuss the matter of ordination of women. Neither are there examples or principles that would have the same weight as explicit

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<sup>12</sup>RH, July 9, 1895.

<sup>13</sup>See Ev 491-93.

<sup>14</sup>See MM 246; CH 524.

<sup>15</sup>See Anderson.

divine prohibition or endorsement today. There are favorable arguments that some would deduce from certain considerations, but there are countering arguments.<sup>16</sup>

It is, however, a serious matter for the church to consider that able, humble, and earnest young women present themselves as college or seminary candidates for degrees in theological and ministerial training and some of them claim to have heard the call of the Lord to the ministry. As with all callings, the church has to weigh such a conviction most carefully, lest it be out of touch with leadings of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, as with men, the church has to be able to recognize the call of the Lord that the ministerial candidate claims. A conference committee has to be able to extend a call. Churches or institutions have to be ready to welcome the candidate. There would need to be additional General Conference internships available to young women, or at least discrimination removed from present general practice.

Annual Council actions have taken the position that the whole world field should be open to calling women as ministers before they could be called to any part of the field. Who could not agree that it would be ideal for the world field to be united on the proposal at the outset? On the other hand, we make regional or divisional distinctions on other matters of church polity. (The position on the wedding ring is an example.)

Some might ask why anyone should have to contend his or her way into the ministry. It does not seem ideal to think of urging one's way into the ministry; but, on reflection, one must note that men now in church leadership may have done so. Since history is replete with accounts of the struggles of women to break into male-dominated callings and professions, the ministry might be no exception.

But again—why women in the ministry? Perhaps it is because women sense that in the Seventh-day Adventist Church acceptance to the ministry of even a few women would symbolize their complete acceptance to partnership with the men of the church.

But today it is asked, Should we risk splitting the church over the question of ordination of women? Or even splitting a few congregations? These are solemn questions. Unity is the supreme evidence to the world of the reality of the church's spiritual contact with Jesus Christ (John 17:21) and should be of the highest priority in church objectives. But is the unity of the Adventist Church fragile enough to be shattered by this matter?

With all the hurdles between women and the ministry, perhaps only a handful of candidates would even wish to make the attempt to gain acceptance (especially if as many as 100 men were waiting to be placed after all regular quotas had been filled). They could be placed only when a combination of persons would be willing to provide the necessary openings.

In other areas and on other issues the church has been willing to conduct a pilot program, to experiment. This particular experiment would be quite involved and could be fraught with disappointment. (Many men, however, have found that the call to the ministry did not work out for them, and they had to adapt to a different vocation.) But one wonders, Could the church consider a pilot program for women in the ministry? If it were tried for five years, there could then be presented to an Annual Council a realistic recommendation on this subject. A door of opportunity could thus be opened without leaving it untended.

The above observations, tied to the work done over a period of several years by the BRI and an associated study committee, provide the consensus of those involved that there is neither theological mandate for nor objection to ordination of women to any level of responsibility for which ordination is indicated. At the same time it is recognized that the church has to be led of

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<sup>16</sup>See Raoul Dederen, "A Theology of Ordination" (chap. 12).

the Spirit into such new areas and the BRI has neither desire nor intention to become the prime or sole advocate. The BRI sees its responsibility to be that of giving church leadership the benefit of the trained scholarship of the church. How to share such knowledge with the church at large and how and when to move is seen as the responsibility of church leaders at all levels.

There is a factor that carries weight with all followers of Jesus Christ. It is that while each member of the church has freedom in Jesus Christ, he or she will be willing to restrict that freedom in the interest of the mission and unity of the church, which is Christ's body. So personal preferences and viewpoints will always be held in subservience to the goals of the gospel commission.

On one other aspect of the matter the BRI and its standing committees have been clear, and that is that the full potential of the women and the men of this church for a finished task has yet to be harnessed and endowed with "latter rain" power. For that climactic development we work and pray.

I  
**MAN AND WOMAN IN GENESIS 1-3**  
Gerhard F. Hasel

The opening chapters of Genesis (1-3) are of crucial importance for both the origins of our world and also the origin, beginnings, and determining relationships of man and woman. As such they set the stage for a biblical concept of man's interrelationships, without which any understanding of the mutuality between man and woman is impaired and one-sided.

An investigation of the status of man and woman in Gen 1-3 is warranted and mandatory on account of both the new set of questions raised with regard to the status of women in the church and the contradictory assessment of the evidence in Gen 1-3. Some interpreters claim that "man assists passively in her [woman's] creation" and that since "woman [is] drawn forth from man [she] owes all her existence to him."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly woman is said to exist in a state of inferiority in relation to man. Other interpreters infer from Gen 2 that woman is inferior and subordinate to man because of "the fact that she is the helper of man, and is named by him. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Another view holds that whereas Gen 1 recognizes the equality of man and woman, Gen 2 makes woman a second, subordinate, and inferior being.<sup>3</sup> It is observed that Gen 1:26-28 "dignifies woman as an important factor in the creation, equal in power and glory with man," while Gen 2 "makes her a mere afterthought."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, there are those suggesting on the basis of Gen 1-3 that man and woman are created equal, that woman is not an afterthought of Creation and does not constitute a decline in God's creativity. To them woman as the last of all Creation is its climax and culmination. Woman is the crown of Creation.<sup>5</sup> These contradictory views, all claiming to derive from the material in Gen 1-3, warrant a careful investigation of the evidence provided in the opening chapters of the Bible. This is all the more important because these chapters describe man's perfect state before sin and the far-reaching changes introduced by sin, perpetuated, and expanded to immense proportions since then.

**Man and Woman in Genesis 1**

The inspired record reveals that on the sixth day of Creation week, after everything else had been created,

"God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over

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<sup>1</sup>E. Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York, 1958), p. 173; cf. S. H. Hooke, "Genesis," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, eds. H. H. Rowley, M. Black (London, 1962), p. 179.

<sup>2</sup>John A. Bailey, "Initiation and the Primal Woman in Gilgamesh and Genesis 2-3," *JBL*, 89 (1970): 143; cf. A. van den Born, "Frau," *Bibel-Lexikon*, ed. H. Haag, 2nd ed. (Einsiedeln, 1968), col. 492; Claus Westermann, *Genesis* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970), pp. 315-16.

<sup>3</sup>Eugene E. Maley, "Genesis," *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, ed. Raymond Edward Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1968), p. 12, concludes that "woman's existence, psychologically and in the social order, is dependent on man."

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth C. Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (New York, 1895), 1:20; cf. Elsie Adams and Mary L. Briscoe, *Up Against the Wall, Mother* (Beverly Hills, 1971), p. 4; Sheila D. Collins, "Toward a Feminist Theology," *Christian Century* (Aug. 2, 1972), p. 798.

<sup>5</sup>So Bailey, *JBL* 89 (1970): 150; John L. McKenzie, "The Literary Characteristics of Gen. 2-3" *Theological Studies* 15 (1954): 559; Walther Eichrodt, *Das Menschenverständnis des Alten Testaments* (Zurich, 1947), p. 35, et. Al.



every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Gen 1:26-27, NASB).”

This sublime account of the creation of man is part of the summary narrative of Creation (Gen 1:1-2:3), complemented with more specific details about man and his setting in the following chapter (Gen 2).<sup>6</sup> It expresses in most compact form the essentials of the creation of man.

The first point is that “man” (*’ādām*)<sup>7</sup> is a term which includes both “male and female” (1:27). As such, *’ādām* (“man”) is a generic term for mankind.<sup>8</sup>

Next it is to be stressed that in Gen 1 man is created as both “male and female” (vs. 27). There is no distinction between the sexes in terms of superiority or subordination. “Man” has existence as a total and complete creature uniquely as man and woman. The full meaning of *’ādām* is realized only when there is man and woman.<sup>9</sup>

Man was created to live in constant communion with each other. Though male was the first creature formed (Gen 2:7), which is already implied by the mention of the term “male” before “female” in Gen 1:27, and put into the Edenic garden “to cultivate it and keep it” (Gen 2:15, NASB), a job identified with the male (Gen 3:17-19), he is not yet the perfect and complete creature for which God aims in the creation of mankind. God’s own evaluation of the situation after the creation of the male was, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen 2:18, NASB). Only with the creation of woman does man exist in complete and harmonious partnership and communion. With the coming into existence of both man and woman, creation is complete—a fact stressed again in Gen 2.

In the definition of mankind as bisexual the Creator does not suggest any superiority of one sex above the other.<sup>10</sup> Woman is not subordinate to man; man is not subordinate to woman. Neither one holds an inferior place, nor is the role of one lower than that of the other. Relevant

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<sup>6</sup>The assessment of traditional liberal scholarship that there are two different Creation accounts which manifest “irreconcilable” contradictions (so H. H. Rowley, *The Growth of the Old Testament* [New York, 1963, p. 18] and many others cannot be maintained. The difference in the usage of divine names is best explained on account of the different semantic aspects associated with each (see M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch* [Jerusalem, 1967], pp. 32, 103ff; U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* [Jerusalem, 1961], pp. 15-41). The difference of style is paralleled by the commonplace stylistic differences in extra-biblical ancient Near Eastern texts (see Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* [Chicago, 1968], pp. 116-17). The supposed differences in the conception of God are overdrawn (see Y. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel* [Chicago, 1960], p. 207; E. J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. [Grand Rapids, 1964], p. 51). The alleged difference in the order of events, namely that the animals were created *before* their naming and *after* the creation of man (Gen 2:19), vanishes on the basis that the word “formed” in Gen 2:19 can be equally well translated “had formed” because the perfect tense of the Hebrew verb does double duty for both past tense and pluperfect (see G. C. Aalders, *A Short Introduction to the Pentateuch* [London, 1949], p. 44; Gleason Leonard Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* [Chicago, 1964], pp. 118-19; Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, p. 118, n. 19).

<sup>7</sup>See on this term esp. E. Lussier, “Adam in Gen 1:1-3:24,” *CBQ*, 18 (1956): 137-39; S. Amsler, *Adam le terreux dans Genèse 2-4*,” *Revue de Théol. et Phil.* 2 (1958):107-112; J. de Fraine, *Adam et son lineage* (Paris, 1959); J. Jeremias, “‘Aoau,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1964), 1:141-43; F. Vattioni, “La sapienza e la formation del corpo umano (Gen 1:26),” *Augustinianum* 6 (1966): 317-23; C. Westermann, “‘ādām Mensch,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann (München, 1971), 1:41-57.

<sup>8</sup>There is no difference of opinion on this point among interpreters.

<sup>9</sup>Maly, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>Eichrodt, *Menschenverständnis*, p. 35, speaks of the “noteworthy equality between man and woman before God . . . in that she is designated by God as the equal supplementation of man [Gen 2:18], in that she is also created in the image of God whereby she has part in the special place assigned to man over against nature.”

points in Gen 1 indicate that male and female are created equal, that neither is superior nor inferior to the other in creation.<sup>11</sup>

It is striking that both “male and female” are created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). The whole man in his bisexuality, which does not so much stress the nature of man as a being with a divinely given sex drive but rather his unity and mutual communion, is created in the image of God.<sup>12</sup> There is not distinction in terms of superiority or inferiority. To the contrary, woman is also created, like man, in the image of God.<sup>13</sup> Both man and woman are thus set apart from the rest of creation as constituting a new and distinct order.<sup>14</sup> They are equal in their distinct superiority to the rest of creation, because both share equally in the image of God.

The blessing of God is bestowed upon both of “them” (*’ōtām*). The divine blessing comes to man (*’ādām*) as man and woman. Both equally share the blessing. Both are equal recipients of God’s blessing (Gen 1:28). The “blessing” (*brk*) bestowed by God upon both man and woman is the power to be fruitful and multiply and thus perpetuate the species.<sup>15</sup> The responsibility for propagating and perpetuating mankind rests equally upon both man and woman.

The task of “subduing” (*kbš*) the earth (Gen 1:28) and “ruling” (*rdh*) over the animal world (Gen 1:26, 28) is laid upon both man and woman. When God purposed to create man (*’ādām*), He had already designed that both should exercise the “ruling” function (1:26). The verb *rdh* means in Joel 3:13 “to tread in the wine-press.”<sup>16</sup> In Num 24:19 and Lev 26:17 it is used of “to rule over” and is employed frequently of the ruling or governing activity of the king.<sup>17</sup> It has been suggested that the basic meaning of *rdh* is “to tread (down),”<sup>18</sup> but this is hardly the meaning here. It seems that man as “the crowning work of the Creator”<sup>19</sup> maintains his royal

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<sup>11</sup>“When God created Eve, He designated that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that in all things she should be his equal. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an individuality in thinking and acting” (1875).—3T 484.

<sup>12</sup>Despite the clarity of language in Gen 1:26-27, the opinion has been revived recently (Phyllis Trible, “Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation,” *JAAR*, 41 [1973]: 36), without reference to earlier supporters (such as F. Schwally, *ARW* 9 [1906]: 172ff.), that the first man (Gen 1:26-27) was androgynous, a single hermaphrodite being. However, the rendering in 1:27c, “male and female created he *them* (*’ōtām* [emphasis supplied]),” militates against this view. This theory is also militated against by the use of the terms “male” (*zākār*) and “female” (*nēqēbāh*) which denote later in the Pentateuch not the adjectives “male” and “female” but concretely the male and female parts of the species (Gen 17:10ff; Lev 12:5; etc.); cf. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1967), 2:12b, n. 2.

<sup>13</sup>It has been inferred from the phrase “in the image of God he created him” (1:27b, RSV) that the “him” (*’ōtō*) “excludes the idea that also woman had a part in the image of God and the rulership of the world” (J. Bohmer, “Wieviel Menschen sind am letzten Tage des Hexaemeron geschaffen worden?” *ZAW* 34 [1914]: 33). In actual fact the antecedent of “him” (*’ōtō*) is the collective noun *’ādām* in 1:27a; “him” is thus a grammatical singular which should be understood, like its antecedent, in the collective sense. The plural “them” (*’ōtām*) in 1:27c refers to the bisexual expression “male and female,” so that the singular suffix and the plural suffix both have their proper grammatical form and refer to the same idea. Cf. W. H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterschrift*, 2nd ed. (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1967), p. 145, n. 1; p. 147, n. 1.

<sup>14</sup>“All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made ‘in the image of God,’ and it was the Creator’s design that they should populate the earth”—Ellen G. White Comments, 1BC 1081.

<sup>15</sup>Westermann, p. 221; C. A. Keller and G. Wehmeier, “*brk* pi, segnen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum AT* 1:369.

<sup>16</sup>William Lee Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1971), p. 333.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. 1 Kgs 5:4; Pss 110:2; 72:8; Isa 14:6; Ezek 34:4.

<sup>18</sup>H. Wildberger, “Das Abbild Gottes, Gen 1, 26-30” *TZ* 21 (1965): 481-83.

<sup>19</sup>PP 44.

position in his rulership over the animal kingdom.<sup>20</sup> The exercise of rulership does not mean exploitation, because this would mean to lose his divinely given position of lordship. Both man and woman have a share in this task on equal basis. Both are elevated to an equally noble status over creature and creation in their exercise of dominion over the created world. Man as male and female is God's sovereign emblem and representative on earth, summoned to maintain God's claim over the earth, having received dominion over the world as part of God's special domain of sovereignty.

In short, in Gen 1 man (*'ādām*) is created last male and female, and is thus truly the crown of creation.<sup>21</sup> Both man and woman share their creation in "the image of God" which lifts them above all other creatures and places them together in a special relationship to God. Both man and woman find their full meaning neither in male alone nor in female alone, but in their mutual relationship and communion. Both man and woman receive the divine blessing with the power to propagate and perpetuate the human species; both man and woman are given the task to "subdue" the earth and "rule" over the animal kingdom, indicating their common position as vicegerents over God's creation. This heaping up of aspects in the creation, nature, and responsibilities of *'ādām* ("man") indicates that both male and female were created by God as equals. Neither man nor woman was superior or inferior to the other; neither was subordinated to the other. Man and woman were equals, each certainly with his own individuality.

## Man and Woman in Genesis 2

The narrative of Gen 2:4-25 describes in more detail aspects of the carefully written and most compactly constructed Creation story of Gen 1, complementing it on crucial points.<sup>22</sup> In Gen 2:7 "the man" (*hā'ādām*) is the first creature formed<sup>23</sup> from the dust of the ground. God breathed into him (Adam)<sup>24</sup> the "breath of life" (*nišmat-bayyîm*) and "man became a living being" (NASB).<sup>25</sup>

"The man [Adam]" was taken by God and settled in the Garden of Eden in order to till and to tend it (Gen 2:15). It seems that this statement refers to the male, because the tilling and keeping of the garden is an activity identified with the male (cf. Gen 3:17-19).<sup>26</sup> Meaningful and complete existence can be experienced by man only in connection with work.

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<sup>20</sup>Westermann, pp. 221-22.

<sup>21</sup>Note the similarity of expression between Ellen G. White, who calls man "the crowning work of the Creator" (PP 44) and a recent writer who states that "male and female [man] are indeed the last and truly the crown of all creatures"—Trible, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup>See n. 6.

<sup>23</sup>Commentators have often suggested on the basis of the word "formed" (*yšr*) in 2:7 that the creative activity is like that of a potter (so Gunkel, Procksch, Kohler, Humbert, etc.). However, it is hardly correct to maintain that the verb *yšr* implies in a special way the memory of the potter's craft and God as potter, because the term "dust" (*ḥr*) does not allow it. The specific word for "clay: or "mud" is *homer* (with B. Jacob, Cassuto, Vriezen, Westermann, W. H. Schmidt).

<sup>24</sup>In Gen 2 *hā'ādām* ("the man") is not often used in a collective sense but as a general description of the first male. Cf. Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, 2nd ed. (Newton, MA, 1970), p. 406; et al.

<sup>25</sup>Westermann, *Genesis*, p. 283: "Man is created as *nps hyh*. A 'living soul' is not put in his body. Man is understood as a unity in his being made alive. An understanding of man as consisting of body and soul is excluded." Vriezen, *An Outline of OT Theology*, p. 407: "This infusion of the breath [of life] by God does not mean that man has received a divine soul or spirit."

<sup>26</sup>So correctly with Trible, p. 35, against Westermann, p. 301.

The divine instruction to “the man” (*hā-’ādām*) not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must have been given to both man and woman (Gen 2:16-17), because woman refers to the divine instruction and the prohibition to eat from this one tree (Gen 3:2ff.). Since woman is included under the term *hā-’ādām* in 2:16 but the report of her creation is not given until thereafter (2:18ff.), there may be here a possible indication that Gen 2:4ff is not a separate Creation account as critical scholarship maintains.<sup>27</sup> Genesis 2:16-17 obviously presupposes Gen 1:26-27.

Woman was created after man had been engaged in the naming of the animals (Gen 2:20). A far-reaching observation grew out of this experience: there is no “helper suitable for him” (vs. 20, NASB). Then comes God’s pronouncement, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him” (2:18, NASB).

It is mandatory to investigate the meaning of the term (*ezer*) rendered as “help meet” (KJV), “helper” (RSV, NIV, NASB), “partner” (NEB, NAB) and “aid” (Speiser, Anchor Bible), as well as the idea of “fit for him” (RSV) or “suitable for him” (NAB, NASB). This investigation should clear up the matter as to whether these thoughts stress equality or inferiority.

The expression *ezer* (“helper”) has many different usages in the OT. It is distinguished from the feminine noun *ezrah* meaning “help, support.”<sup>28</sup> The usage of the masculine noun *ezer* shows that the writer of Gen 2:18 chose a more neutral term, avoiding the idea of making woman a mere “help” or “support” for man.<sup>29</sup> The translation “aid”<sup>30</sup> does not fit the meaning of the original term. The traditional translation “help meet” (KJV) is made up of two English words. The term “meet” is an archaism, meaning “adapted” or “suitable,”<sup>31</sup> and has little to do with the term “helpmeet” which is a ghost word where “*help meet* for him” has been mistakenly read as a single word.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, to speak of woman as a “helpmeet” in the sense that she is a mate aiding her husband in his work “is an error implying strange ignorance of the English language.”<sup>33</sup>

The noun *ezer* (“helper”) is employed primarily for God,<sup>34</sup> which indicates that it does not imply inferiority or of necessity lower status. The Lord (Yahweh) is the “helper” for Israel. As “helper,” God creates and saves,<sup>35</sup> which shows that this term designates a beneficial relationship. It can be a personal name for a male.<sup>36</sup> In Isa 30:5 the whole people is designated as “helper.” In Hos 13:9 the question is raised as to who will be Israel’s “helper” when destruction comes to her. In all OT instances the term “helper” is employed in contexts which refer to a beneficial relationship. The term itself does not specify positions within relationships, nor does it by itself imply inferiority. Since the term pertains to God, people, and animals (Gen 2:20), position must be determined from the context or additional content. This additional content is provided in Gen 2:18 with the word (*kenegdô*) which means literally, “like his counterpart.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Ser n. 6.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. Pss 60:12; 108:13; Isa 10:3; Holladay, p. 270.

<sup>29</sup>Schmidt, p. 200; Westermann, p. 309.

<sup>30</sup>So poorly E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, “Anchor Bible” (Garden City, NJ, 1964), p. 15.

<sup>31</sup>S. R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1904), p. 41.

<sup>32</sup>*Webster’s New World Dictionary*.

<sup>33</sup>Driver, p. 41.

<sup>34</sup>Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7; Pss 20:3; 33:20; 115:9-11; 121:2; 124:8; 146:5; Dan 11:34.

<sup>35</sup>Pss 121:2; 124:8; 146:5-6; Deut 33:7, 26, 29.

<sup>36</sup>1 Chr 4:4; 12:9; Neh 3:19.

<sup>37</sup>Ludwig Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Li* (Leiden, 1958), p. 591; Holladay, p.

The idea is that woman is a helper “corresponding to him” or “alongside him.”<sup>38</sup> Inasmuch as woman is made a helper alongside and corresponding to man, she is his suitable counterpart and fitting companion.<sup>39</sup> Thus in Gen 2:18, 20 the kind of relationship which is entailed is one of equality, because the word *neged* (“counterpart”) which joins *ʕzer* (“helper”) indicates that woman is a suitable helper fit for man.

We must keep in mind that the animals are also helpers but, as Adam observes, they fail to fit man (*ʕīdām*). They are formed (*yāsar*) from the ground (*ʿādāmāh*) as Gen 2:19 indicates. Yet their similarity in the way they are made and in the stuff they are made of is not equality. Adam names the animals and thereby exercises power over them; but no suitable, helping counterpart is found among them for him (2:20). Thus the report moves to the creation of woman. In short, animals are helpers *inferior* to man. Woman is suitable partner *alongside* and *corresponding* to man, his *equal* companion.<sup>40</sup>

The account of the creation of the woman (Gen 2:21-22) concludes the story of the creation of man. In the creation of female God Himself is the only one active, just as in the creation of male. For the last act of creation, its climax, “the Lord God caused a deep sleep [*tardēmāh*] to fall upon the man” (2:21, NASB). Aside from the description of the actual processes of the creation of woman, this sentence appears to emphasize that man himself had no part whatever in the creation of woman. He neither participates in, nor looks on, her creation.<sup>41</sup> He is likewise not consulted. Woman owes her origin as solely to God as does man.

Both man and woman were created from raw material. Neither man nor woman was spoken into existence. Man was made from dust (2:7); woman was made from a rib (2:21).<sup>42</sup> The “rib” (*selah*)<sup>43</sup> is evidently taken from Adam, not to explain something with regard to him,<sup>44</sup> but to

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<sup>38</sup>So Speiser, p. 17.

<sup>39</sup>L. Kohler, *Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia, 1957), p. 246, n. 103, translates appropriately “a partner who suits him.”

<sup>40</sup>Man is created by God in such a way that he requires mutual help. The writer of Ecclesiastes expresses this concept as follows: “For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up” (4:10, NASB). Man cannot fulfill his purpose except in mutual support.

<sup>41</sup>This point is made correctly by J. G. Thomson, “Sleep: An Aspect of Jewish Anthropology,” VT 5 (1955): 421-35.

<sup>42</sup>Though the raw material itself is not identical, this does not do away with the fact that male and female are made from a divinely chosen raw material.

<sup>43</sup>It has recently been supposed that “the reference to the rib has probably its ground in a Sumerian play upon words” (so now Westermann, p. 314, following J. B. Pritchard, “Man’s Predicament in Eden,” *RevRel* 13 [1948/49]: 15). Attention has thus been drawn to the creation or the goddess Nin-ti, whose name can mean both “lady of the rib” and “lady who makes live” because *ti* in Sumerian means “rib” and also “to make live” (S. N. Kramer, *History Begins Sumer* [Garden City, NY, 1959], p. 146; D. J. Wiseman, *Illustrations From Biblical Archaeology* [London, 1958], p. 9). However, the fact that “rib” is verbally linked to “life-making” in Sumerian—whereas in Hebrew the words for “rib” and “to make alive” have nothing in common—indicates that it is hardly possible that the reference to the rib in the biblical creation story has its origin in Sumerian mythology. This is further strengthened by the fact that the themes of the story of creation of woman and the Sumerian myth “Enki and Ninhursag” have virtually nothing in common (cf. ANET, pp. 37-41).

<sup>44</sup>There is no scholarly agreement on what the conception of creation from the rib means. It has been suggested that “rib” was a euphemism for the birth canal which is lacking in males (so J. Boehmer, “Die geschlechtliche Stellung des Weibes in Gen. 2 und 3,” *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 79 [1939]: 292). It has been asserted that the “rib” explains the existence of the navel in the first man (so P. Humbert, *Etudes sur le récit du Paradis* [Neuchâtel, 1940], pp. 57-58) or answers the question why the ribs cover the upper but not the lower part of the body (so G. von Rad, *Genesis* [Philadelphia, 1961], p. 82) or that man can continue to live even at the loss of a rib (so O. Procksch, *Die Genesis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. [Leipzig, 1924], ad loc).

express something of their mutual relationship.<sup>45</sup> “The woman was created, not of dust of the earth, but from a rib of Adam because she was formed for an inseparable unity and fellowship of life with the man. . . .”<sup>46</sup> The creation of woman from the rib of man does not imply a position of subordination on her part.<sup>47</sup> To the contrary, it stresses woman’s status as equal with man,<sup>48</sup> superior with man to the animals and inferior with him to God. To call woman “Adam’s rib” is to misread the text which explicitly states that the extracted rib was but the raw material out of which God built (*bnh*)<sup>49</sup> woman.

After the creation of woman God takes her to the man who acknowledges her equality and Jubilantly cries out in the poem of 2:23:

This at last<sup>50</sup> bone of my bones,  
and flesh of my flesh;  
This one shall be called woman (*ššāh*),  
for this one has been taken out of man (*š*).

The first two lines (“bone of my bones, . . . flesh of my flesh”) joyously express that finally a fitting companion and suitable partner, the “counterpart corresponding to him” (2:18, 20) is brought. Man himself stresses that his partner is of the same stuff as he is.<sup>51</sup>

The last two lines introduce for the first time the terms “man” as male (*š*) and “woman” as female (*ššāh*). This change of terminology seems to indicate that man as male exists only in relationship with woman as female. Woman exists in correlation to man and vice versa. With the creation of woman (*ššāh*) occurs the first specific term for man as male (*š*).<sup>52</sup> The linguistic pun of *š* (man) and *ššāh* (“woman”) in 2:23b proclaims both equality and differentiation in terms of male and female. The Genesis creation account carefully avoids any hint at inferiority or superiority. Equality between man and woman is both maintained and emphasized.

Some interpreters suggest that the phrase “this one shall be called woman” (2:23b) refers to the naming of female by male,<sup>53</sup> that thereby man has power and authority over her and that she

<sup>45</sup>So correctly Westermann, p. 314.

<sup>46</sup>C. F. Keil, *The First Book of Moses (Genesis)* (Grand Rapids, 1949), 1:89.

<sup>47</sup>With Schmidt, p. 201.

<sup>48</sup>“Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him.”—PP 46. “The rib means solidarity and equality.”—Trible, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup>The common verb *bnh* is employed in the OT for various kinds of activities which involve “building” (cf. R. Hulst, “*bnh* bauen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:325-27). It is employed only one more time (out of 376 total occurrences) for creative activity in the OT (Amos 9:6). It is a term expressing creative activity in Hebrew as its Akkadian cognate *bānû* which is the regular term describing the “creation” of human beings (W. G. Lambert and A. R. Millard, *Atra-bāsis The Babylonian Story of the Flood* [London, 1969], p. 57; cf. Wolfram von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch* [Wiesbaden, 1959], p. 103), and its Ugaritic cognate *bny* which means “to create, procreate” (U. Cassuto, *Genesis* [Jerusalem, 1961], 1:134).

<sup>50</sup>The common rendering of “now” for *ha-pa'um* is hardly sufficient. It should be translated as “at last” with NEB, NAB, NJV, and Holladay, p. 295.

<sup>51</sup>Cf. W. Reiser, “Die Verwandtschaftsformel in Gen 2, 23,” TZ 16 (1960): 1-4; W. Brueggemann, “Of the Same Flesh and Bone (Gen 2:23a),” CBQ (1970), 532-42.

<sup>52</sup>J. Kuhlewein, “*š* Mann,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:130-38.

<sup>53</sup>So for example von Rad, p. 82; Bailey, JBL 89 (1970): 143; D. Kidner, *Genesis* (Chicago, 1967), p. 66; Westermann, p. 315; John H. Marks, “Genesis,” *The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (New York, 1971), p. 5.

is subordinated to man.<sup>54</sup> Two considerations from a careful study of the respective passages indicate that the text does not support this inference. (1) The typical biblical formula for naming involves the verb “to call” (*qārā*), plus the explicit object, *name*. This is evident from the first naming in the Bible and is carried on consistently in Genesis. “And whatever the man *called* [*qārā*] a living creature, that was its *name* [*šēm*]. And the man *gave* [*qārā*] names [*šēm*] to all cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field” (2:19b-20a, NASB). In giving the animals names, first man establishes his divinely given authority and dominion as God’s representative over them (Gen 1:28) but comes to recognize that there is no suitable counterpart for him. We must keep in mind that in the OT the conferring of a name is an act of power and an assertion of ownership or some other form of control, just as the giving of a new name indicates a change of state or condition, the beginning of a new existence.<sup>55</sup> In Gen 4:17 Cain “built a city, and *called* [*qārā*] the *name* [*šēm*] of the city of Enoch, after the *name* [*šēm*] of his son” (NASB). In 4:25 another son is born to Adam who “*called* [*qārā*] his *name* [*šēm*] Seth.” To Seth also a son was born “and he *called* [*qārā*] his *name* [*šēm*] Enoch.”<sup>56</sup> These examples demonstrate that the clause “this one shall be called woman” (2:23) does not constitute the naming of Adam’s partner. This sentence has the verb “call” (*qārā*) but lacks the essential word “name” (*šēm*).<sup>57</sup> (2) This conclusion finds its support in the fact that the word “woman” (*ššāh*) is not a name or proper noun.<sup>58</sup> It designates the female counterpart to man with the recognition of sexuality. This recognition does not constitute an act of naming on the part of man to assert power and to assume superiority over woman.<sup>59</sup> Man and woman are equal sexes with neither one having power and authority over the other.<sup>60</sup>

We have observed so far that Gen 1-2 would seem to indicate the equality of man and woman, that these chapters militate against the notions of superiority or inferiority on the part of either man or woman. There remains for us to turn to the suggestion that the creation of man before woman implies a divinely ordained subordination of woman. It is claimed that the order of sequence, man created first and woman second, establishes “the priority and superiority of the man . . . as an ordinance of divine creation.”<sup>61</sup> Such a supposition would be in tension with the indicators of equality. It may be assumed that the inspired writer in writing the reports of the creation of man and woman wrote in such a way that the respective aspects of the total story would not be in tension with each other. Indeed the order of sequence of the creation of man and woman does not imply man’s superiority or woman’s inferiority. It serves a different function.

In Hebrew literature the central concerns of a unit often come at the beginning and at the end of the unit as an *inclusio* device.<sup>62</sup> The complementary narrative of creation of Gen 2:4-25

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<sup>54</sup>Bailey, JBL 89 (1971): 143—“To be sure, the fact that she is . . . named by him, indicates a certain subordination on her part.”

<sup>55</sup>The change of the name Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28) indicates his new existence and implies the nature and mission of the bearer. The assigning of the new names to Daniel and his three companions (Dan 1:7) establishes the authority and power of the Babylonians over the exiled youths.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. Gen 17:5 for the renaming of Abram to Abraham and 17:15 of Sarai to Sarah.

<sup>57</sup>At times the verb “call” is absent in the naming but the essential noun “name” is always present (cf. Gen 32:29).

<sup>58</sup>J. Kuhlewein, “*ššā* Frau,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:247-51.

<sup>59</sup>With Tribble, p. 38.

<sup>60</sup>Westermann, pp. 316-18.

<sup>61</sup>Keil, p. 89; cf. nn. 1-4.

<sup>62</sup>This term was used a long time ago by Eduard König. On this see now James Muilenburg, “Form Criticism and Beyond,” JBL 88 (1969): 9-10; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, “Anchor Bible” (New York, 1966), 1:5; Tribble, p. 36.

evinces this structure. The creation of man first and woman last constitutes a “ring composition”<sup>63</sup> where the first and last (second) correspond to each other in importance. In terms of the thinking of the biblical writer, this does not mean that the first is more important or superior and the second less important or inferior. To the contrary, the existence of the creature created first is incomplete without the creation of the creature created last, as the divine declaration emphasized: “It is not good for the man to be alone” (2:18, NASB). Thus as the Gen 2 narrative of creation moves to its end it moves to its climax, and not its decline, in the creation of woman.<sup>64</sup> With the coming into existence of woman, creation has reached its completion and culmination. Her creation is not an afterthought. This is supported, as we have seen, by (1) the content and context of the narrative of the creation of woman in Gen 2 and (2) the content and context Gen 1 where *ʿādām*, as male and female, is truly the crown of all creation.<sup>65</sup>

It may be parenthetically inserted that the remarkable importance of woman in the biblical reports of creation is all the more extraordinary when one realizes that the biblical account of the creation of woman as such has no parallel in ancient Near Eastern literature. It indicates the high position of woman in the OT and in biblical religion in contrast to woman’s low status in the ancient Near East in general.

### **Man and Woman in Genesis 3**

The remarkable position of woman as an equal to man as a divine ordinance of creation (Gen 1-2) is not maintained much longer after the entry of sin. The consequences of sin are enormous even for the harmonious relationship and delicate equality between man and woman.

It is not necessary to rehearse the story of the serpent’s (Satan’s) approach to the woman, their dialogue, and the woman’s eating of the forbidden fruit (3:1-6a). In contemplating the tree in the middle of the garden, the woman recognizes the fruit as “good for food”; namely, it satisfies the physical drives. It is “a delight to the eyes,” showing that the fruit is aesthetically and emotionally desirable. The tree “was desirable as a source of wisdom [*haskīl*]” (3:6) as the serpent had claimed (3:5). When the woman acts she is fully aware that she seeks not merely to satisfy divinely given drives,<sup>66</sup> but to attain a higher sphere of existence, approaching that of deity—to be “like God” (3:5). Under these impressions and aspirations she takes the fruit and eats. It is striking that the inspired writer shows in the way he writes of woman’s fall that the initiative and the decision to eat are hers alone without consultation with her husband, without seeking his advice or permission. In separating from her husband, she was “in greater danger than if both were together.”<sup>67</sup>

After man joins his wife in eating of the fruit, both man and woman are one in the new knowledge of their nakedness (3:7). They are one in hiding from the Lord God (3:8) and in their fear of Him (3:10). In the acts of disobedience man and woman have broken the harmonious relationship with their God. Both male and female experience the same loss of harmonious relationship with God and each other.

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<sup>63</sup>Term used by Muilenburg, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup>McKenzie, TS 15 (1954): 559. To make woman “the crown of creation” (so Bailey, JBL 89 [1970]: 143) is to overstate her importance.

<sup>65</sup>Man is “the crowning work of creation.”—PP 52.

<sup>66</sup>Westermann, p. 339.

<sup>67</sup>SR 31.



God addresses to man the first questions (3:9, 11). Finally Adam admits, “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate” (3:12, NASB). Here is another indication of the broken harmony between male and female and man and God. Just as shame is a sign of the disturbance of interhuman relationships and fear a sign of disorder in divine-human relationships, so the disruption of these relationships in different spheres of existence is reflected in man’s defense after sin when he puts the blame on woman and, since she was given to him by the Creator, ultimately upon God.<sup>68</sup> The woman in turn blamed the serpent and, like her husband, ultimately God (3:13).

We must now turn to the judgments of God which come in curses and punishments. The record is explicit in its emphasis that divine curses are pronounced upon the serpent (3:14) and the ground (3:17); but the woman and the man are not cursed.<sup>69</sup>

The declaration spoken to woman is of special concern. It consists of (1) the multiplication of pain in pregnancy and childbirth (3:16a)<sup>70</sup> and (2) that her husband shall “rule” over her (3:16b).

The judgment that there shall be an increase of “pain” (*‘iššābôn*)<sup>71</sup> during pregnancy and in childbirth can hardly serve as a sound theological argument against attempts to reduce discomfort and pain during pregnancy and labor. Why? The same term (*‘iššābôn*) is employed for the “toil” (RV, RSV, NASB, NAB) or “labour” (NEB) imposed on Adam with regard to the travail in making his livelihood. As man’s travail in making a livelihood is reduced by inventions and technology, so woman’s travail in pregnancy and childbirth can be reduced by modern inventions and technological advances!

What does the troublesome statement that your husband (*iš*) “shall rule over you” (RSV) mean? At first sight one might be under the impression that as man’s dominion and rulership over the animals is established, so woman’s aspirations for a higher sphere of existence caused her to actually fall to an inferior position, equaling that of other creatures. But this means to misread the text. The inspired writer carefully distinguishes between man’s (*‘ādām*) rule over the animals and a husband’s rule over his wife. The Hebrew text employs two different verbs which are rendered into English (and other modern languages) by the same word. Man’s rulership over the animals is expressed with the verb *rdh* (1:26, 28), the meaning of which has been discussed already and need not be repeated. Man’s rulership over his wife is expressed with the verb *māšal* (3:16). In over 100 usages of forms of the root *mšl* in the OT, there is not a single example in which a form of *mšl* expresses man’s ruling over animals. Accordingly, by the choice of this word to express that man shall “rule” over woman, the inspired writer excluded the idea of woman being reduced through sin to a position equal to animals. The verb *māšal* is employed a number of times with Yahweh as the subject.<sup>72</sup> When used of man, it is employed of man’s

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<sup>68</sup>With H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (Gottingen, 1901), p. 16; von Rad, p. 89; and other against Tribble, p. 40: “Here man does not blame the woman; . . . he blames the Deity”; cf. PP 57: “he [Adam] endeavored to cast the blame upon his wife, and thus upon God Himself.”

<sup>69</sup>Against Schmidt, p. 216, who speaks of a “Fluchwort gegen den ‘Menschen’” in Gen 3:17-19.

<sup>70</sup>The translation “your pain in childbearing” (RSV, NJV, NASB, NAB) captures admirably the meaning of the Hebrew idiom which is “a parade example of hendiadys” (Speiser, p. 24). A hendiadys is a literary and idiomatic method whereby two formally coordinate terms, either verbs, nouns, or adjectives, are joined by “and” to express a single concept in which one of the components defines the other. The literal text would read “your pangs and your childbearing.”

<sup>71</sup>A kindred noun is employed the second time the word “pain” appears in 3:16; namely, *ṯēb* (“pain”), which derives from the same root *ṯbh* (Holladay, p. 280).

<sup>72</sup>1 Chr 29:12; 2 Chr 20:6; Ps 22:28; 59:13; 66:7; 89:9; 103:19; Judg 8:23.

rulership over creation (Ps 8:7), his brothers and sisters (Gen 37:8), slaves (Exod 21:8), nations (Deut 15:6), or nations ruling another nation (Joel 2:17). Man can also “rule over” or “be in charge of” someone’s possessions (Gen 24:2; Ps 105:21). The verb can also refer to “self-control,” namely the ruling of oneself (Gen 4:7; Ps 19:14; Prov 16:32). A common usage is “to rule” in the political sphere.<sup>73</sup> It is obvious that the verb *māšal*, being used of an activity of God, man, woman, nation, etc., has multiple nuances. It seems certain that it implies subordination. Again the context and additional content must define the nature of the subordination of woman to man.

It is a fact of nature that woman is not subordinate to man in intellectual, mental, emotional, and other spheres of existence. A woman could take part in equal status with man in the public life of ancient Israel. Important women are known from the earliest to the latest period of Israel’s history. Miriam could serve as a counselor to government (Exod 2:4, 7-8; 15:20-21) and is known as a prophetess (Exod 15:20). Deborah is an Israelite heroine and served as a “judge” on equal par with other judges (Judg 4-5). Athaliah reigned as queen over Judah for six years (2 Kgs 11). Huldah the prophetess was consulted by the king’s ministers (2 Kgs 22:14). Isaiah’s wife was a “prophetess” (Isa 8:3). Both men and women could take the Nazarite vow and dedicate and separate themselves for God (Num 6:2). The book of Esther tells how the nation was saved by a woman. Regarding God’s choice of women for spiritual and political leadership, the OT provides ample evidence against an inferior ability of women to fulfill such tasks, though they do not appear as often as man. Women were employed by God to do a work for Him, just as were men.<sup>74</sup>

In returning, to the question of the meaning of the statement that man shall “rule” (*māšal*) over woman, one needs to stress that this follows the statement that her “desire” (RV, RSV, NASB) or “urge” (NAB; NJV; NEB, margin) shall be for her husband (Gen 3:16). This “urge” or “desire” can hardly be described as “bordering upon disease”<sup>75</sup> or as a craving more violent in woman for her husband than in man for his wife. Why? The same Hebrew term (*tešûāh*) is also used of man’s “desire” or “urge” for his beloved (Cant 7:10-11). This seems to imply that the wife’s desire for her husband is just as natural and strong as is the husband’s desire for his wife. On this point the OT does not appear to make a distinction between man and woman. Both seem to share the same urge.

In any case, the inspired record shows that the divine declaration that man shall “rule” over woman is placed within the context of the man/woman relationship in marriage. This contextual setting of the divine announcement of man’s rule over woman must never be lost sight of.<sup>76</sup> Note that the first part of the declaration, that is, the multiplying of travail in pregnancy, is an experience that takes place in marriage. The second part, that is, pain in childbirth, is likewise an experience which takes place within the sphere at marriage. The third part stresses the wife’s “desire for your husband.” Then after this threefold reference to changes associated with the marriage institution comes the sentence, “he [your husband] shall rule over you” (3:16, NASB).

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<sup>73</sup>Gen 45:8, 26; Josh 12:2, 5; Judg 8:22-23; 9:2; 14:4; 15:11; 2 Sam 23:3; 1 Kgs 5:1; Isa 3:4, 12; 14:5; 16:1; etc.; cf. J. A. Soggin, “*mšl* herrschen,” *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* 1:930-33.

<sup>74</sup>To deduce superiority on the part of man on account of statistics (women functioned less often than men) is precarious.

<sup>75</sup>So Keil, p. 103.

<sup>76</sup>Paul also speaks of the wives’ submitting to their husbands (Eph 5:24), but adds immediately (to avoid misunderstanding) that they should love their wives as Christ loved the church (5:25) and as they love their own bodies (5:28).

The contextual setting of the marriage institution provides a crucial aid in answering the question of the meaning of the statement, “he shall rule over you.” The ruling of man over woman is restricted to the sphere of marriage.<sup>77</sup> Accordingly, this divine declaration does not apply to all spheres of woman’s life and activity. This sentence cannot be used to support male domination and supremacy in all spheres of life. It is reading into this statement what the context denies. It is eisegesis and not exegesis.

Now the sensitive questions arise with regard to the meaning of the husband’s ruling over his wife. Does this ruling mean male domination and supremacy in marriage? Does this imply that the female is to be reduced to a blindly obedient slave? Does this support man’s reign as a despot? Does this include the loss of the wife’s individuality, the surrendering of her will to her husband, etc.? Neither the OT nor the NT gives any indication of answering any of these questions in the affirmative. Sin disrupted the harmony of husband and wife. That man should rule over his wife means that the union and harmony of marriage can be preserved only by submission on the part of one to the other.<sup>78</sup> So man is the head of the woman as the Father is the head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3). As the Father and Christ are equal and yet God is the head of Christ, so husband and wife are equal<sup>79</sup> but the husband is the head. He is the first among equals. The submission on the part of one to the other can hardly be thought of as destroying the essence of a harmonious relationship; and yet one of the two rules and is head; whereas the other is in submission. The headship of the husband, his rulership in the sphere of marriage, is controlled by his love modeled after the love of Christ for His church, giving Himself up for her (Eph 5:25). A husband guided by the divine model will love his wife as his own body (Eph 5:28). These biblical concepts destroy any false understanding of the rulership function of the husband in marriage.

The usurpation of power and authority by man over woman contrary to the divine intention and God’s will is already illustrated in Gen 3. It appears to result from an increase of sin which corrupted the pattern established by God after sin vitiated man’s relationship with God and each other. The inspired record reports, “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living” (3:20, NASB). Adam named his wife. This is the second naming scene in the Bible. It has been shown above that the biblical formula for naming contains the verb *to call* (*qārāḥ*) and the object *name* (*šēm*). Both elements are present. In naming his wife, Adam asserts ownership and control over her. It is an act of power which seems to reflect the corruption of a relationship of mutuality and equality. Does the inspired writer intend to express the idea that Adam, who established his dominion and authority over animals in the act of naming them, is doing the same in naming his wife, establishing a supremacy fit for animals but not for his God-given equal? That the name Eve itself has a positive connotation, because it expresses the idea of life and that she is “the mother of all the living,” does not do away with her being named, which appears to fault man with corrupting a relationship of rulership

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<sup>77</sup>Ellen G. White clearly interprets Adam’s rule over Eve in terms of the husband/wife relationship in the home in the following way: “But after Eve’s sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in *subjection to her husband*, and this was part of the curse.”—3T 484, emphasis supplied. In PP 58, she writes, “they [Adam and Eve] would have ever been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by *submission on the part of the one [to] the other* . . . she had fallen into temptation by *separating from her companion*, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now *placed in subjection to her husband*.” (Emphasis supplied.)

<sup>78</sup>See n. 77.

<sup>79</sup>See 4T 36.

built on mutual esteem and self-giving love. Does it not appear as an act that mars the divinely established relationship between husband and wife? Is it significant that it is followed by expulsion from the Garden of Eden (3:22-24)?

### **Retrospect and Prospect**

It remains now to summarize our conclusions and study their implications for the church at the time of the end. Genesis 1 appears to indicate equality between man and woman in the following ways: (1) “man” (*ādām*) being created as “male and female,” (2) their creation “in the image of God,” (3) their sharing in equal manner in the divine “blessing,” (4) their common power to “subdue” the earth, (5) their mutual assignment to “rule” over the animals, and (6) their common vocation to be God’s vice-regents on earth (Gen 1:26-21).

The more extensive story of the creation of man and woman in Gen 2 does not stand in tension or opposition to this picture, but corroborates the compressed statements of Gen 1, complementing them with additional details. That woman is created to be man’s “helper” (*ēzer*) expresses both a beneficial and a harmonious relationship between man and woman. Only woman is a suitable partner alongside and corresponding to man; she is his equal companion (2:18, 20). As God is man’s superior helper and animals are man’s interior helpers, so woman is man’s equal helper, one that fits him. Woman owes her creation as solely to God as does man who, although created first, is neither consulted nor participates in her creation. Her creation from Adam’s rib indicates the inseparable unity and fellowship of life between male and female as well as her status as equal with man (2:21). The jubilant outcry, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23a, RSV), expresses man’s recognition that finally there is a fitting companion equal to him. The fact of Adam’s creation before Eve’s does not imply any superiority on his part.

With the fall of man and the entry of sin into the world (Gen 3) the complete and total harmony between God and man, man and man/woman, and man and world is disrupted. The particular term chosen by the inspired writer to express the idea of the divine declaration that man shall “rule” (*māšal*) over his wife (3:16) indicates that she is not reduced to a slave or an animal to be “ruled” (*rādah*) as animals are (1:26, 28). The context of Gen 3:16 amply indicates that the sphere of woman’s submission is restricted to the marriage relationship. To maintain a harmonious union in marriage during the era of sin, God designed that while husband and wife should remain equal, he should “rule” over her or be the head of a relationship of equals as the Father is the head of Christ in the relationship of the equality of a triune God (1 Cor 11:3). The husband’s rulership is modeled after the self-giving love of Christ for the church (Eph 5:25, 28), which militates against any usurpation of powers and claims of authority over woman (Gen 3:20).

In addition to the important observation that the rulership of man over woman is valid in the sphere of marriage, it has been observed, if our careful investigation has not misled us, that the husband’s ruling function was explicitly assigned to him after the Fall.

The implications of these observations are of immense significance for the task of the proclamation of the gospel of God’s remnant church. If the plan of salvation and the message of the gospel are concerned with the reproduction of the image of God in men under the guidance of the Spirit of truth,<sup>80</sup> and if on the basis that Christ in His life and death has achieved even

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<sup>80</sup>DA 671.

more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin,<sup>81</sup> is it then not the responsibility of the church to bring about the reproduction of the image of God in man, to restore harmony between God and man, and establish equality and unity in the human family where there is now inequality between men and women in such spheres of life and activity where the divine declaration of mans rulership over his wife and of the wife's submission to her husband (Gen 3:16; Eph 5:22-23; 1 Pet 3:1ff.) does not apply? Furthermore, does the urgency of the task and the shortness of time not require the total utilization of all our manpower and womanpower resources in the completion of the gospel commission given to the remnant church?

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

**II**  
**THE LEGAL AND SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN**  
**IN THE PENTATEUCH**

Kenneth L. Vine

The purpose here is to show the status of woman as presented in the Pentateuch as far as her position in society and law were concerned. It is vital that the original status given to woman by God at creation be reviewed and that the study give an overview of the changed status resulting from the Fall.

**Creation of Woman**

The basic Pentateuchal record of the creation of woman is found in the following three passages as quoted from the NASB (used here and throughout this study).

1. Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image; according to our likeness, and let them rule over the fish at the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

2. Genesis 2:18, 21-25

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him helper suitable for him."

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So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place.

And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; and shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

3. Genesis 5:1-2

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

He created them male and female, and He blessed and named them Man in the day when they were created.

In the use of the generic term *ʿādām*, translated “man,” but more correctly “mankind,” Moses includes both “male and female” (Gen 1:27) without sex distinction in terms of superiority or subordination of the one to the other. As Hasel correctly pointed out, “man and woman find their full meaning neither in male alone nor in female alone, but in their mutual relationship and communion.”<sup>1</sup>

The fact that woman is included in the term *ʿādām* of Gen 1, and yet her creation account is not detailed until Gen 2, certainly suggests that the latter is not a separate account of creation as critical scholars contend,<sup>2</sup> but an expansion, giving more detail, and building on the Gen 1 account.

Further, the Gen 2:18 term “helper suitable for him” may give the wrong connotation, suggesting one of inferior position created only to “help” or “aid” the “master.” But the word *ʿezer* (“helper”), whatever its true meaning, is applied to God<sup>3</sup> as the “help[er]” for His people; it in no way implies an inferior position but rather mutual support for mutual benefit.

The implied original position of woman therefore is that she was fashioned by God from a rib (*ṣēlāh*) taken from man’s side,<sup>4</sup> to be his equal—a suitable counterpart—in a partnership of complementary companionship forming an inseparable and perfect unity.<sup>5</sup> Equality is implicit also in Gen 2:22-23 where the terms *ʿiš* and *ʿiššāh* are used for the first time and imply an equality that differs only in the sex—male and female—but presents no suggestion of superiority or inferiority.<sup>6</sup> That they “become one flesh” (Gen 2:24) also contributes to the concept of the equality and unity of the man and woman in God’s original plan.

It is interesting and important to note that nowhere in ancient Near Eastern literature is there a parallel to the biblical account of the creation of woman, and nowhere in the ancient Near East is the woman held in such high esteem as in the inspired Mosaic account of creation by the Most High God.

### Woman After the Fall

While many will agree that God’s original plan was for man and woman to be equal from the viewpoint of status and that the husband and wife complement each other, the big question is, “What happened, if anything, to this status and relationship following the Fall, as far as God was concerned?”

The story of the temptation and fall recorded in Gen 3 is familiar. Verse 6 declares:

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard F. Hasel, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3,” (chap. 1 in this volume), p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>See for example H. H. Rowley, *The Growth of the Old Testament*, (New York, 1963), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup>Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; Pss 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9; 121:1-2; 124:8; 146:5; Dan 11:34; Hos 13:9.

<sup>4</sup>PP 46: “Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self, showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.”

<sup>5</sup>C. F. Keil *The First Book of Moses: Genesis* (Grand Rapids, 1949), 1:89.

<sup>6</sup>William L. Bevan, art. “Women” ed. W. Smith. *A Dictionary of the Bible* 3 (London, 1863): 1785; see also Anson Rainey, art. “Woman,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 16 (Jerusalem, 1971), cols. 623-25.

Eating of the fruit from the tree in the center of the garden was explicitly forbidden by God on pain of death (Gen 2:16-17); Eve, against God’s counsel, left her husband’s side and placed herself in temptation’s pathway by going to the tree. She saw its fruit was “good for food,” thus desirable for the physical drives; “pleasant to the eyes,” therefore emotionally and aesthetically satisfying; and desirable “to make one wise,” appealing to her ego.<sup>7</sup>

The woman, “being quite deceived” (1Tim 2:14) fell into transgression and urged her husband to follow suit. Both sinned and both entered into their new “knowledge” and “wisdom” with the same disastrous results. They were naked and ashamed (Gen 3:7); they hid from the Lord God with whom they were accustomed to walk and talk with a clear conscience<sup>8</sup> (Gen 3:8); and the hitherto unknown emotion of fear gripped them (Gen 3:10). Nowhere up to this point is there implied an inferior position of woman after sin;<sup>9</sup> and it is true that the loss of peace and harmony was experienced by both man and woman with God and each other.

God now pronounced judgment upon our first parents. “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you’ (Gen 3:16). Pain is therefore to be the woman’s lot, and her husband is to “rule over” her.

Does this last statement not seem to imply a change in status for the woman? Is she no longer to be equal with her husband, but now be subordinate to him, ruled over by him, as he was to rule over the animals? Does this not prove the inferiority of the woman following the Fall?

It is important to point out that the Hebrew text uses two different words to express rulership in the beginning of the book of Genesis. In Gen 1:26, 28 where man is told to “rule” or “have dominion” over the animals the word *rādāh* is used. However, the verb *māšal* (Gen 3:16) is used when expressing a husband’s rulership over his wife. This latter verb is never used to express man’s rule over the animal kingdom, which would certainly suggest that the wife was not to be reduced, through sin, to the level of animals.

Another point to emphasize is that all facets of the judgment pronounced in Gen 3:16 apply to the marriage institution. The travail in pregnancy, the pain in childbirth, the wife’s desire for her husband, and the point that the husband would “rule” over the wife are all marriage related—within the family—and are unrelated to other spheres of a woman’s activity and life.

That the wife was “placed in subjection to her husband”<sup>10</sup> is clear; but does this make the wife a slave, lacking in individuality, initiative, or will of her own? Scripture would clearly give a negative answer; but even as sin broke the harmony of the home and marriage, God saw within the framework of the new circumstances that harmony, union, and smoothness could prevail only as the husband took the lead and the wife took the submissive but supportive role (1 Cor 11:3). “As the Father and Christ are equal and yet God is the head of Christ, so husband and wife are equal [4T 36] but the husband is the head. He is the first among equals.”<sup>11</sup>

Therefore this rulership by the husband is to be held in love, following the pattern of Christ’s love for the church (Eph 5:25). However, sin rapidly brought degradation and an order vastly different from God’s original plan.

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<sup>7</sup>Cf. 1 John 2:16, and PP 56.

<sup>8</sup>PP 57.

<sup>9</sup>Hasel, p. 22.

<sup>10</sup>PP 58-59.

<sup>11</sup>Hasel, p. 25.



The Pentateuch reveals that the social and legal status of woman is strongly influenced by the patriarchal form of family life,<sup>12</sup> in which the woman's principal function is fulfilled in her role as wife and mother. She does indeed take part in the religious, social, political, and economic life of the community, and at times plays a part even in military affairs as will be seen in the following pages.

### **Woman's Status and Role as Daughter**

Within a patriarchal society the husband longs for sons, and a wife who produces sons has established herself and her honor within the family and community. The birth of a son is cause for great rejoicing, for the continuance of the family name and estate is assured. The birth of a daughter does little for her own family; for upon marriage she takes the name of the husband and builds the family in his name. Thus Lev 12:1-5 reflects the greater desirability of sons.

When a genealogy is being related, it is usual to mention only the sons. Only occasionally are outstanding daughters named (for example, Gen 37:35 mentions "all his [Jacob's] daughters," yet only Dinah is referred to by name; Gen 5:3, 7, 10, etc., mention "and daughters" but none are named).

This does not mean that they were unloved and unwanted. When Jacob left his father-in-law's home with his wives and goods while Laban was away shearing sheep, Laban followed in hot pursuit and said to Jacob, You "did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters" (Gen 31:28).

After settling his problem with Jacob "Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them," (Gen 31:55) and warned Jacob not to mistreat his daughters (Gen 31:50).<sup>13</sup>

A great deal of liberty was enjoyed by women in Pentateuchal times. Both married and single girls mingled quite freely and openly with both sexes while carrying out the duties and amenities of ordinary life. Rebekah was unveiled while traveling in the caravan until she came into the presence of her affianced (Gen 24:64-65). Jacob saluted Rachel with a kiss in the presence of the shepherds (Gen 29:11). Each of these young ladies engaged in active employment—the former fetched water from the well and the latter tended her flock.<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note the extent of freedom Rebekah had when extending hospitality to Eliezer: "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in" (Gen 24:25), and all this before she consulted the family. She had also received from an apparent stranger presents of gold rings and bracelets weighing a total of ten and a half shekels (Gen 24:22).

The fact that an outrage on a single girl in the open field was visited with severe punishment (Deut 22:25-27) is indicative of the fact that it was not considered improper for a young lady to go about unprotected. This point is strengthened by the fact that it was her duty to care for the family water supply (Gen 24:16) and to water the flocks (Gen 24:19-20), as well as to care for the sheep (Gen 29:6, 9).

Daughters were expected to take part in Sabbathkeeping (Deut 5:14), in rejoicing before the Lord (Deut 12:12), in playing instruments and dancing (Exod 15:20), in presenting and

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<sup>12</sup>Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (New York, 1961), p. 20; O. J. Baab, art. "Woman," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 4 (New York, 1962): 864.

<sup>13</sup>See also Gen 29:11, etc.

<sup>14</sup>Bevan.

eating of offerings before the Lord (Deut 12:17-18),<sup>15</sup> and in sharing the spoils of God's enemies (Exod 3: 22).

In matters of genealogy and inheritance sons played the dominant role. However, the daughters of Zelophehad appealed to Moses that inheritance laws include unmarried daughters of fathers who died having no male heir (Num 26:33; 27:1-9). The appeal was granted under the guidance of God. Daughters of fathers having no son could inherit the father's estate. All rights were forfeited if they married outside their tribe; this would keep the inheritance within the family (Num 36:2-4).

However, a daughter was subject to her father, and in many ways was treated as inferior to her brother. A father could sell his daughter into slavery where she could become the wife of the master or his son (Exod 21:7-11), though Jewish tradition explains that the daughter must be under the age of puberty and her family must be suffering extreme poverty.<sup>16</sup> Her master was forbidden to resell her. He could release her, but the law of release during the sabbatical year did not apply to women as to men (Exod 21:1ff.; Lev 25:40).<sup>17</sup> She could choose to remain a servant "forever" by submitting to an ear-boring ceremony (Deut 15:17).

Should a single girl make a "vow to the Lord" (Num 30:3-5), or even a Nazarite vow (Num 6:2ff),<sup>18</sup> it was subject to the validation of the father; but this was not true for a son. Idolatry was punished with death by stoning (Deut 13:6-11), and this was true for the daughter or wife.

While the father controlled his daughter, he was forbidden to force her into prostitution (Lev 19:29), though Lot offered his two daughters to the men of Sodom in order to protect his two male guests (Gen 19:8). Harlotry was condemned and was generally punishable by death, possibly with the idea of protecting God's people from being swept into the degrading rites and practices of the surrounding fertility worship. It would appear that the sin was considered more heinous for the woman than for the man, as is illustrated in the experience of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38). For a priest's daughter to become a harlot, especially in the light of local fertility temple rites, there was only one punishment—to "be burned with fire" (Lev 21:9).

Fornication in general was condemned. If an engaged daughter were seduced, the young man paid a dowry, she became his wife, and divorce was forbidden (Exod 22:16; Deut 22:28-29).<sup>19</sup> If she was engaged and forced by another man, the law took account of two situations: If the act occurred in the city where she could have called for help, both were stoned to death (Deut 22:23-24). If it occurred in the open country, only the man was executed. The woman was not held accountable (vss. 25-27). Should the fornication take place with another man's female slave, the man was punished (not with death) and required to present a guilt offering to the Lord; the slave girl was not punished, possibly because she was considered part of the other man's "belongings" (Lev 19:20-22). Bestiality was automatically punished by death (Exod 22:19; Lev 18:23; 20:16), whether committed by man or woman.

The daughter, while being subject to her father, had many freedoms. She was loved. She served in the home and field chores, but was to keep herself chaste at all times prior to marriage.

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<sup>15</sup>For daughters of priests see Lev 22:12-13.

<sup>16</sup>Lewis N. Dembitz, art. "Woman, Rights of," *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* 12 (New York, 1907): 556.

<sup>17</sup>See also Rainey, cols. 624-25.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>This is illustrated in the story of Dinah and Shechem (Gen 34:7-31), but the fact that a daughter had been forced left deep-seated hatreds which in this case led to the death of the Shechemites.

## Woman's Status and Role as Wife

Marriages in Pentateuchal times were arranged by the parents (Gen 24:3ff.; 34:4, 12; Deut 7:3; etc.), usually within the tribe and often to one's first cousin as is common in the Middle East today.<sup>20</sup> This is usually in the interest of keeping the wealth and estate within the family. First the consent of the father was given (Exod 22:17; Deut 22:16), then the consent of the family was sought but was not essential to the final arrangements of the marriage (Gen 24:41). Finally the prospective bride was approached for her approval (Gen 24:5, 8, 39, 57-58). Such statements as, "Suppose the woman will not be willing, . . ." "We will call the girl and consult her wishes," and "Will you go with this man?" certainly suggest that the woman had some say in regard to her marital likes and dislikes, in spite of the authority the father had over her. However, human nature being what it is, it would be unusual if this power were not abused; and, in some cases, the abuse became the rule.

Conditions for marriage as seen in the Pentateuch include: a woman should be a virgin (Deut 22:13-21; Gen 24:16; etc.) and preferably beautiful (Gen 12:11, 14; 26:7; 29:17; Deut 21:10-14); she should be industrious, for most of the household chores and management were upon her shoulders.<sup>21</sup> The one she was to marry should be from the covenant community, as evidenced by his circumcision (Gen 24:3; 28:1; 34:14-15; Deut 7:3; etc.), and no unlawful relationship should be entered into (Lev 18:7-20). It was preferable, though not an unbroken law, that the firstborn daughter should be married before the younger (Gen 29:26). No harlot or divorcee was permitted to marry a priest (Lev 21:7), "for he is holy to his God."

Once the agreement was settled, the father received a "bride price" for his daughter and thus a contract was sealed with the prospective husband.<sup>22</sup> This is called the *mohar* or "price" (Gen 31:15; 34:12; Exod 22:17; etc.). It is equivalent to the amount paid by a single man who seduces a virgin and thereby makes the commitment to take her as his wife (Exod 22:16).

The question comes as to whether this is actually a "purchase price" for the transfer of chattel property, or the price paid for "the surrender of authority over a woman by one man to another,"<sup>23</sup> with the corresponding responsibility to love her and care for her welfare. The latter seems to be the case. Dembitz likens the *mohar* to the Babylonian *tirhatu*, where it became customary for the bride's father to restore the money to the husband at the wedding on receipt of a contract to the wife "as a jointure, payable upon the death of the husband or in case of divorce. . . [It was therefore] a good security against divorce on insufficient grounds."<sup>24</sup>

After the engagement the young lady veiled herself when in the presence of her husband-to-be (Gen 24:65) and she was considered as if she were the wife (Deut 22:23-24); for if she were violated by another man he would be charged with having "violated his neighbor's wife." Following the engagement her husband-to-be would be excused from war service until twelve months after the wedding.<sup>25</sup>

The Pentateuch does not describe a wedding in detail. "God celebrated the first marriage,"<sup>26</sup> of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; nothing is given by way of description. Of Isaac it is stated that he brought Rebekah "into his mother Sarah's tent, . . . and she became his wife; and he loved her. . ." (Gen 24:67). Of Jacob and Leah (obviously a veil concealed her identity for

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<sup>20</sup>Gen 24:4, 15, 29, 38; 28:2; etc.

<sup>21</sup>Bevan, pp. 1785-86.

<sup>22</sup>Baab, p. 865.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. In Gen 14:16 "the women"/wives are separated from "his possessions." In Deut 5:21 "neighbor's wife" is separated from house, field, animals, and servants, yet she belongs to her husband, as the husband belongs to her.

<sup>24</sup>Dembitz, p. 557.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Deut 20:7, and 24:5.

<sup>26</sup>pp 46.

Jacob thought her to be Rachel) it states that Laban “brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her” (Gen 29:23). He is then said to have waited until “the bridal week” of Leah was complete—possibly similar to a “honeymoon” of more modern times—before Laban “gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife” (Gen 29:27-28). Little is said of the wedding celebrations, though Laban did gather “all the men of the place, and made a feast” (Gen 29:22). It is assumed, however, that the young lady also invited her friends and the whole community to the celebrations.

In the Pentateuch a marriage gift from the bride’s father of at least one handmaid was common. Laban gave Zilpah to Leah, and Bilhah to Rachel (Gen 29:22-29). Sarah’s handmaid was Hagar (Gen 16:1). The purpose of the handmaid was not only to serve the wife but, should the wife be barren or unable to produce sons, she could give the handmaid to her husband so that sons might be born. It would appear that in the latter event the handmaids were eventually referred to as “wives,”<sup>27</sup> possibly as secondary wives; but their sons were ranked with those of the full-fledged wife (for example, Jacobs 12 sons). The handmaid was totally under the control of the wife (Gen 16:1-9); and apparently, as in the case of Hagar (Gen 21:9-14), she could be driven out from the family for insubordination, along with her child, if a natural child had been born to the family.

Following the wedding the wife came under the authority of her husband (Num 5:19) and she addressed him as *baʿal*, “master, lord,” or *ʿadôn*, “lord” (Gen 18:12; Judg 19:26).<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that this is the same title of address used by a slave to his master or a subject addressing the king. In Deut 21:13; 22:22; 24:1, etc., to marry a wife is expressed by the Hebrew verb *baʿal*, “to become master.”

This should not, however, be interpreted as indicating that the wife of an Israelite was on the level of a slave. As de Vaux<sup>29</sup> points out, a man could sell his slaves and even his daughter but never his wife. This was true even when the wife was acquired as a captive in war (Deut 21:10-14). The wife was a “free” woman (as opposed to a bondwoman) who could be divorced, even though she could not initiate the divorce. In case of divorce, however, she was protected by a letter of divorcement that restored her freedom (Deut 24:1-4), and the *mohar* was to be restored to her.

Within the family she became well established and held in high esteem when the first child, particularly a boy, was born (Gen 16:4; 29:31-30:24); it drew the husband and wife closer together and she was revered by the extended family—the community—and particularly by her children, who owed her honor, respect, and obedience. The wife was not addressed as a slave or part of a man’s chattels; for in Gen 12:13 Abraham addressed Sarah with the words, “Please say that you are my sister. . . .” This is a respectful request, not an order. And, contrary to a common custom currently prevailing in the Middle East where the wife walks while father and children ride, Gen 45:19 and Exod 4:20 indicate that wagons and donkeys were supplied for the transportation of wives and children.

The view of Miller and Miller in *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*<sup>30</sup> that women in OT times were tireless drudges whose lot was little better than that of cattle or slaves” is unfortunate.

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<sup>27</sup>See Gen 37:2 where Bilhah and Zilpah are referred to as “his father’s wives.” The Hebrew word *nāšîm*, (wives women), is used. These were considered above a concubine in rank (Hebrew: *leḥēnāh* or more commonly *pilāgaš*), who were half wives, sometimes taken from among slaves (Gen 16:2-3), and their sons were considered inferior to those born to full-fledged wives (Gen 25:6; Judg 8:31; 9:18; etc.).

<sup>28</sup>De Vaux, pp. 26, 39.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Madeline S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, art. “Woman” (New York, 1961), p. 821.

Either it demonstrates little understanding of the situation of the wife in OT times; or it reflects an evaluation made outside the OT framework and thus leads to wrong interpretations.

Certainly the wife who entered into her role in the right spirit in Pentateuchal days would have worked hard; but if done in the spirit of love as a homemaker, wife, and mother, all this “far from lowering her status” would have “earned her consideration” and honor.<sup>31</sup>

The wife’s role included, in addition to childbearing and childrearing,<sup>32</sup> preparing meals (Gen 18:6; 27:14; etc.); carrying water (Gen 24:11ff; Exod 2:16; etc.); weaving and spinning, and thus making and caring for the family clothing. (Exod 35:25-26; etc.); manual labor, which might include working in the field (even making the ark for Moses [Exod 2:3])<sup>33</sup>—perhaps nursing (Exod 2:7-10; Gen 24:59; 35:8; Num 11:12, etc.); or being a midwife (Gen 35:17; 38:28; Exod 1:15-22; etc.). These and many other duties, when performed well, brought joy and honor to her.

Of course one might expect abuses on the part of both the husband and the wife; but these cases are not typical in the Pentateuch. Adultery and fornication in various forms were forbidden and punishable by death or condemnation to childlessness (Lev 20:10-21; etc.).<sup>34</sup>

Certain things were forbidden to a wife. She could not make vows that were not validated by her husband (Num 30:6-8); she could not wear man’s clothing (Deut 22:5), thereby attempting to deceive and to enter into the forbidden role of a male. In defending her husband who might take part in a physical fight with another Israelite, she was forbidden to seize the assailant’s genitals on pain of having her hand cut off (Deut 25:11-12).

The question of bigamy and polygamy should be mentioned at this point. The first reference to a bigamous marriage is to Lamech (Gen 4:19-24), of the line of Cain, who married Adah and Zillah. It was a perversion of God’s original plan for man as well as a downgrading of womanhood. It is true that in an agricultural society “many hands make light work” and that this might have been the original basis for bigamy, yet its related problems—multiplied in polygamous marriages—seem to outweigh the advantages. Jacob married Leah and Rachel (Gen 29:23, 30), though Leah was not his choice. It resulted in broken harmony and jealousy in the home (Gen 30:1). To control this ill-begotten state of affairs, laws were formulated (Deut 21:15-17) which at least handled matters of inheritance. If a second wife were not taken, then it became common for part-wives, called “concubines,” to be taken, as in the cases of Nahor (Gen 22:24) and Abraham (Gen 25:6). This tended to degrade womanhood even further. Then Esau, who at first took two pagan wives, Judith and Basemath (Gen 26:34), to displease and bring grief to his parents (Gen 26:35), began to multiply wives (Gen 36:2-3) and concubines (Gen 36:12; etc.), all the more so as he “saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac” (Gen 28:8-9). This was probably encouraged by the earlier deceptions of his mother (Gen 27:7-28:2) and brother.

The Lord forbade the future ruler of Israel to “multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away” (Deut 11:17). This shows the effect of a wife upon her husband. It seems obvious that the Mosaic laws were aimed at “mitigating rather than removing evils”<sup>35</sup> which appeared to be almost inseparable from the then-existing state of society. The enactments sought to raise the standard of womanhood, discourage polygamy, counteract and correct injustices arising from

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<sup>31</sup>De Vaux, p. 39; Bevan.

<sup>32</sup>See p. 29.

<sup>33</sup>De Vaux, p. 49.

<sup>34</sup>Miller and Miller, pp. 821-22.

<sup>35</sup>W. L. Bevan, *A Dictionary of the Bible*, art. “Marriage” 2 (London: 1863); 241-42.

abuse by the male in a patriarchal society, restrict divorce, and encourage if not enforce a purity of life within the bonds of matrimony. More will be said under the subheading “Woman and Legal Rights.”<sup>36</sup>

### **Woman’s Status and Role as Mother**

The woman’s chief function was childbearing (Gen 3:16), and a good mother would enjoy the praise and respect of the father and children (Prov 31:28).<sup>37</sup> Because the mother was responsible for feeding, clothing, training, and guiding her children, she was often the one who presented the first rudiments of their education—especially the principles having to do with their moral formation. Her children were taught from the Ten Commandments to “honor your father and your mother” (Exod 20:12; cf. Lev 19:3). “The position of the mother is higher under the Mosaic law than under any other system in antiquity.”<sup>38</sup>

So highly respected was the mother that it was regarded as unthinkable that Joseph’s “mother” would bow down to a “son” (Gen 37:10). Reverence for her was demanded by law (Lev 19:3), though a good mother earned it by her love and actions. To curse or strike one’s mother or father (no differentiation is made between mother and father in this and other cases) brought an automatic death penalty, as did an incestuous relationship between a son and his mother.

Several accounts of the deaths of mothers of prominent men mention a period of weeping and mourning (Gen 23:2; 38:12; etc.). In the case of Rachel a memorial pillar was raised in her honor (Gen 35:20).

### **Status and Role of Other Women**

#### **Widows**

Upon the loss of her husband, the widow donned mourning garments for an unspecified period (Gen 38:14). She was at liberty to find food from the gleanings of the field, olives, and grape harvests (Deut 24:19-21). She was also given of the tithe of the increase “in the third year, the year of tithing” (Deut 26:12-13). She was protected by law from affliction (Exod 22:22), from distortion of justice (Deut 27:19), and from being forced to give a garment in pledge (Deut 24:17). Should she make a vow to God, she would be held accountable to fulfill the vow (Num 30:9), as was a man (vs. 2). And should she have a child by her husband, it was her privilege to take a wife for her son (Gen 21:21).

But if an aged widow had no children and no resources, her plight was a piteous one, and she was commended to the charity of the people, along with orphans and resident aliens.<sup>39</sup>

A young widow left childless was provided for in the Mosaic law by the levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10) whereby she was given to the *levir*, her husband’s next brother. The first son of that marriage was counted as a son of the dead husband so as to preserve his name and estate. This was a pre-Mosaic custom (Gen 38): Er, Judah’s oldest son, married Tamar and he died. She was then given to the second, Onan, who did not want to raise a son for his brother. When he

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<sup>36</sup>For a discussion on the effects of polygamy in the OT see Bevan, p. 1786.

<sup>37</sup>Rainey, col. 623.

<sup>38</sup>Dembitz, p. 558.

<sup>39</sup>de Vaux, p. 40; see also Exod 22:21; Deut 10:18; 24:17-21; 26:12-13; 27:19; etc.

entered into an illicit relationship with Tamar for sensual gratification only, instead of going through the process of refusing to act as *levir* to Tamar, God slew him. She was then told to wait for Shelah, the youngest, to grow up. But Judah delayed with obvious intent of failing to keep his word.

Tamar could remain a part of her husband's family while there was a *levir* (brother-in-law). If there was no *levir*, or the *levir* refused to honor his role, the widow was free to remarry outside the family, but would in the meantime leave her former father-in-law's home to live with her parents (Gen 38:11; cr. Lev 22:13). In the case of Tamar, while waiting for Shelah to mature, she apparently lived with her parents though still under partial control of Judah (cf. Gen 38:11, 24).

After waiting a reasonable time, Tamar forced the issue by impersonating a harlot, or "temple prostitute," to trap Judah in a forbidden relationship with her. When found out, she was considered worthy of death because she, presumably promised to Shelah, had played the role of a harlot.

She was spared when Judah realized the wrong he had done her. Though the record nowhere suggests that she was ever given to Shelah, it does state that she had twins, the elder of whom, Perez, became a progenitor of the Messiah.

This incident ended with reasonable satisfaction for Tamar. But the law forbade cult prostitution (Deut 23:17-18), whether male or female; and wages from such a practice were barred from the temple as an abomination.

## Divorcees

Prior to the law concerning divorce in Deut 24:1-4 men apparently divorced their wives by ordering them out of the house,<sup>40</sup> thus putting the divorcee in an almost impossible situation. With the divorce law the divorcee was given a certificate of divorcement so that she could legally and properly become the wife of another man with no stigma attached. At the time of the divorce the husband was to return the *mohar* to the wife, which became somewhat of a deterrent to gaining a divorce on insufficient grounds.<sup>41</sup> The law thus partially protected a woman from a capricious husband.

Should a divorcee make a vow to the Lord, she was held accountable to honor the vow, as was the widow or the man (Num 30:2, 9).

## Slaves

Male and female slaves from pagan nations could be purchased and become part of one's possessions, but it was not permissible to take a Hebrew as a slave (Lev 25:39-46). In the case of the purchase of a Hebrew man or woman, only six years of service could be demanded, for in the seventh year they were to be set free (Deut 15:12).

A daughter could be sold into slavery to pay a debt or because of the extreme poverty of the family (Exod 21:7); but in no case could she be sold into prostitution (Lev 19:29). A daughter thus sold with the idea that she marry the master could be redeemed if she were found displeasing to him. In the event that she had been designated for the master's son, she was to be treated as a daughter. In no case could she be re-sold to a foreign people; but if she were found unacceptable, she was to be released without payment (Exod 21:7-11).

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<sup>40</sup>S. H. Horn, "Divorce," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* (Washington, 1979), p. 290.

<sup>41</sup>Dembitz, p. 557.

The slaves, male or female, were considered property of the master (Exod 21:20-21; Lev 22:11), and could be punished or corrected by him. Abuses were handled mildly, however; if, after a beating, the slave—male or female—died the same day, there would be unstipulated punishment; but if the slave were to die after a day or two, no punishment would be meted out because the slave was his property (Exod 21:20-21). However, in the event that an eye or a tooth was lost, the master was duty-bound to release the slave, male or female (Exod 21:26-27). Should the master give a female slave to a male slave for a wife, and children be born of the union, this could secure the release of the male slave. But the female slave and her children were to remain the master’s property (Exod 21:4).

### **Woman and Inheritance**

Little more can be said than the recorded above—that in no case did an inheritance go to the mother;<sup>42</sup> but the daughters of Zelophehad (Num 26:33; 27:1-9; 36:2-4) had the inheritance law changed so that it reads, “If a man dies and has no son, then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter. . . .” This inheritance is conditional upon the daughter’s marrying within the tribe. To marry outside the tribe would mean the forfeiture of the inheritance to the father’s brothers.

### **Woman and Religious Life**

The woman’s role in organized worship was generally of a secondary nature. She could be called to be a prophetess, and could lead the people in music, singing, and sacred dancing (Exod 15:20; etc.), yet she could not serve as a priest(ess).<sup>43</sup>

Women, including daughters, maidservants, and widows, are specifically mentioned along with “all the congregation of Israel” (Exod 12:3; Deut 16:14) as taking part in the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. However, they were represented as part of the covenant community of Israel through the circumcision of their fathers or husbands; and their sins were forgiven through their faith in the offerings made by the priests, their fathers, or husbands.

They were credited with contributions for the tabernacle (Exod 35:22-29; 38:8), and the daughters of the priests could take part in eating the breast and thigh of the wave offering (Lev 10:14).

However, Israelite religion had no place for the pagan temple or cult prostitute (Deut 23:17-18; Num 31:15-16; 25; see also Gen 38:21-22). In pagan fertility worship such women took part in the act of fertility of man, beast, and soil, by transferring through sympathetic magic the fertilization of the cult prostitute to the respective area to be made fertile. But while Israel’s society was agriculturally based, there were no fertility rites in the Levitical rituals; and therefore there was no need for temple prostitutes. Their presence would only debase Israel and they were therefore condemned to death.

Neither was there any place in Israelite worship for the sorceress or spirit medium, who was directly connected with Satanic powers and worship; therefore anyone connected with the practice was condemned to be stoned to death (Exod 22:18; Lev 20:27; etc.).

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<sup>42</sup>Dembitz, p. 556. Unless Bethuel, Rebekah’s father, left the inheritance to his wife so that Rebekah’s home was called “her mother’s household” (Gen 24:28).

<sup>43</sup>Baah, “Woman,” p. 866. It is suggested that this might be because of the sexual nature of the woman and her periods of ritual uncleanness. See Lev 12:2, 5; 15:18-33, and the purification procedures in Lev 12:6-8. See also Rainey.



Thus the major part the woman played in the religious life was in instructing and training the children, and instilling in their young hearts basic spiritual principles and truths. Also, as the family took part in the major feasts at the tabernacle, she played her part in song, praise, prayer, and heart preparation of herself and her children.

### **Woman and Social Life**

The Pentateuch reflects a certain stratification of the female Hebrew society. Deuteronomy 28:56 talks of “the refined and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, . . .” which is an obvious description of the elite, aristocratic woman. At this period of time there was little or no middle class of specialists and business people, or *nouveaux riches*, which made the next class the “free” married women. Then would come the unmarried “free” women—the divorcee and the widow. The final group would appear to be the handmaids who had become secondary wives, concubines, and female Hebrew slaves. This last group represents those in various states of bondage.

At public festivals and celebrations women played a prominent part in music, singing, and dancing (Exod 15:20-21). This was particularly true at times of tribal and/or national victory, annual feasts, weddings, and (on a smaller scale) upon the birth of sons.<sup>44</sup> The women were also responsible for the food and drink at all times; and, while they might sing and dance, there is no evidence in Pentateuchal times of the sensual type of dancing common to pagan festivities. The women also participated as both guests and attendants of guests.<sup>45</sup>

Little detail is given in the Pentateuch regarding funerals and the woman’s part at such times. However, it was usual that the eyes of the dead were closed (Gen 46:4) and the body wrapped but usually not placed in a casket. The nearest relatives embraced the body (Gen 50:1). The men would tear their garments and put on sackcloth (Gen 37:34). The pagan custom of cutting oneself and shaving the hair and beard were condemned (Lev 19:27-28; 21:5; Deut 14:1). The women were to care for food—usually a special dish for such occasions—and drink, and to weep and lament—though in the early days this was also done by the men (Gen 23:2; 50:10). Later the laments and songs were prepared and sung by women who looked upon it as their trade or profession to be taught to their daughters (Jer 9:16ff.).<sup>46</sup>

### **Woman and Legal Status**

Many Hebrew laws treated men and women equally: both parents were to be honored and revered by their children (Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16; 27:16), death being meted out to the child, male or female; who either strikes or curses his parents—mother or father (Exod 21:15, 17; Lev 20:9; Deut 27:16); both adulterer and adulteress were to be put to death (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22); both male and female partners were to die if caught in incest (Lev 20:11, 17-18); in dealing with leprosy the Law banished and both male and female sufferers, without distinction, from society as unclean (Lev 13:29, 38; Num 12:1-2, 10ff.); punishments for violence—striking, goring by an ox, cursing or killing mother or father, male or female slave, man or woman, son or daughter—were the same whether committed by a male or female (Exod 21:15-32).

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<sup>44</sup>See Bevan, pp. 1785-86; de Vaux, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup>Bevan, Baab, p. 865.

<sup>46</sup>De Vaux, pp. 60-61

However, certain laws reflect a different status for certain women under special circumstances: The birth of a daughter required longer purification rites than for a son (Lev 12:1-5); in extreme poverty a father might sell his daughter to pay a debt (Exod 21:7-11)—however, this was with the idea that she would become the wife of either her master or her master’s son. Should she be found to be unacceptable, she was to go free without payment. Under no circumstances was she to be sold to foreigners. If sold into slavery as a wife, she was not, like her male counterpart, permitted to go free in the seventh year (Lev 25:40). She was not to be forced into prostitution by her father (Lev 19:29). A vow made by a single girl or married woman needed the approval of her father, husband, or guardian before it was valid. Without this the vow was made null and void (Num 30:4-16). However, this was not true of a widow or divorcee, whose vows were as valid as any man’s (Num 30:2, 9). In the evaluation of special vows the differentiation between the male and the female becomes evident (Lev 27:2-7). For example, the value of the vow was “according to your valuation of persons, belonging to the Lord”: a male between 20 and 60 years of age was evaluated at 50 shekels of silver, while a female of the same age group was evaluated at 30 shekels of silver. A male 5 to 20 years old was 20 shekels while a female of the same age was 10 shekels. A male up to three years of age was 5 shekels of silver, while a female of the same age was only 3 shekels. A male over 60 years old was valued at 15 shekels while a female of the same age was rated at 10 shekels. The value rating for the woman was approximately two-thirds that of the man.

Therefore, one cannot break from the conclusion that in the Patriarchal society in Pentateuchal days the woman, in general, had a lesser rating than the man; though as wife and mother she was revered, honored, respected and held in very high esteem.

### Summary

Initially there was full equality between man and woman as they came from the Creator’s hands.<sup>47</sup> They were equal, complementary, and compatible partners created in the image of God, given the same privilege of “subduing” the earth, and the same responsibility to people the earth with God-loving, God-worshiping, and Godlike children. Under the shared blessing of God in perfect surroundings, with God and angels as their teachers and companions, they unbelievably chose to sin, to go their own way.

“Eve had been perfectly happy by her husband’s side in her Eden home; but, like restless modern Eves, she was flattered with the hope of entering a higher sphere than that which God had assigned her. In attempting to rise above her original position, she fell far below it. A similar result will be reached by all who are unwilling to take up cheerfully their life duties in accordance with God’s plan. In their efforts to reach positions for which he has not fitted them, many are leaving vacant the place where they might be a blessing. In their desire for a higher sphere, many have sacrificed true womanly dignity, and nobility of character, and have left undone the very work that Heaven appointed them.”<sup>48</sup>

In their marital relationships Eve was placed in subjection to her husband, for he was to “rule” (*māšal*) over her (Gen 3:16), to be the head of a relationship of equals, as Christ rules the church (Eph 5:25, 28), and God the Father is the Head of Christ (1 Cor 11:3). But he was not to “rule” (*rādāh*) over her as a master his slave, or as he was to control the animal world.

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<sup>47</sup>See Hasel, pp. 26, for the summary and implications of the record in Gen 1-3.

<sup>48</sup>PP 59, see also 1BC 234, comment on Gen 3:16.

Unfortunately, after the first three chapters of Genesis, man's adulteration and abuse of his powers debased womanhood. This abuse spread far outside the marriage relationship to include all women, and to reduce their position in some societies to little more than goods and chattels—property owned by the man as he owned a house, land, animals, and slaves.

God's original plan of monogamy quickly spread to bigamy, then polygamy; and the Mosaic laws, which were given within the framework of a polygamous society in which women were downtrodden, were aimed at relieving and improving conditions within that setting.

Kings were told not to multiply wives (Deut 11:17); and, in the event of bigamy, two sisters should not be married to the same man (Lev 18:18) because of rivalries and jealousies that were bound to arise. Each wife was given certain matrimonial rights (Exod 21:10-11). A eunuch, considered essential in a polygamous society, was banned from the "assembly of the Lord" (Deut 23:1); thus there was an attempt to discourage this occupation and, therefore, the system that brought it into existence.

Divorce, which was so simply and irresponsibly decreed by the husband, thus causing the most distressing results for the former wife, was now brought into some control (Deut 24:1ff.). This demanded time to re-think, emotions to cool, the intervention of a third party to attempt reconciliation, and the giving of a "certificate of divorce" by the husband to his former wife. This certificate gave her a clean bill of health to remarry.

Humane regulations improved the positions of slaves (Exod 21:2-6), purchased wives (Exod 21:7-11), and captives (Deut 21:10-14); and the distribution of property to the children or different wives (Deut 21:15-17).

Laws condemning fornication, adultery, and bestiality in all their forms, punishing the violators with death, served to curb the sins of carnality that were increasingly prevalent at that time.

Man, however, was dominant, and this is reflected in social, religious, and legal affairs in the Pentateuch. Genealogies were given by the father's line with women rarely mentioned (Num 26:46, 59; etc.). The father had absolute authority over children, married sons living with him, his wife (wives), and the whole household. This power extended even over life and death in some cases (Gen 38:24).<sup>49</sup>

However, women who became good and industrious wives and mothers were respected and occupied an important place in Israel.<sup>50</sup> God's plan, however, is reflected in its fullness not in the Patriarchal society of the Pentateuch but rather in Gen 1 and 2 where man and woman were created equal, complementary, and compatible within the divine sphere of operation assigned to each. As the remnant church concerns itself with the presentation of the full gospel message to all the earth, and to the restoration of the image of God in each person, by God's grace, it becomes more and more imperative that man and woman be brought back from the ruinous situation into which sin has led them, and by the Spirit reestablish the original unity, equality, and harmony in relationships that were characteristic of the original creation. However, until sin is removed, the complete and perfect attainment of that standard will not be possible. But should this not indeed be the goal to which all are striving?

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<sup>49</sup>See de Vaux, pp. 20, 39; E. W. Heaton, *Everyday Life in Old Testament Times* (New York, 1956), p. 69; Baab, pp. 864-65.

<sup>50</sup>See the review by Louis Jacobs, art. "Women," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16 (Jerusalem, 1971), cols. 625-28.

### III THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT OUTSIDE THE PENTATEUCH

Jerry A. Gladson

#### General Observations

The task of this study will be to survey the role of women in the OT outside the Pentateuch. Since the Pentateuch reflects the legal more explicitly than the social aspects of this subject, a study of the historical, prophetic, hymnic, and wisdom literature will allow for a wider view of the social context of the role of Hebrew women.

It was felt that since no essential shift in woman's basic societal position occurs within the literature studied, the results would be best arranged topically. This, in turn, allows a more practical perspective from which to evaluate the findings.

The sheer historical and literary immensity of the literature surveyed means that depth had to be relegated a secondary place to breadth (our primary purpose of this study). To compensate, this writer has sought to study contextually and sociologically virtually every occurrence of *ʾiššāh*<sup>1</sup> ("woman") in the books from Joshua to Chronicles (Hebrew canon). Such a procedure gives a fair indication as to the OT place of woman in the community of God. In addition, study has been made of relevant texts which speak of women but do not employ *ʾiššāh*, and consequently some overlap with Pentateuchal sources has been necessary for clarification.

#### Patriarchal Structure

The patriarchal form of family existence in the OT assumes that a woman "lived in the shadows rather than in the light of life." She was first under the authority of her father, then her husband after marriage; and, in the eventuality of his death, her husband's brother. This subordination of all aspects of a woman's life was somewhat symbolized by the fact that though she was a member of the covenant community, she possessed no sign of it as did the male in circumcision.<sup>2</sup> This stance of woman under man<sup>3</sup> meant that her "essence as a human being is linked with her function as a companion" to him.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This word appears 775 times in the OT with the meaning "woman," "wife," "female" (Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* [Oxford, 1968], p. 61, hereafter abbreviated BDB.) The word appears in a word play in Gen 2:22, 23, but Rainey feels its root goes back to *ʾnt*, used in Old South Arabic (and Ugaritic) and Aramaic. (Anson Rainey, "Women," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* [New York, 1971], 16:623). The plural, *nāšim*, appears to come from the same root (Fritz Maass, "ʿnôsh," *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, tr. by J. T. Willis [Grand Rapids, 1974], 1:346).

<sup>2</sup>Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, 1975), pp. 68-94.

<sup>3</sup>G. Beer, *Die Soziale und Religiöse Stellung der Frau in Israelitischem Altertum*, Sammlung Gemeinverständliches Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte, no. 88 (Tübingen, 1919), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Rainey; cf. Gen 2:23, 24.

## Fundamental Equality

At the same time, the Genesis record clearly portrays woman as equal to men in that both are, together, in the “Image of God.”<sup>5</sup> Jewett comments, “Man’s creation in the divine image is so related to his creation as male and female that the latter may be looked upon as an exposition of the former.” Sexuality, then, is not just procreative, but is a “part of what it means to be like the Creator.”<sup>6</sup> It can even be argued that since woman was created last (Gen 2:21-25) she is to be considered the “crowning act” of Creation.

But the record is also clear that the role of woman in the fall of the race somewhat altered this position and put man in the role of master (3:16). The rest of the OT, it would seem, operates on the basis of woman’s subjugation to man after the fall.<sup>7</sup>

## Woman in the Ancient Near East

Women generally fared better in Hebrew society than in the rest of the ancient Near East, as is shown by a comparative study of Semitic laws. In the Hebrew codes the “highest ideals of womanhood were being striven for,”<sup>8</sup> and she generally enjoyed a favorable position in both the family and religious context.<sup>9</sup>

These cursory observations indicate that Hebrew society was a “cut” above that of other ancient nations in OT times, but that it was still short of God’s ideal. Specific examples must now be given indicating more precisely woman’s role in Israelite society.

## Socio-Economic Role

### Marriage

To the Israelite woman, marriage was necessary for a complete life. The obscure numerical proverb which mentions “an unloved woman when she gets a husband” (Prov 30:23, RSV) seems to imply that apart from the love of a husband a woman is unfulfilled.<sup>10</sup> Yet, even so, marriage arrangements were made by the father, who had almost absolute authority over his children,<sup>11</sup> or the groom’s father in conjunction with the bride’s father (Judg 14:1-2). In any case, the girl must have been consulted (Gen 24:5, 8; Num 36:6), so the transaction between father and groom was not just a transfer of chattel; it was more the “surrender of authority over a

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<sup>5</sup>The structure of Gen 1:27-28 places emphasis on this plural aspect of the *Imago Dei*. Cf. the discussion in G. F. Hasel’s, “Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3” (chap. 1 in this volume), sec. 1, pp. 11-14.

<sup>6</sup>Jewett, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup>It should be recalled, however, that this subordination is a part of the original curse, as is pain in childbirth, thorns and thistles, etc. Genesis gives us the origin of *why* things are the way they are. The gospel aims to eliminate the curse in all its aspects (Rev 22:3). This is often not taken seriously enough by theologians.

<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth M. MacDonald, *The Position of Women as Reflected in Semitic Codes of Law*, University of Toronto Studies: Oriental Series (Toronto, 1931), p. 73.

<sup>9</sup>Rainey.

<sup>10</sup>It is not clear whether this proverb refers to an unmarried woman or a woman in a polygamous marriage who is unloved, though the latter seems most likely (cf. R.B.Y. Scott, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Anchor Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Garden City, NY, 1973)), 18:181; cf. Deut 21:15.

<sup>11</sup>Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York, 1961) 1:20; cf. Gen 38:24; 24:58.

woman by one man to another.”<sup>12</sup> In the case of two adults who had already been emancipated from parental control, the man seems to have initiated proceedings (2 Sam 11:2-3); though Ruth, by virtue of the levirate law, appears in a modified aggressive role (Ruth 3:8ff.).

Such customs of marriage by parental arrangement did not stifle love between husband and wife, for several passages know of love in marriage (Gen 24:67; 29:20; 1 Sam 1:5), and there is every evidence to indicate that the wife remained a person and had very personal influence on her husband (Gen 16:2; 1 Sam 25; 2 Kgs 4:8-10; Job 2:9-10).<sup>13</sup> As in all cultures, there were good and bad marriages; but no doubt many Israelite homes experienced a deep love relationship between husband and wife. Malachi implies as much when he laments those who were unfaithful to the wives of their “youth” with whom they had made a covenant (chap. 2:14). The Hebrew terms, *habereth* (“wife, consort”) and *berith* (“covenant”), imply a potential closeness between Hebrew men and their wives.

Marriage meant to the Hebrew woman essentially that she was “possessed” by her husband, who was called both *ʾadn* (Lord; Gen 18:12) and *bl* (“master”; Exod 21:22).<sup>14</sup> This subordination surfaces in many implicit ways in the OT, as, for instance, in Isaiah’s prophecy of “seven women” taking hold of one man for support in the day of Yahweh’s judgment upon Israel (Isa 4: 1), and in Jeremiah’s prediction of the return from Babylonian captivity (Jer 31:22). In the latter case, the prophet predicts that “a woman shall compass a man” (lit. tr.)—an *absolutely new* event in the world which reverses traditional roles.<sup>15</sup> That the practice of polygamy no doubt contributed to such subordination is evidenced by the graphic description of the Persian harem in Esther (cf. especially 2:12-14), where women are regarded as so much property of the king. Judges 19:22-30 reveals the low estate of many such concubines. Besieged by “base” men, pursuing his overnight guest, the host offered them his virgin daughter and his guest’s concubine. When they failed to listen, the guest thrust out his concubine, whom they “knew” and “abused,”<sup>16</sup> and left dead at the door. The very fact that the host did not face the mob himself but rather made his daughter and the concubine confront them shows that women were only expendable property. Judges, of course, condemns this behavior (cf. chap. 21:10-25), and it cannot be supposed that every concubine or wife of a polygamous home was so regarded. But it nonetheless remains certain that polygamy did nothing to relieve the subordination of women.

Just as marriage was essential to the Hebrew woman, so the bearing of children was even more so—as the basic purpose of wedlock. Human beings are referred to as *yeʾūdliššāh* (“one born of woman”; Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4), an expression in keeping with the original forecast in Gen 3:16. Hebrew women frequently served as midwives (1 Sam 4:20), and children were so highly regarded that childlessness was considered a curse (Gen 29:32–30:1-23; 1 Sam 1:5).<sup>17</sup> Because the wife gave herself so completely to her family, she consequently earned the respect of her

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<sup>12</sup>Rainey, p. 624; cf. O. J. Baab, “Woman,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. G. A. Buttrick (Nashville, 1962), 4:805.

<sup>13</sup>Baab.

<sup>14</sup>Beer, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup>*Neqēbāh ʾəsōsēbh gāber* (“a woman shall compass a man”) rests upon the MT tradition. The LXX (at 38:22b) has, “men shall go about with deliverance” (en *sōtēria pērielēusontai anthropoid*). This is obviously a passage the exact sense of which has been lost prior to the LXX translation. However, the MT is taken to be preferable on the grounds of its intelligibility in the light of the above discussion. The prophet therefore sees a radical alteration of the social structure by a reversal of roles.

<sup>16</sup>Both *yēdū* (“they knew”) and *yithalelū* (“they abused”) carry sexual connotations (BDB, pp. 394, 759).

<sup>17</sup>Rainey, pp. 623-24.

children (Prov 31:27-28; Lev 19:3; Deut 5:16). The psalmist sings in contented delight, “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table” (Ps 128:3), a picture, no doubt, of the ideal Hebrew family blessed of God. Sons, of course, were more highly desired than daughters (Gen 29:34; 30:20; Lev 12:2-5).

The mother saw to it that her children were properly educated and cared for in every way (1 Sam 1:23-24, 2:19; Prov 1:8; 6:20), a function which made her largely responsible for domestic chores such as washing, cooking, making clothing, etc. (Gen 27:9, 14; Prov 31:10-31); also perhaps drawing water from the common well if she did not have daughters old enough to relieve her of that chore (Gen 24:11, 13-16). Sometimes the daughters even took care of the flocks and watered them, like Rachel and Jethro’s seven daughters (Gen 29:9-10; Exod 2:16; 3:1).<sup>18</sup>

### Woman’s Aesthetic Place in Life

Throughout the OT woman’s beauty is extolled. Tamar, Absalom’s daughter, earned the quaint description, “a woman, beautiful of appearance” (lit. tr. 2 Sam 14:27), while Job’s daughters stood out as more beautiful (*yepheh*, “beautiful, fair”)<sup>19</sup> than all the women of the earth (Job 42:15). Especially interesting in this regard was the Persian harem in the days of Esther. To

Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.) women were clearly “sex Objects,” greatly prized for their beauty. They must “delight” (*ûāphēæ*) the king (Esther 2:14), and win his “favor” (*yātab*; vs. 9). Esther found “grace and favor” (*hēn wāûesed*, probably a hendiadys, meaning “graceful favor”)<sup>20</sup> in his eyes (vs. 17). But it is left to the love songs of the OT to ascend the literary and poetic heights in the description of woman’s beauty. Psalm 45, a Maskil celebrating the marriage of a king to a princess, sings, “The Princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes; in many-colored robes she is led to the king, with her virgin companions, her escort, in her train” (vss. 12-14, RSV). The superscription to this piece suggests it is a royal “song of love,” or love song.<sup>21</sup> However, the most extensive OT love song is the Song of Solomon, a song of ideal eastern love in idyllic poetry.<sup>22</sup> Here, in amorous and even sensuous tones, the lovers converse and sing of their love for each other. The beloved woman has eyes like doves, hair like a flock of goats, teeth like shorn ewes, lips like scarlet thread, and cheeks like pomegranate (see Cant 4:1-7). She desires her lover (3:1-5) and he desires her (4:8-15). In one sense, the highest expression of the male-female relationship in the OT is seen here. Physical attraction and sexual consummation appear as normal and beautiful. Man is made for woman and woman for man (ct. Gen 1:26, 27, and discussion above).

Turning to a quite different aesthetic form, women seem to have excelled in singing and dancing on both social and religious occasions in ancient times (cf. Exod 15:20).<sup>23</sup> Singing (and dancing) women were no doubt a regular part of the king’s court, as many passages attest (2 Sam 19:35; 2 Chr 35:25; Eccl 2:8). Both Ezra and Nehemiah mention a large group of cultic singing women who returned from exile (Ezra 2:65; Neh 7:67).

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<sup>18</sup>M. L. Held, “Woman (in the Bible),” *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1967), 11:997.

<sup>19</sup>BDB, p. 421.

<sup>20</sup>Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto, 1967), par. 72, p. 17.

<sup>21</sup>*Maōkîl nîr-yēdidōth*, “song of love” (BDB, 391).

<sup>22</sup>BC 1110-11.

<sup>23</sup>Baab, p. 865.

Thus anciently, as today, women were greatly admired for their beauty and their skill in the fine arts; though, unquestionably, these traits were as abused then as today.

### Negative Attitudes Toward Women

Despite adulations of her beauty, woman also has her dark side in the pages of the OT. It was she, Paul reminds us, who introduced disobedience into the world (Gen 3; 1 Tim 2:14-15). And Micah warns his troublous times, “guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your bosom” (Mic 7:5, RSV).<sup>24</sup> Ecclesiastes paints her in a most sinister form, “One man among a thousand I found, but a *woman* among all those I have not found” (Eccl 7:28, emphasis supplied). Solomon at this point in his career evidently considered women as the essence of “stupidity and folly in human beings.”<sup>25</sup> The contrast is somewhat relieved by the realization that men fare very little better than women, in Solomon’s estimation!

The normative wisdom book, Proverbs, however, frequently reverberates with various negative comments about women. Living with a “contentious” woman (*madon*, “strife,” “contention”)<sup>26</sup> is a fate little better than death (Prov 21:9, 19; 25:24). Most feared of all women is the adulteress, a theme woven in and out of the first section of Proverbs (chaps. 1-9) like a dark thread. “The commandment is a lamp . . . to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adventuress” (chap. 6:23-24 RSV). Several Hebrew terms are employed in the issuance of these warnings: *šîḥāh zārāh* (“strange woman, harlot”; chap. 2:16; 6:24, RSV);<sup>27</sup> *nokrîyyāh* (“foreign woman,” a technical term for “harlot”; chap. 7:5; 20:16; 27:13);<sup>28</sup> *šeseth kesîlûth* (“the woman stupidity”; chap. 9:13ff.)<sup>29</sup> *zônāh* (“fornicator, harlot”; chap. 23:27);<sup>30</sup> and *šîḥāh menālepeth* (“adulterous woman, woman committing adultery”; chap. 30:20). These warnings probably have a double meaning, both literal and symbolic. They caution against loose women, but they also inveigh against the folly and seductive way of life found in pagan religion and against the practice of cultic prostitution associated with Canaanite religion.<sup>31</sup>

Another way the OT uses the feminine image negatively appears in Saul’s vitriolic statement to Jonathan for his friendship with David: “son of a perverse rebellious woman” (1 Sam 20:30)! Like the saying that a foolish son was a dishonor to his mother, not his father (Prov 10:1), Saul’s wrath at Jonathan struck at his mother—a stylized way of reproach at the time. Reviling a man in this manner is known elsewhere in the ancient Near East.<sup>32</sup> In similar manner, the Chronicler calls Athaliah “that wicked woman” because she desecrated the house of God (2 Chr 24:7).

Both of these usages may have provided the prophets with choice epithets when they spoke of apostate Israel as a harlot (cr. Ezek 16:28). She had defiled her relationship with Yahweh and was no better off than a common adulteress. A discussion of the intent of these prophetic passages will be dealt with later.

Evidently, non-Israelite women came in for their share of ill-will in the OT also. Solomon, it will be remembered, fell on account of his involvement with “foreign women” from Egypt,

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 866; cf. Rainey, p. 623.

<sup>25</sup>Scott, p. 238.

<sup>26</sup>BDB, p. 193.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 649.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 493.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 275-76.

<sup>31</sup>Scott, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup>G. C. Caird, “1 and 2 Samuel,” *Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, et al. (Nashville, 1953), 2:994.



Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and from among the Hittites (1 Kgs 11:1ff.). The writer of Kings quickly points out that such doings were contrary to Torah and could only lead to idolatry (Deut 7:1-4; 17:17; Exod 34:11-16). In Ezra-Nehemiah the problem of Israelite marriage to “foreign women” flares up on a mass scale (Ezra 9-10; Neh 13:23ff.). These wives were finally put away together with their children because they had corrupted the purity of the race (Ezra 9:2; 10:11).

### **The Ideal Woman**

As a contrast to these negative sentiments there are also many passages, besides the love songs, scattered like bright gems throughout, emphasizing women’s fine points. Abigail, wife of Nabal, appears as of “good understanding” (*tôbath-ôekel*, “good-of-understanding”) and “beautiful” (*yepheth tölär*, “beautiful of form”), in 1 Sam 25:3. She must have been in a similar category with the “wise woman” (*hokmah*) who was admired among the Hebrews just as were the wise men (2 Sam 14:2; 20:16). Proverbs speaks of a “gracious woman” (*lêneth ùen*; chap. 11:16) and of a “good wife” (*lêneth hayil*;<sup>33</sup> chap. 12:4); but reserves its finest language for the famous “song of the ideal wife,” found at the conclusion of the book (chap. 31:10-31). Beer calls this a “catechism of women,” or “woman’s catechism” (*Frauenkatechismus*).<sup>34</sup> The presence of such a piece only functions to underscore the basic ambiguity of the OT witness since here, even though praised in glowing language, woman is still subordinate to man.<sup>35</sup> Yet, in another sense, it serves to balance and close Proverbs on a positive note regarding women, a fact not to be taken lightly in view of some of its negative statements. The poem itself emphasizes domestic, culinary, tailoring, and managerial skills of the ideal wife; and hence provides some indicator of the latitude of an Israelite woman’s freedom in a well-to-do home in her ancient culture. Though subordinate, she thoroughly enjoyed the love of her family and sought to meet their many needs.

### **Political and Military Role**

#### **Women As Members of the Covenantal Community**

The Israelite woman had membership in the covenant community though she had no external sign indicating such. The law codes indicate that she was regarded as a complete human being (Exod 21:22-25, 28-31; Lev 20:16);<sup>36</sup> and though many laws hold her equal to man (Lev 11; 19:3; 20:10-11, 17-18; Deut 5:16), others seem to stress her subordination. The birth of a daughter required longer ritual purification than a son (Lev 12:1-5), the valuation of a man differed from that of a woman when a special vow was made (Lev 27:1-7); and the *man*, not the *woman*, had the right of divorce (Deut 24:1-4).<sup>37</sup> The prophets, however, seem to recognize that Yahweh was concerned about abuse of women. Micah notes His displeasure when women were driven from their homes (chap. 2:9); Amos calls down judgment upon the Ammonites “because

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<sup>33</sup>The meaning of this phrase is disputed (cf. Ruth 3:11). *Lyh* is applied to various male appellatives suggesting that its use here with “wife” means that she was worthy of a place in the warrior gentry. This evidently does not mean she was warlike, but that she had all the desirable virtues—industriousness, thrift, managerial skill, diligence, etc. (Rainey, p. 624.)

<sup>34</sup>Beer, p. 12. It no doubt had an educative function in Israelite life.

<sup>35</sup>Louis Jacobs, “Woman: Attitude to Women,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 16:626; cf. vss. 10-11, 23, 27.

<sup>36</sup>Rainey, p. 624.

<sup>37</sup>Baob, p. 866.

they have ripped up women with child in Gilead” (chap. 1:13); Isaiah defends the widow along with other downtrodden people (chap. 10:1-2). So against the apparent unconcern for the equality of women discernible in the OT stands a God calling men to higher and nobler views. The very fact that the prophetic voices spoke in behalf of women indicates that they had *rights* which had gone unnoticed by the apostate elements in society. Perhaps the same principle that implied man’s and woman’s equality in Eden now reappears in prophetic calls to repentance.

By contrast, one should direct attention to the witness of the many genealogies scattered throughout. These genealogies were not provided to make a definitive historical record; but they express actual domestic, political, and religious relationships.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, lineage is traced through the male. The female is mentioned only where she is of historical significance (Gen 11:29; 22:23; Num 26:33; 27:1-11).<sup>39</sup> Even the Book of Ruth, whose central figure is a woman, ends with a genealogy traced, not through Ruth and Naomi, but through Boaz (Ruth 4:18-22). This male domination is consistent from beginning to end (Gen 10; cf. 1 Chr 1-9). As late as Ben Sira (about 180 B.C.), only men were considered “distinguished” in the history of the Jews (compare his song in praise of famous men, Sirach 44:1-50:29), a view that is neatly contradicted by many heroes who were women (Judg 5; 1 Kgs 1:11ff.; 2 Kgs 2:26).<sup>40</sup>

Such a condition is in keeping with the fundamental patriarchal society of the Hebrews. In a social fabric where women play a more forceful role, the genealogy might be traced through the female line (matriliny).<sup>41</sup>

### **Fortune of Women in War**

Women did not serve in the Israelite army (however, cf. Prov 12:4). But because of their beauty and sexual charms they were regarded as great prizes from the spoil of a defeated foe (Isa 30:2). The Hebrews were given instruction to respect the sensitivities of a captured woman (Deut 21:10-14), but it is not so certain that her conquerors went by any such code.

In fact, so far was the woman removed from the din of battle that when she did manage to deal the fateful blow to a soldier, it was considered disgraceful. Accordingly, it is interesting to note Deborah’s *praise* of Jael’s murder of Sisera (Judg 5:24) in comparison with Abimelech’s dying request after he had been struck with a millstone by a woman on the wall of Thebez (“Draw your sword and kill me, lest men say of me, ‘A woman killed him,’” Judg 9:54, RSV; cf. 2 Sam 11:21). Deborah’s song apparently reveals a feminine perspective while the latter narrative betrays a male viewpoint.

### **Feminine Leadership**

The leadership of women appears in various contexts in the OT. Basic and fundamental here was the female prophet, the *nēbīlāh*. Several are mentioned (Miriam, Exod 15:20; Deborah, Judg 4:4; Huldah, 2 Kgs 22:12-20; Isaiah’s wife, Isa 8:3; Noadiah, Neh 6:10-14; false prophetesses, Ezek 13), but little is known about their nature or the function of their office. It seems probable

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<sup>38</sup>Cf. Robert R. Wilson, “The Old Testament Genealogies in Recent Research,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (June, 1975): 169-89.

<sup>39</sup>R. A. Bowman, “Genealogy,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* 2 (Nashville, 1962): 362-63.

<sup>40</sup>Baob, p. 865.

<sup>41</sup>As, for example, among the Iroquois Indians of North America (cf. “Matriarchy,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1957), 15:92.

that they served like their male counterparts. The question of cultic prophetesses here is even more moot than the hotly debated role of the so-called “cultic” prophets.<sup>42</sup>

Also to be considered are the “wise” women who were respected and consulted regarding important matters, and whose roles must have at least included advisory leadership (2 Sam 14:2ff.; 20:16-22). Deborah the prophetess similarly seems to have occupied a double role—that of prophetess and judge (Judg 4:4). It bears repeating that the word “judge” (*sophet*) connotes certain leadership characteristics in the Book of Judges (such as military authority) not found in the English equivalent. This authority may have even approached that of a king in the time of war (cf. Hos 7:7)<sup>43</sup>

Second Kings 4:8 speaks of a “wealthy woman” (literally, “great woman,”) in the days of Elisha. This could mean she was either rich or of high rank (cf. 1 Sam 25:2; 2 Sam 19:32);<sup>44</sup> but chap. 8:1-6, which records her flight from the country on account of famine and subsequent return thereto, seems to tilt the intent more toward riches. On her return she was given all the harvest accruing to her (from “*her* house and *her* land,” vs. 3, RSV) for seven years. This incident in the Elisha narrative clearly indicates that a woman could hold property and could rise to heights of greatness and prosperity in a Hebrew world dominated by men.

## Religious Role

### Cultic Festivals

Women’s role in the religious affairs of Israel was evidently of a secondary nature. There were no priestesses, probably because of woman’s periodic ritual uncleanness (Lev 12), and the abhorrence of cult prostitutes in the Canaanite religious practices.<sup>45</sup> Women did contribute to the tabernacle (Exod 35:22-29; 38:8), joined David in joyous procession (2 Sam 6:19), and were allowed to participate fully in the activities at the great festivals—Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Exod 12:3; Deut 16:14; Ps 68:25).<sup>46</sup> They could go on pilgrimages to holy places (1 Sam 1:3-5, 24-28; 2:1-11, 19-20; 2 Kgs 4:23),<sup>47</sup> and apparently served in a special temple choral group (2 Chr 35:25; Ezra 2:65; Neh 7:67).

Numerous passages call attention to the cult prostitutes among the Canaanites (cf. Amos 2:7-8; Hos 4:13-14). The extent to which pagan practices penetrated Israel becomes apparent in the vivid prophetic denunciations of Hebrew women making cakes for the “queen of heaven”—probably a reference to the Assyro-Babylonian deity Ishtar (Canaanite Astarte), whose figurines have been found in Palestine (Jer 7:18; 44:15-19)—weeping for Tammuz, using amulets (Ezek 8:14; 13:18).<sup>48</sup> In Jeremiah’s account women worshiped Ishtar, no doubt because she was the goddess of fertility, maturity, and sexual love, conditions much valued in Israelite society.

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<sup>42</sup>D. J. McCarthy, “Prophetess,” *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* 11:867; id., “Prophetism,” *ibid.*, pp. 871-72.

<sup>43</sup>C. U. Wolf, “Judge,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* 2:1013.

<sup>44</sup>2BC 868, comment on 2 Kgs 4:8.

<sup>45</sup>Baob, p. 865.

<sup>46</sup>Rainey, p. 625.

<sup>47</sup>Held, p. 997.

<sup>48</sup>See 4BC 501-2, 604, 620.

## Joy and Mourning

The texts also speak of feminine participation in periods of joy and mourning. Women were always present at weddings and funerals, customarily mourning for the dead (2 Sam 1:24; 2 Chr 35:25). But other occasions also became the springboard of feminine emotional expression—probably singing and dancing. David feared the Philistine women would “exult” over the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:24), while Isaiah notes that Yahweh’s judgment upon the land would be so severe that celebration would vanish from among the “complacent daughters” (Isa 32:9-19).

Not all of these occasions were religious, of course, but the Hebrew did not distinguish between religious and secular as do modern Westerners. Yahweh was Lord of all life, and mournful or joyous expressions were often called for by the fortunes of living.

## General Religious Influence

Though woman’s role was secondary to men’s, still the “behind-the-scenes” faithful witness of the Hebrew mother must have made itself known across the nation’s spectrum (compare Samuel and Hannah, 1 Sam 1-3). “The hand that rocks the cradle sways the world,” was as true then as now, as the Bible writers make clear in their frequent observations of pious women (Gen 25:22; Judg 13:3-23; 1 Kgs 14:4; Esth 4:16).<sup>49</sup> Especially dear to the hearts of Jewish people during the Intertestamental period was the touching story of Judith, a pious woman who delivered Bethulia from the Assyrians while remaining true to her God.

Mention should be made here, for completeness’ sake, to the several prophetesses referred to in the OT, who, beyond question, exerted a religious influence over the people. See page 42.

## Symbolic Use of the Feminine Image

### Negative Symbol

Just as the OT in general sees woman in both a positive and a negative light, so it presents two types of women symbolic imagery. This basic ambiguity should not be surprising, because it shows the important effect that both good and bad women had upon society.

A frequent formula encountered in the prophets is that of a “woman in travail” (Isa 13:8; 21:3; 26:17; Jer 30:6; 49:22, 24; cf. 50:37; Isa 42:14). This idiom is used variously, but generally it connotes both the weakness and panic of a nation under God’s judgment. Its apocalyptic-like tone is even picked up by Paul as a description of the panic engendered by the eschaton (1 Thess 5:3). The depiction of the woman in a time of crisis and agony becomes a symbol of nations stricken with terror.

More obvious in the OT is the use of feminine imagery as a personification of wickedness (compare “Dame Folly,” Prov 9:13ff.). The double *entendre* of the proverbial warnings against the “adulterous woman” should be included here (Prov 6-7) as well as the picturesque vision in Zachariah of “wickedness” (*hārīnāh*, “feminine”) borne away from Israel to Shinar by two other

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<sup>49</sup>Held, p. 997.

women with stork's wings (chap. 5:5-11). The vision signified the removal of iniquity from the land to the place where it was apparently worshipped.<sup>50</sup>

As a symbol for apostate Israel, the evil woman was a natural choice. Ezekiel relates two allegories, the first of which tells how Jerusalem was an abandoned infant taken up by Yahweh (chap. 16:1-7). When she became of marriageable age, Yahweh betrothed her to Himself (vss. 8-14), but she proved unfaithful and became like all the other harlots (vss. 15-34). The second allegory concerns both Samaria (Oholah) and Jerusalem (Oholibah), depicted as sisters (chap. 23). The two sisters finally went into harlotry and their deeds descended upon their heads (vss. 11-49).

Hosea, in similar fashion, sees Israel as an unfaithful wife; only here Hosea's own wife (if this be regarded as autobiographical, not allegorical, narrative) confirmed her unfaithfulness and became the symbol of the apostate nation (chaps. 1-3). Especially striking in this prophetic account is Yahweh's love for his estranged wife (Israel) in spite of her sin (chap. 3:15).

### Positive Symbol

That the prophetic symbolic use of woman also took a positive turn is well-known. For Isaiah, Zion was a desolate and forsaken woman whose fear was allayed by Yahweh her husband (chap. 54:5-6). Jeremiah's feminine imagery—Jerusalem as the “daughter of Zion,” a “comely and delicately bred” woman—is preserved even in the modern versions that translate the verb as “destroy” rather than “liken” (chap. 6:2, RSV).

Micah likewise tells of Zion as a daughter in travail facing exile in Babylon. But Yahweh will soon rescue her (chap. 4:9-10). Especially noteworthy is the imagery found in Lamentations. At least five separate, symbolic “voices” are heard in this book lamenting the fate of the fallen city of Jerusalem.<sup>51</sup> Zion appears here as a desolate woman mourning her fate (chap. 1:17).

Wisdom literature, too, makes use of this positive feminine image (Prov 1:20-21; 4:5ff.; 7:4; 8:1-3; 9:1-6; 14:1). In Prov 1:20ff. wisdom emerges in the feminine guise, pleading with the simple to learn instruction from her. She speaks with prophetic urgency, the only difference being the lack of the messenger formula—“Thus saith the Lord.”<sup>52</sup>

The very notion which led to the use of feminine imagery such as this belongs to a society in which “women were respected and occupied an important place.”<sup>53</sup> The plus and minus uses of the image merely reflect the realities of life itself, but that reality was so forceful that it became an integral part of the literature.

Many students of the Bible who are sensitive to the role of women in modern life have been troubled by the apparent masculinity of the Deity. In a women's religious meeting, it is told, the traditional terms God, He, Him, and Father, were replaced by “She,” “Her,” and “Mother.” Perhaps this was extreme, but the point seems well taken. Undeniably, Scripture utilizes male imagery for the Deity. However, the situation is not quite so bleak as one might imagine. It is more in line with the facts to say that though male imagery predominates, feminine imagery also occurs. Isaiah 49:14-16 speaks of Yahweh's love for Israel in terms of a maternal affection: “Can

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<sup>50</sup>P. R. Ackroyd, “Zechariah,” *Peake's Commentary on the bible*, eds. Matthew Black and H. H. Rowley (London, 1962), p. 649.

<sup>51</sup>W. F. Lanahan detects the “voice” of the city, a desolate woman (chaps. 1-2), a defeated soldier, a detached reporter (chaps. 3-4), and the community of Israel (chap. 5). “The Speaking Voice in the Book of Lamentations,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (March, 1974): 41-49.

<sup>52</sup>Scott, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup>Jacobs, p. 626.

a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?" (vs. 15). The word rendered "compassion" actually springs from the term for womb (*re'ûem*), thus reinforcing the feminine symbol. Deuteronomy 32:18 puts into poetry the sentiment, "You were unmindful of the Rock that *begot* you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth." Paul Jewett points out that the symbol of God as male or female is not to be taken literally. It is rather to be understood analogically;<sup>54</sup> and since the OT was bequeathed to a patriarchal society it is easy to grasp why the masculine imagery predominates. Moderns should thus not become offended at such language but recognize it as a necessary part of the ancient communicative process. Because both male and female characteristics are needed to express the *Imago Dei*, it is also obvious that both are ultimately inadequate to fully disclose the hidden nature of God. This can be readily seen in the use of other OT symbols of God (compare "light," Ps 27:1; "fortress," Ps 91:2; "Rock," Deut 32:4; etc.). In the final analysis, *all* symbols of whatever nature fail to completely reveal God; hence, "in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son" (Reb 1:2, RSV). Nor can a masculine incarnation be viewed as discriminatory, either, since society at the time was masculinity oriented (that is, in view of the male cast of Near Eastern human social structure, the idea of a feminine messiah does not seem cogent).

## Conclusions

### Summary of the Old Testament Evidence

Most references to woman in the OT are but incidental to the main point in the text, except in instances where she plays a vital role in the action being described (compare Ruth, Esther, Sarah, etc.). This fact, together with specific examination of woman's place in Israelite society, has shown that she was regarded as subordinate to man. This subordination of women, however, is to be placed alongside the Creation narrative, which portrays Eve's equality at the beginning and then her subsequent fall. Thereafter woman, though regarded as of lesser importance, was prized by men for her beauty, virtue, and procreative abilities.

The polarities of feminine position are acutely apparent in the wisdom texts, particularly Proverbs. There woman is described as both virtuous and industrious, as well as sinful and evil. Prophetic literature likewise demonstrates this feminine ambiguity in its symbolic portrayals of women, as both the faithful people and the apostate people of God.

Woman's role everywhere is secondary. She stands *behind* her husband, *assists* in worship, handles the domestic chores. Only rarely, as in the case of Deborah, does she come to national prominence. Yet she is also highly valued, extolled, and counted as the equal partner of man. The OT record, therefore, is somewhat equivocal in its description of woman.

### The Old Testament and Women Today

The present women's liberation issue has forced the church, which claims the OT as a part of its doctrinal base, to try to more carefully define woman's place in its activity. With women becoming qualified for leadership responsibility in both ministerial and other lines,<sup>55</sup> it now

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<sup>54</sup>Jewett, p. 167.

<sup>55</sup>Franz J. Leenhardt, *La Place de la Femme dans L'Eglise d'Après le Nouveau Testament*, Etudes Theologiques et Religieuses (Montpellier: Faculte de Theologie Protestante, 1948), p. 3. At the end of 1975 the United Methodist Church had 576 ordained women; the United Presbyterian, more than 200; and the Lutheran

becomes imperative for the church to face squarely what the OT says regarding the role of women. Since the NT concept of the role of woman does not differ markedly from that of the OT,<sup>56</sup> the sacred witness to be accounted for seems to span the whole of the biblical canon. Is woman thus so be regarded as subordinate to man today because she was so in biblical times? Is she now to occupy a secondary place in the leadership and administration of the church because such was her place anciently?

Answers to these questions are not easy, and the judgments expressed here are only to stimulate thought. A distinction must be maintained, it seems, between the specific counsel to ancients, and the application of the principles upon which that counsel was based to Christians today. That is, the historical, grammatical, syntactical, literary, and sociological backgrounds into which a given text was directed must be examined before adequate description can be provided as to what the passage “meant” to its original audience. Then the principles of the text must be enunciated in such a way as to be applicable to this contemporary generation. Once this is done the ancient passage can speak with force and meaning to the church today. Both the implied and the explicit features of the text in question must be considered in this hermeneutical process so that no piece of evidence is overlooked. The divinity of Scripture will also have to be maintained as an integral part of the whole (a fact frequently overlooked by contemporary historio-critical approaches).

The OT was addressed to those living in a patriarchal society. It was thus written in such a way so as to be heard by those living in this sociological setting. This does not mean that the message of the OT has in any way been compromised. But it does mean that the exact social fabric of those living in OT times cannot be taken over without adaptation into the modern community. Scripture itself must be the guide to that adaptation.

Perhaps a good example of an incorrect hermeneutic which attempts to take over the sociological setting of OT times can be seen in the use of the Bible to defend slavery in the past century. It was argued that blacks were naturally inferior to whites because of the curse placed supposedly on Ham (really on Canaan); and that therefore the Bible approved slavery. Did not Paul himself say, “Bid slaves to be submissive to their masters” (Titus 2:9, RSV)?<sup>57</sup> Correspondingly, present-day Mormons sometimes use OT precedents to justify polygamous beliefs. In neither of these cases is the contemporary Christian convinced. He quickly points out that God spoke to people where they were and He attempted to raise them from that level to His ideal. It would seem that the same reasoning would apply to the biblical role of woman as contrasted with that today.

Indeed, if one listens, he hears higher, nobler principles regarding woman, even in the OT. Eichrodt has called attention to the original equality between man and woman as the *Imago Dei* in Genesis. Here “all ambiguity as to the relationship between the sexes is removed,” he comments. “At the same time the verse (Genesis 1:26-27) does away with any justification for holding the female half of the race in contempt as inferior, or in some way closer to the animals.”<sup>58</sup> Beer, too, feels that though the subjection of woman has been broken down by Christ (Gal 3:28), the “advance word” has already been sounded in the OT in Joel 2:28ff. Additionally, the new covenant promise of Jeremiah talks of a new freedom for all (from least to greatest)

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church of America, 27. (“Women of the Year: Great Changes, New Changes, Tough Choices,” *Time* 107 [January 5, 1976]: 13).

<sup>56</sup>Baab, p. 867.

<sup>57</sup>Jerome Leslie Clark, *1844: Social Movements* (Nashville, 1968) 2:130.

<sup>58</sup>Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, tr. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, 1967), 2:121-27.

including women.<sup>59</sup> He states that Christianity, distinct from OT mores, offers the best guide for “today’s polymorphic questions about women.”

Little has been said to this point about the books of Ruth and Esther. This has been deliberate, because this author believes the presence of these books in the OT canon helped to speak this “advance word” about women. Significantly, Ruth concerns itself with a figure who is both female and Gentile. Had the Hebrew people heeded the message of this book, they no doubt would have avoided the national exclusivism that marked their later history. The book also suggests that Yahweh is concerned about *woman*, about her place, regardless of nationality, in His community. That says something to the present issue. In Esther, likewise, the main character is a woman. Here Esther is both a part of the traditional image of woman (beautiful, subordinate, a “sex object”), and transcendent above it. Through her very subordination to the king she effects deliverance for the Jewish nation. Esther thus emerges, in a way, as a “total woman.”

Other questions persist (complementarity in diversified ministries, equality of assignment, response of the laity, etc.)<sup>60</sup> but these, it appears, should not prevent the church from following the “advance word” of the OT and the Christ of the NT in the full utilization of feminine talent in the community of God.

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<sup>59</sup>Beer, p. 45.

<sup>60</sup>A. Cunningham, “Women as Priests,” *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, supp. (1967-1974), 16:470.



## IV FIRST-CENTURY CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN EMPIRE

Julia Neuffer

The purpose of this study is to survey briefly the climate of opinion regarding the place of women among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the first century. This is the cultural setting in which the Christian church originated and began its development. Since the church rose in the midst of Judaism and thence spread into the Greek-speaking Hellenistic world of the eastern Mediterranean, and later to the Roman west, these three cultural backgrounds will be surveyed in this order.

### Women in First-Century Judaism

There is little direct documentary evidence for first-century Palestine, but the Jewish customs of that time were based either on OT precedents, adapted to postexilic and later ideas, or on the traditions embodied in the “oral Law” and put into writing in the Mishnah about a century later. Though the Mishnah cannot be used as specific and detailed proof of first-century practices, many of its provisions were part of a long-developing tradition, some say stemming from the time of Ezra on. The principal differences between the first century and the Mishnaic period would be the changes in Jewish thought and religious observances resulting from the destruction of the temple and the consequent loss of the ritual system. Therefore, it would not be expected that social customs and attitudes relevant to women would be changed thereby. For this reason the Mishnah, which looks backward seeking to record the older practices for posterity, seems to be a reasonably safe source.

Legally the Jewish woman was under the control of first her father then her husband. In other words, she remained a semi-minor under male guardianship. She could not even make a religious vow without the consent of father or husband.<sup>1</sup> Although she was not forced to marry without her consent (cf. Gen 24:58), she and the bridegroom could merely express preference; the arrangement was made between the fathers of the two partners. The girl could be betrothed as early as twelve and married at twelve and a half.<sup>2</sup>

Her education would have included little more than the domestic arts taught by her mother. She probably learned to read and write and was given elementary religious instruction—enough to pass on to her small children. But only boys went to the synagogue school to study the Torah (in Hebrew, of course). It is true that one first-century rabbi recommended that a father teach his daughter Torah, because the merit she would thus acquire might stand her in good stead if some day her husband should accuse her of adultery, in which case such merit could suspend the penalty. On the other hand, Rabbi Eliezer (A.D. 90) protested that this would be equivalent to teaching one’s daughter lewdness.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of the girls’ lack of opportunity for an education, there were women who somehow acquired considerable knowledge of the Torah and even of other subjects. There are records of some rabbis who had wives learned in the law,<sup>4</sup> and Timothy’s mother and grandmother had

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<sup>1</sup>Mishnah *Nedarim* 10, based on Num 30. (Mishnah is hereafter abbreviated M.)

<sup>2</sup>*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s. v. “Marriage,” vol. 11, p. 1028.

<sup>3</sup>M. *Sotah* 3. 4.

<sup>4</sup>The best known was Beruriah, the wife of Rabbi Meir (Talmud *Pesahim* 62b).

enough knowledge to give him a solid grounding in the Scriptures. There is an allusion in the Mishnah to the possibility of a man's setting up his wife as a shopkeeper or appointing her manager of his business.<sup>5</sup> But apparently most wives were not taught enough to manage their own business affairs.

At marriage a girl went directly from the guardianship and control of her father to that of her husband.<sup>6</sup> Although she retained ownership of her own property, proceeds thereof or earnings of her own work belonged to the husband as long as the marriage lasted, and at her death he inherited it.<sup>7</sup> For her protection a marriage contract, called the *Ketuvah*, specified what she brought with her as her dowry and personal possessions, and the amount added by the bridegroom, so that in case of divorce she could take away what belonged to her. All the husband's possessions were security for this amount.<sup>8</sup> This document included the agreement of both parties and was considered basic to the marriage. The groom's contribution was set at a minimum (twice as much for a virgin as for a widow or divorcee), but he was expected to exceed that, according to his means.<sup>9</sup>

The husband was obligated to guarantee the wife her marital rights, support, ransom if captured, and burial.<sup>10</sup> The wife was obligated to grind the flour, bake the bread, wash the clothes, cook, make his bed, nurse her child, and work in wool. (Certain of these duties were not required of her if she brought servants to perform them.)<sup>11</sup> The work in wool was considered a very important occupation of the wife, who was responsible for the family's clothing.

We know little of the dress of the first-century Jewish woman. There must have been no lack of interest in dress (cf. some of the OT denunciations of the vanity of her ancient ancestors), but descriptions are lacking. Since some of the garments of NT times and later bore the same Greek names as those worn by Greeks, it is probable that a Jewish woman's dress was not dissimilar from that known to us from Greek sculptures. These were long, flowing garments, sewn with loose sleeves or merely draped, portions of which could be turned up over the head for an outdoor head covering. Veiling the face was not a Jewish custom. That probably came in later through Arab influence.<sup>12</sup> Hair style was apparently important as a symbol of one's status. The virgin bride came to her wedding in a curtained litter (or wearing a veil; the translation is disputed), and wore her hair loose and flowing;<sup>13</sup> but not so a widow or divorcee at her second wedding. The married woman bound her hair up on her head in various styles of braids, fillets, nets, or bands,<sup>14</sup> so that her head was "bound," or "covered," with her long hair. This was a sign of her submission to her husband's authority (cf. the "[sign of] authority on her head" mentioned in the early Christian church, in 1 Cor 11:10, 15, NASB).

Apparently the idea of a woman's long hair as a covering for her head was involved in the ceremony of the wife accused of unfaithfulness by her husband. Although the ordeal of drinking

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<sup>5</sup>M. *Ketuvoth* 9.4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 4. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 8. 9.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 8. 8. The *Ketuvah*, or marriage contract, was introduced in the first century B.C. (Philip Blackman, ed. and tr. *Mishnayoth*, vol. 3 (London, 1953), introduction to tractate *Ketuvoth*, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 4. 7; 5. 1.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 4. 4; 5. 6.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 5. 5.

<sup>12</sup>Roland de Vaux, "Sur le voile des femmes dan l'Orient ancien," *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935): 408.

<sup>13</sup>M. *Ketuvoth* 2. 1, 10.

<sup>14</sup>Hermann Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 2 (Munich, 1926), comment on 1 Cor 11:5, pp. 427-29.

the bitter water was discontinued in the first century,<sup>15</sup> it is described in the Mishnah. The priest took the woman to a gate between the Court of the Woman and the Court of the Israelites; that is, to the point beyond which women were not allowed to enter, in the temple of Herod (such a segregation of the women in their own court is not mentioned in connection with the Solomonic or the postexilic temple). There the priest tore the woman's garments to bare her bosom and loosened her hair,<sup>16</sup> apparently signifying that she had destroyed her modesty and broken her marriage.

The biblical origin of this method of disgracing the woman publicly may be sought in Num 5:18, which prescribes the loosening of the woman's hair before she is given the "bitter water that causes the curse." The verb *paraC*, translated "uncover" in the KJV, has the meaning of loosen, disarrange; and in combination with *rosh* (head), means to let (the hair) hang loose, untie (unbraid), and is so translated in several English versions.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the Mishnah among the grounds for divorce serious enough to warrant dismissing the wife without returning her dowry (which she would ordinarily take with her) was her going out in public with her hair loose.<sup>18</sup> Since loose hair, ordinarily the mark of a virgin, would lead the beholder to suppose that she was unmarried, it would appear that she was thus repudiating her marriage and declaring herself eligible for male attention. Another kind of similarly culpable public behavior, mentioned in the same section, was conversing with any man.<sup>19</sup> Both of these fit in with a dictum of the rabbis that a woman's voice, like her hair, was sexually provocative.<sup>20</sup>

(Small wonder, then, that we find in the NT indications of surprise when the disciples found Jesus at Jacob's well *talking to a woman*, and of consternation in the Corinthian church at a woman's speaking up and asking questions in public assembly and—worse yet—appearing without the wifely sign of her husband's authority on her head.)

Divorce was the prerogative of the husband only, exercised at his pleasure; though the marriage contract was a deterrent because it entitled the wife, except in case of grave misconduct, to take with her her *Ketuvah*—whatever she owned as listed in that document. But in the case of cruelty she could appeal to the courts to force her husband to divorce her.<sup>21</sup>

A divorced or widowed wife did not return to her father's control. Her property was her own, and although the widow did not inherit from her husband, she and her unmarried daughters were entitled to support by the heirs (the sons), and she was entitled to live on in her husband's

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<sup>15</sup>After the temple was destroyed (see Blackman, introduction to tractate *Sotah*, p. 329).

<sup>16</sup>M. *Sotah* 1. 5, 6.

<sup>17</sup>Several Hebrew lexicons give the meaning to let loose, let go, let grow, let hang loose. Köhler and Baumgartner give first the meaning uncover, but add that if referring to hair it means let hang loose; Gesenius (ed. Tregelles) and Holladay emphasize the loosening or hanging loose, especially with the noun *rosh* (head). Texts cited are Num 5:18, also Lev 10:6; 13:45; 21:10; the latter refer to priests. The KJV uses "uncover" throughout, but several new translations, following the newer Hebrew lexicons, use the word "loose." So does the Jewish Soncino translation.

<sup>18</sup>M. *Ketuvoth* 7. 6.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Talmud *Berakoth* 24a. Three rabbis, who lived from one to three centuries later but probably echoed earlier beliefs, said that a woman's hair, her leg, and her voice were provocative. Earlier rabbis also regarded woman as a source of temptation, and the Jewish philosopher Philo called woman "the beginning of transgression," "irrational," the symbol of sense perception, but man the symbol of mind ( *Questions and Answers on Genesis* 1. 43. 45, 47; 4. 15).

<sup>21</sup>Blackman, introduction to tractate *Gittin*, p. 391.

home.<sup>22</sup> If she had no heirs able to support her, she was a widow indeed,” dependent on charitable maintenance.

A Jewish wife, though completely under her husband’s authority, was the mistress of her household. She normally received respect and affection from her husband, and honor from her children.<sup>23</sup> According to her character and capacities, she could exert considerable influence on her husband and sons. But she probably had less freedom in the first century than in earlier and more rugged times. Her sphere was limited mostly to the home and to domestic pursuits.

Her time was largely taken up—unless she had slaves—in household and maternal duties, not merely cooking and housekeeping, but grinding flour for baking, and spinning and weaving cloth for the family’s clothing. Hence, she doubtless felt relieved rather than deprived at being exempt” from studying the Torah and from all positive religious commands that prescribed duties at set times, with certain exceptions.<sup>24</sup> The principal exception was the observance of the Sabbath. (The Mishnah warns of three duties the neglect of which will cause a woman to die in childbirth; one is lighting the lamp before the Sabbath.)<sup>25</sup>

Yet for the woman who happened to have time and the inclination to go deeper into the study of Scriptures and religious observances, these exemptions from religious duties must have been restrictive. Some have deduced from the Mishnah that women took Nazirite vows in order to achieve personal participation in religious rites, since the only sacrifices a woman could offer personally were the meal offerings connected with her Nazirite vows or with the ordeal of the bitter water. However, this could not have been true in the early days. As the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* points out, women are mentioned in connection with transgressions that are “atonable by sacrifice”—the trespass offerings (Num 5:6-8; cf. Lev 6:1-7).<sup>26</sup>

There is no clear evidence in the Bible that there were any professional female participants in the recognized cult of tabernacle or temple. There had been prophetesses at various times, but no priestesses. Perhaps because their pagan neighbors had immoral rites as part of their worship (they had not only priestesses but also a class of religious prostitutes), the Jews had a great advantage in a priesthood limited to males only. Even that precaution did not entirely eliminate priestly misconduct such as that of Eli’s sons (1 Sam 2:22).

The pious Jewish wife and mother, who was the backbone of the national family life and morality and brought up her children from infancy in the ways of obedience to the Law, did more than teach them their earliest concepts of God. She also led out in certain home ceremonies, such as welcoming the Sabbath at the Friday evening meal; and she took part in the Passover rituals, such as removing the leaven and preparing the Passover supper. Also she could accompany her husband and sons, as her time permitted, on pilgrimages to the great feasts. Jewish women were by no means excluded from the benefits of their religion; but neither were they allowed, except in rare cases, to realize their full potential.

## Women in Hellenism

The place of women in the Greek-speaking world of the first century was higher than it had been in classical Greece, but not on a par with their freedom and importance in the age depicted

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<sup>22</sup>M. *Ketuvoth*, 4. 2; 11. 1; 12. 3.

<sup>23</sup>M. *Kiddushim* 1. 7.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>M. *Shabbath* 2. 6; *Mekilta Bachodesh* 8.

<sup>26</sup>M. *Kiddushim* 1. 8; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s. v. “Woman,” vol. 16, col. 624.

in the Homeric poems. Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, managed her household and dealt with the suitors as she saw fit, though her son Telemachus was her titular guardian. Other Homeric women moved among men in public as their later descendants did not. In the classical period, at the height of the Hellenic culture (fifth-fourth centuries B.C.), the Greek city-states varied in law and custom.<sup>27</sup> Athens exhibited one extreme, the almost complete seclusion of women inside the home (probably derived from the Ionian Greek cities in western Asia Minor, which may have learned the custom from their Oriental neighbors). Sparta, at the other extreme, allowed and encouraged its women to move freely in public and taught the young girl athletic skills intended to develop them as healthy mothers of strong soldier-sons.<sup>28</sup> The other Greek states were ranged between these two extremes. A woman occupied, at least legally, a position variously subordinate to or dependent on some man—either father, husband, or guardian of some sort—throughout antiquity; though in practice she sometimes had more independence of action than was spelled out in the legal system.

A Greek man did not marry for love or even for companionship, though a measure of affection could develop in time.<sup>29</sup> He did so in order to have children to bear his name and care for his old age and continue the proper rites that would care for his soul hereafter. Aside from the slave woman who was a mere servitor, he recognized three types of women, all used for his service. As an unknown author put it in a speech attributed to Demosthenes: “We have *hetairai* for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily health of our bodies, and wives to give us legitimate offspring and be the faithful guardians of our homes.”<sup>30</sup>

The penalty for a wife’s adultery was death for her and her paramour, but was not enforced. A man’s unfaithfulness to his wife was not adultery unless committed with another man’s wife. Polygamy was not a Greek practice, but having a concubine was not considered polygamy. The wife often acquiesced, content in the knowledge that when the concubine outlived her charms she would be a household drudge, to the wife’s advantage. As one modern writer aptly expressed it, “All in all, in the matter of sex relations, Athenian custom and law are thoroughly man-made, and represented an Oriental retrogression from society of Egypt, Crete, and the Homeric age.”<sup>31</sup>

A Greek girl was taught very little beyond the domestic arts (except in Sparta, where she was trained in athletics). She was likely married off at fourteen or fifteen to a man twice her age, by arrangement between her father and the groom’s father. Thereafter she was mistress of the house, managed the household, the slaves, if any, and the children. Even a woman who had slaves to do the routine housework customarily spun wool, wove, and made garments for the family.

The clothing<sup>32</sup> of the Greeks, both men and women, consisted essentially of two simple garments, a loose wool tunic and an outer garment, a folded and draped piece of cloth. Women wore their hair done up in a variety of styles, fastened with hairpins, fillets, nets, or metal circlets; young girls let their hair hang long and loose.

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<sup>27</sup>For a general discussion of Greek life, see Leonard Whibley, *A Companion to Greek Studies*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, 1916). For the place of women, see pp. 610-17.

<sup>28</sup>Euripides scorned the Spartan girl athletes in their short dresses (*Andromache*, lines 596-600).

<sup>29</sup>See *Greek Anthology*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1939), no. 340, for a tomb inscription expressing affection and a deep sense of loss.

<sup>30</sup>Oration “Against Neaera” 122 [1386].

<sup>31</sup>Will Durant, *The Life of Greece* (New York, 1939), p. 305.

<sup>32</sup>For discussions of dress, see Whibley, pp. 624-32; Percy Gardner and Frank B. Jevons, *A Manual of Greek Antiquities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1898), pp. 54-63; for detailed drawings, see Mary G. Houston, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Costumes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York, 1965), pp. 46-67.

The wife was practically limited to the women's quarters of the home, and was occupied with her home duties. She went out only occasionally, if properly attended, to religious ceremonies, tragic plays (not comedies, which were not proper for her ears), and in some places to the women's public baths. In public it was improper for her to speak to any man. Pericles of Athens is credited with saying that the best woman is the one least known for either good or evil.<sup>33</sup>

With practically no cultivation of her mind beyond learning to read and write, she had no education of the sort to enable her to talk intelligently with her husband on his level of interests. A fictional account of a conversation has Socrates asking a friend, "Is there anyone to whom you commit more affairs of importance than you commit to your wife?" "There is not." "Is there anyone to whom you talk less?" "There are few or none, I confess."<sup>34</sup>

In the same work is a husband's description of how he trained his bride to her new duties. "She was not yet fifteen years old when she came to me, and up to that time she had lived in leading strings, seeing, hearing, and saying as little as possible."<sup>35</sup> After overcoming her timidity he lectures her on the difference between the man's work and the woman's, and tells her exactly how he wants the house organized. He explains how God gave woman the indoor tasks because she is naturally fearful, but "he who deals with the outdoor tasks will have to be their defender," for which he has been meted out "a larger share of courage." But both man and woman are granted "memory and attention," and "the power to practice due self control."<sup>36</sup> After hearing this monologue on wife-training, Socrates is made to come up with a remark that sounds familiar even now: "Upon my word, . . . your wife has a truly masculine mind by your showing!" "Yes," replies the husband, "and I am prepared to give you other examples of high-mindedness on her part, when a word from me was enough to secure her instant obedience."<sup>37</sup>

This sort of wifely paragon was to keep house and bring up the children—those, that is, that the husband decided to keep. Weaklings and most girls were "exposed" at birth, left in a public place to die or be picked up by someone and reared as a slave. The wife was to provide private meals, which she could eat with her husband, and dinners for his guests, during which she retired to the women's quarters, for the guests were male. Nor did she go out with her husband to banquets, which were strictly "stag" except for the paid entertainers—flute players and *hetairai* ("companions").

*Hetairai* might be mere high-class entertainer-prostitutes; but a minority, who were sketchily or fairly well educated, could augment their physical attractions and dinner-table with conversation on the topics of the day—perhaps on the theater or even on philosophy—that no wife could furnish. They sometimes made more or less permanent attachments with their distinguished clients. Some were foreigners, whom no citizen could marry. Some were of the citizenry but preferred to forgo the security of wifely imprisonment for their independence and the company of—and sometimes influence over—the leading men of the time.<sup>38</sup> These higher-grade *hetairai* were the only free women in Hellenic society, going wherever they pleased; and—according to one secondary work that cites no source—without the head covering expected of a lady, and often with their hair cut and hanging down around their ears.<sup>39</sup> (An interesting bit, if

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<sup>33</sup>Thucydides 2. 45. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Xenophon *Oeconomicus*, 3. 12, in his *Memorabilia and Oeconomicus*, Loeb Classical Library, pp. 387, 389.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 7. 5, p. 415.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 7. 25-27, p. 423.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 10. 1, p. 447.

<sup>38</sup>See Durant, p. 300, and the sources cited.

<sup>39</sup>Gardner and Jevons, pp. 63, 66.

verifiable, in view of the later NT allusion to the shame of a Christian woman's cutting her hair. This was in Corinth—at that time a proverbially immoral crossroads seaport with a mixed population of Romans, Greeks, and assorted Orientals and with a famed temple of Aphrodite, or Venus, served by a thousand beautiful *hetairai*, the delight of seamen from all shores. Is this abhorrence of a shorn woman connected with the fear of her being mistaken for a *hetaira*?)

The respectable Greek wife did not envy the *hetaira*, who was looked down on socially in her prime and who most often died in poverty and misery. The wife was probably reasonably content with her lot, partly for lack of knowledge or anything different, and partly for the security and status that were hers. Her husband administered her property and enjoyed the use of it, gave her whatever measure of affection he might feel, and, if he pleased, divorced her and retained the children. But if divorced she could reclaim her dowry and return to her *kyrios*—her father or other male guardian through whom she had to conduct any legal business. Herodotus, accustomed to the Greek seclusion of women, was surprised to see women in Egypt outdoors buying and selling.<sup>40</sup>

The Hellenistic period, however, saw a change. In the older Greek society of the classical era the city-states had been, as Toynbee puts it, “freemen's clubs into which there had been no admittance for women or slaves,” but in the Hellenistic period, after the city-states had been replaced by the kingdoms of Alexander's successors, “these two long disfranchised classes were now regaining something of the footing in society that had been theirs in the ‘heroic’—or barbaric—age before the rise of city-states had left them out in the cold.”<sup>41</sup>

However, as Tarn points out, although the women of the Macedonian ruling classes in the eastern Mediterranean area enjoyed more independence than before, this was possible only for those individuals who actively sought a greater role in society. The increased opportunity for the minority did not affect the masses in either Greece or the East. There was still a cultural difference between men and women because of the educational difference. Some women wealthy enough to own slaves were illiterate.<sup>42</sup>

For most women, their husbands still controlled their lives. Ancient custom and economic conditions both operated to the continuance of the practice of exposing unwanted infants, mostly girls. Tarn cites statistics for the ratio of sons to daughters in certain families, which indicates an unnaturally high proportion of males.<sup>43</sup> More vividly than any figures, a single sentence in a letter—a papyrus written in Greek, from Egypt—pictures the cruel situation of an expectant mother who reads a letter from her husband—an otherwise kindly letter: “If it is a boy, let it be, if it is a girl, cast it out.”<sup>44</sup>

In the first century, under Roman administration, Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean remained Hellenistic—a mixture of Greek and Oriental—with little but the provincial governments affected by Rome, except in certain Roman colonies and municipalities. Greek was the language of half the empire, used extensively in Rome itself. The “Greeks,” or “Hellenists,” who had synagogues in Jerusalem and from whose ranks came Christian converts, were Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora—Jews who lived in the Hellenistic lands of the eastern Mediterranean.

When eastern religions spread into the Hellenistic and then the Greco-Roman world, many women and slaves were attracted to them in great numbers. Many were attracted by the high

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<sup>40</sup>Herodotus, 2. 35.

<sup>41</sup>Arnold J. Toynbee, *Hellenism* (New York, 1959), p. 135.

<sup>42</sup>W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1930), pp. 89-91.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 92-94.

<sup>44</sup>*Select Papyri*, vol. 1, ed. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar (Cambridge, 1959. Loeb Classical Library), no. 105.

moral tone of Judaism. When Christianity, in particular, spread into this Hellenistic world, it “appealed to the women; for, though the status of Hellenic women had been improving in the post-Alexandrine age, they had not attained the standing and influence that were attainable, in the social life of the Christian Church, by women who won respect for their personalities through devoting themselves to the Church’s service.”<sup>45</sup> We may find in Lydia of Philippi an example of a Hellenistic businesswoman.

### The Roman Woman

Before the first century began, the Roman woman<sup>46</sup> was freer than her Greek counterpart; by the end of that century she was able to enter marriage in virtual equality with her husband, at least legally, and probably had more independence than her nineteenth-century descendants.<sup>47</sup> This new status of women directly affected the Roman citizens, mostly of the upper classes, but it must have reached to some degree the upper class of non-citizens. Nevertheless, the masses throughout the Empire probably felt little change by the process. The eastern half of the Mediterranean world was never Romanized; it remained Greek in language (plus the local languages, of course) and Greek-Oriental in customs.

In the first century the Roman husband no longer had power of life and death over his wife; but the father—the *paterfamilias*—still held it over his children, even his married sons unless he “emancipated” them. That was the law, but by this time the right was almost never used because it was condemned by public opinion.<sup>48</sup> In one respect, however, a father still exercised, regularly and without censure, a form of life-and-death power—in the exposure of unwanted newborn infants, mostly bastards and girls. The mother had no more voice in the decision than the Greek mother.

The Roman girl, until marriage, was under the *patria potestas* (“paternal power”) of her father or grandfather. By an older form of marriage she came under the *manus* (“hand”) of her husband, to whom she stood legally in the place of a daughter; but under the increasingly common form of marriage, without *manus*, she remained a member of her paternal family and, even after divorce or widowhood, under the *patria potestas* of her father or the guardianship of a male relative, who had to represent her in conducting any legal business. Her dowry did not belong to her husband, though he enjoyed the benefit of it as long as the marriage lasted. At her death it returned to her family.

The Roman bride was as young as her Greek counterpart. In spite of her relative independence, with her own property and her freedom of movement, she nevertheless stood in a subordinate position, under some form of male tutelage. Probably to the vast majority of women the home was their sphere. On her wedding day the bride brought to her new home her distaff and spindle and was given fire and water—emblems of her domestic occupations. She was not

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<sup>45</sup>Toynbee, p. 223.

<sup>46</sup>For general discussions of the Roman woman, see Jérôme Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (New Haven CN, 1940), pp. 76-105, 180-83; Ludwig Friedländer, *Roman Life and Manners Under the Early Empire*, 2nd ed., tr. Leonard A. Magnus (New York, n.d.), 1:228-67; John Edwin Sandys, ed., *A Companion to Latin Studies*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 184-90.

<sup>47</sup>As late as the mid-nineteenth century there were women in the United States whose possessions passed automatically into the husband’s ownership at marriage. See Leo Kanowitz, *Woman and the Law* (Albuquerque, NM, 1969), p. 36.

<sup>48</sup>For a chapter covering the Roman family and laws relating thereto, see John Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (Ithaca, NY, 1967), pp. 98-138. This is relevant to this and several following paragraphs.



excluded from her husband's dinner parties and was given due respect as a matron. She did not, as in the old days, sit at her husband's side<sup>49</sup> while he reclined at the table; she now reclined with him and all the others. The less affluent and the villagers probably sat at meals, as had all the Romans before they adopted the eastern custom of reclining.

Roman women wore the equivalent of the Greek dress, with differences.<sup>50</sup> The hair was done up in varying style, rather more ornate after the first century. It was often bound with a bandeau, or a band rising in front like a section of a cone. A fold of the mantle could be pulled up over the head. According to Plutarch (writing in the first century), it was usual for Roman women to go out in public with their heads covered, though in following a father to the grave they did the opposite—going with uncovered head and with hair unbound.<sup>51</sup> Apparently by that time the covered head was usual, but the uncovered head was not scandalous; for another first-century writer cites as an example of “horrid arrogance” an earlier Roman who divorced his wife because he saw her outdoors with uncovered head, which he contended no one but himself should see.<sup>52</sup>

In NT times Roman women were better educated than their Greek sisters. Both girls and boys attended elementary school (if their parents could pay) from age seven to twelve. Higher education was for boys; but women were by no means barred from whatever learning they could acquire by reading, attending lectures, and the like. Some women were aspiring poets and writers. Some studied philosophy. There were even women physicians.<sup>53</sup> Many women, seeking food for their souls, followed Oriental cults; and a number were attracted to Judaism. Christianity found an audience among women who were knowledgeable enough to become “fellow-workers” with the apostles (though most of the names in Rom 16 are not Roman but Greek).

In the last century of the Republic upper-class Roman marriages and divorces were largely a matter of political alliances and realignments; few wanted to rear children. Shortly before the first century began, the emperor Augustus promulgated laws<sup>54</sup> relating to marriage and the family in an effort to stem the decline in the birth rate and the instability of the family among the higher classes. These laws penalized the unmarried and childless, changed the punishment for adultery from death for the woman to a monetary penalty applied equally to both offenders, recognized the status of a concubine as lawful but inferior to that of a wife (a “second wife” being automatically a concubine since monogamy was the law), and encouraged the remarriage of the widowed and divorced.

Divorce was still allowable on mutual consent, or on the wish of either party or of either *paterfamilias*. But it must be declared in the presence of seven witnesses, and the wife's dowry must be returned unless some portion was claimed by the husband for the maintenance of the children or for loss due to the wife. Further, a mother of three children (of four if a freedwoman) no longer had to have a guardian in order to conduct business. Thus there were Roman women carrying on their own affairs, managing their property, and living independent lives.

However, the laws were unsuccessful in stabilizing marriage among the upper classes. In high society partners were changed on the basis of money instead of republican politics, or retained in name only because of the dowry or for prestige. A satire of Juvenal, written a few

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<sup>49</sup>Valerius Maximus 2. 12.

<sup>50</sup>Carcopino, pp. 164-70; Sandys, pp. 195-200; Houston, pp. 108-116.

<sup>51</sup>Plutarch *Roman Questions*, no. 14, in *Plutarch's Moralia* 4 (Loeb Classical Library): 24-27.

<sup>52</sup>Valerius Maximus 6. 3. 10.

<sup>53</sup>For an enumeration of varied occupations and pursuit of Roman women in the first century, see Carcopino, pp. 180-83.

<sup>54</sup>Crook, p. 106; Carcopino, pp. 97-100.

years after the end of the first century, caricatures such people and their foibles and excesses, especially the goings-on of the women. Some of the targets of his tirades appear merely amusing—such as the mannish woman who barges into men’s meetings and talks to uniformed generals with her husband standing by. But others exemplify all the sins catalogued in Rom 1. One of the conversations has a curiously modern ring. “We agreed long ago,” retorts an unfaithful wife when discovered, “that you are to do what you want and I can do as I please. You can yell and confound sea and sky, but I am a human being!”<sup>55</sup>

Of course not all in the upper classes were of this sort. There were high-minded people, conscientious administrators, and devoted couples, such as Seneca and Paulina, Paetus and Atria, or Pliny and Calpurnia, as attested by letters,<sup>56</sup> epitaphs, and historical narratives. And among ordinary people there were many who still retained to some degree the Old, stern Roman virtues. Multitudes, seeking something to give meaning to their lives, were attracted to various eastern religions, including Judaism, and many of them found hope in Christianity.

### **Mixed Cultural Heritage of Christians**

The ethnic and cultural background of the NT Christians was mixed—Jewish, Greek-Oriental, and Roman. Even in the capital, if we can judge from the names of those in Rome itself to whom Paul sent greetings (Rom 16), most were not Romans but Greeks, Hellenized Jews, or other Hellenistic easterners. The fact that Paul wrote to them in Greek indicates that they spoke that language. Lists of the early bishops of the church at Rome show only four Latin names out of the first fifteen.<sup>57</sup> Priscilla and Aquila, who lived at Rome before they met Paul in Corinth, had Latin names. Priscilla may or may not have been Roman; her husband was a Jew from Asia Minor (Acts 18:2). A majority of the early Christians came from social strata that were less affected by the increasing independence of upper-class women. Working-class women throughout the Empire had always moved about freely because their labor in field or shop was an economic necessity. Hence they had a freedom and a value to the family higher than their mere legal status. Similarly, in earlier stages of culture women in general had been freer—in the early Hebrew period and the pre-classical age of Greece and Rome—when in agricultural and pastoral societies men and women shared the work.<sup>58</sup> Doubtless the Christians were more repelled by the vices of contemporary high society than attracted by the increased opportunities open to the ordinary high-minded woman. Christians found their freedom in Christ, in the freedom to use their abilities in His cause; and woman’s charter of freedom was expressed in the assurance that “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:28, 29).

Is it surprising that some Christians in the infant church, in seeking to put this great principle into effect, made mistakes? Rejoicing in their new release from the Mosaic “yoke of bondage” or from their pagan superstitions, some of them expressed their Christian liberty in ways that tended to put a stumbling block before their weaker brethren or to alienate their non-Christian

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<sup>55</sup>Juvenal *Satires*, no. 6, lines 281-84.

<sup>56</sup>Pliny (the Younger) *Letters* 4. 19; 6. 4; 7. 5.

<sup>57</sup>*New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, s. v. “Popes, List of.”

<sup>58</sup>In the OT, women move freely in public places: Rebekah meeting Isaac at the well, Rachel watering her flocks along with the shepherds, Zelophehad’s daughters speaking up in public assembly, the admired woman of Prov 31 buying property, engaging in business, and opening her mouth in wisdom. Homeric women contrast favorably with their classical-age sisters, and pre-Homeric Cretan women are pictured in public gatherings.

neighbors. In at least one church they produced confusion in public worship and transgressed Jewish and Greek ideas of propriety.<sup>59</sup>

The reaction to this kind of situation was the call for moderation and for doing everything “decently and in order” (and, of course, the determination of what is decent and in order is bound up with the ethnic and cultural background). In other churches also the counsel was for caution in asserting one’s Christian liberty at the expense of others (Gal 5:13; cf. 1 Cor 8:9) or of the cause, “that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Tim 6:1), by those outside the church.

Perhaps there is a parallel to this early-church problem of public opinion in a modern experience in our own church, a reaction to an ethnic and cultural environment. Ellen White taught that great principle of unity in Christ, by which, as she put it, “Jew and Gentile, black and White, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God.”<sup>60</sup> She applied the principle by saying that black members should be received as members of white churches.<sup>61</sup>

A few years later, in the face of segregation by law and of stiffening opposition from outside the church (which at one time nearly closed J. E. White’s *Morning Star* mission), she cautioned against inviting opposition unnecessarily. “If you see that by doing certain things which you have a perfect right to do, you hinder the advancement of God’s work, refrain from doing those things.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore she advised separate churches for black members “where demanded by custom; not, she explained, “to exclude them from worshiping with white people” but rather “that the progress of the truth may be advanced,” and she added, “until the Lord shows us a better way.”<sup>63</sup>

Subsequently, as the *SDA Encyclopedia* relates, this policy of separation, though begun as “the result of local necessity,” “eventually came to be so taken for granted that probably a majority of SDA members in areas where segregation was the custom believed it to be a fundamental teaching of the church.”<sup>64</sup> Consequently some people, not knowing that it was originally contingent on a changing ethnic and cultural situation, have cited the authority of Mrs. White for perpetuating segregation.

In the NT epistles—the “letters to young churches”—we see the emerging Christian congregations gathering converts of varying ethnic and cultural heritage; meeting differing local situations; sometimes facing a choice between insisting on the new Christian freedoms and avoiding offense to their neighbors outside the church. But letters omit explaining points that are already familiar to both writer and recipients. Hence it is sometimes difficult for us today, lacking such information, to read between the lines. Is a given decision or instruction based on a universal principle, on a response to a local church situation, or on consideration for public opinion? Not surprisingly, conclusions have differed as to the reasons why certain things were said or done.

For that matter, historians assign various reasons for the wide differences in the place of women in the Roman Empire, ranging from extreme Greek seclusion to Roman Independence.

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<sup>59</sup>At Corinth, in matters of hair styles, of disorderly speaking in tongues, or of women asking questions in church (see 1 Cor 10; 11; 14).

<sup>60</sup>7T 225.

<sup>61</sup>“Our Duty to the Colored People,” p. 11, reprinted in *The Southern Work*.

<sup>62</sup>9T 215. For the background of increased opposition from outside that forced this change in practice, see Ronald D. Graybill, *E. G. White and Church Race Relations* (Washington, 1970).

<sup>63</sup>9T 208, 206-7.

<sup>64</sup>S. V. “Regional Affairs, Office of,” rev. ed. (1976), p. 1194.

Research in that field would require more primary sources than are available. However, a few secondary works may be cited for various theories, mostly undocumented from ancient sources.

The classical Greek seclusion and inferior status of respectable women, most extreme in Athens, has been explained variously as due to the rise of city states;<sup>65</sup> to women's lack of education;<sup>66</sup> to a supposed Greek belief that the father was the child's only parent, and that its mother, alien to the paternal family, was only its incubator, as it were<sup>67</sup> (which looks suspiciously like a contrived explanation); even, in a recent psychological theory, to the man's reaction against his first seven years spent in the women's quarters, under total female domination.<sup>68</sup> The opposite extreme in Sparta has been explained by the danger from the vastly more numerous Helots.

The Roman woman, though never confined to separate quarters, had been legally almost in the position of her Greek sister; then in the third century B.C. she began to gain economic and then other freedoms by legal detours by-passing the restrictions.<sup>69</sup> Various writers attribute her success to her Roman temperament,<sup>70</sup> to her opportunity to control family property during the men's long absences in the Punic Wars,<sup>71</sup> to increased wealth,<sup>72</sup> to marriage without *manus*, without the husband's control,<sup>73</sup> and, in the late Republic, to her value in political marriage alliances.<sup>74</sup>

The Jewish woman of the first century, enjoying more freedom than her Greek sister but less than the Roman matron, was in some ways less free than in early postexilic times.<sup>75</sup> Why? Possibly there had been a Jewish reaction against the influence or Hellenism since Maccabean times, and a disgust with Roman laxity. The rabbis extolled women's domestic virtues, piety, and motherly wisdom—even, on occasion, her accomplishments. But they also often cast her in the role of temptress, citing Genesis for Eve as the originator or transgression and the cause of man's downfall.<sup>76</sup> Paul—himself a rabbi, trained by Gamaliel—also cites “the law” (1 Cor 14:34, 35) for woman's subordination to her husband; by “law” he might have meant the Pentateuch, the OT, or the whole Jewish system.

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<sup>65</sup>Toynbee, p. 135; Verena Zinserling, *Women in Greece and Rome* (New York, 1972), p. 23.

<sup>66</sup>James Donaldson, *Woman* (London, 1907), pp. 52-53. This contributed to men's dependence on the *hetairai* as companions (*ibid.*, pp. 56-59).

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 197; cf. Philip E. Slater, *The Glory of Hera* (Boston, 1968), p. 163. There is disagreement as to whether this view belonged to the Homeric period or the time of the classical playwrights who attributed it to Apollo. See Aeschylus *Eumenides*, lines 658-64; Euripides *Orestes*, line 552.

<sup>68</sup>Slater, pp. 7-10.

<sup>69</sup>Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Women of the Caesars* (New York, 1911), pp. 5-6, 9.

<sup>70</sup>Donaldson, p. 89; illustrated by her willingness to defy male disapproval to make public protests on her own behalf (*ibid.*, p. 99); see also Mary R. Beard, *On Understanding Women* (New York, 1968 [original ed., 1931]), pp. 234-35.

<sup>71</sup>Beard, p. 235.

<sup>72</sup>Donaldson, pp. 105-9; Zinserling, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup>Ferrero, p. 5; Samuel Dill, *Roman Society From Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (reprint; Cleveland, 1956), p. 79; cf. Donaldson, pp. 106-110.

<sup>74</sup>Zinserling, p. 49; Ferrero, pp. 16-18.

<sup>75</sup>On the improved status of women in the exilic and postexilic periods, see Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2 vols. (New York, 1952), 1:112-14, and n. 16, p. 348.

<sup>76</sup>Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (reprint; Grand Rapids, 1957), pp. 139-40, citing Tanch. 28. 6; see also Philo, in n. 20 above.

## Conclusion

The first-century Christians, beginning in Palestine, then spreading in the Hellenistic East, probably felt Roman influence least in their daily lives (though church organization later followed Roman models).<sup>77</sup>

As for the place of women, the Roman laws of personal status and family relationships were binding on Roman citizens; but there is evidence that non-citizen provincials were most often dealt with in their own legal systems.<sup>78</sup> Certainly Roman customs were not transplanted wholesale into the much older societies in the eastern half of the empire—the area with which the NT deals principally. Hence the ethnic and cultural background relevant to this study seems to have been primarily Jewish and Greek, and only incidentally Roman.

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<sup>77</sup>Such terms as “diocese” are taken from names of administrative units of the Roman Empire as reorganized by Diocletian in the third century.

<sup>78</sup>Crook, p. 283.

V  
**JESUS AND WOMEN**  
Walter F. Specht

**Jesus Championed Women's Rights**

In recent years more than one author has described Jesus as a champion of women.<sup>1</sup> Is such a designation justified by Christ's words and acts as preserved in the four Gospels? A casual examination of the tradition as presented in the Gospels does not indicate that He was a revolutionary, vocally contending for the rights of women. If He was indeed a champion of women, in what sense was He such, and how did He contend for womanhood?

In evaluating the evidence one must carefully consider the Jewish environment in which Jesus lived, taught, and worked.

In the Judaism of Jesus' day women were not generally regarded as equal to men. The rabbinical writings more than once record a prayer<sup>2</sup> that, with some modification, is still found in the Jewish *Daily Prayer Book*. In its modern form it reads:

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,  
who hast not made me a heathen.  
Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,  
who hast not made me a bondman.  
Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King, of the universe,  
who hast not made me a woman.<sup>3</sup>

For the last sentence women now substitute:

Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,  
who hast made me according to thy will.

The Jewish document *Pirkē Aboth*, or *Sayings of the Fathers* (a collection of ethical and religious maxims of Jewish teachers who lived between the third century B.C. and the third century A.D.), records that:

“Jose ben Johanan of Jerusalem said: . . . talk not much with a woman. He said it in the case of his own wife, much more in the case of his companion's wife. Hence the Wise have said: Everyone that talketh much with a woman causes evil to himself, and desists from the words of Torah, and his end is he inherits Gehinnom.”<sup>4</sup>

In his commentary on this passage, R. Trevor Herford remarks:

“The ground of the maxim is explained to be that if a man talks much with a woman his thoughts will be turned away from words of Torah to things of no importance. But he may talk with her on the necessary affairs of the household and upon serious subjects. The maxim belongs

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<sup>1</sup>As examples see Halford E. Luccock in *The Interpreter's Bible* 7:795; Arthur John Gossip in *The Interpreter's Bible* 8:529; Harold cooke Phillips in *The Interpreter's Bible* 6:617; C. G. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teaching*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>T. Ber 7, 18; J. Ber. 13b, 57 ff.; b. Men. 43b.

<sup>3</sup>S. Singer, tr., *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup>Aboth 1.5. R. Trevor Herford, *Pirkē Aboth—The Ethics of the Talmud: Sayings of the Fathers*, Edited with Introduction, Translation, and commentary, p. 24.

to an ethic which modern thought has outgrown, as it takes for granted the inferiority of the woman to the man. Upon these lines the relation between the sexes never attains to perfect companionship; and is the more exposed to degradation, in so far as the woman is looked down upon as foolish or shunned as a source of temptation.”<sup>5</sup>

Among other rabbinical dictums that denigrate women or treat them as inferiors, two may be cited:<sup>6</sup> “Happy is he whose children are males, and woe to him whose children are females.”<sup>7</sup> “Ten qabs of empty-headedness have come upon the world, nine having been received by women, and one by the rest of the world.”<sup>8</sup>

Into such a social environment Jesus was born and lived. Yet He never looked down on women or spoke of them as inferior.

“In all four Gospels, Jesus is never reported as acting or speaking to women in a derogatory fashion. He always treated them as equals, individuals, and persons.”<sup>9</sup>

### **Illustrations From Women’s Experiences**

Although numerous rabbinical parables have been preserved, women seldom appear in them. When a woman does appear she is most often presented in a bad light, unless she is a well-known person, such as a king’s daughter.<sup>10</sup> It is significant, therefore, that Jesus often spoke of women in His teaching ministry. And in His sayings and parabolic teachings He drew illustrations from the life and problems of women that clearly indicate His sympathetic understanding of them.

He compared the kingdom of God in its present mystery form to a woman’s placing leaven in three measures of meal (Matt 13:33; Luke 13:20-21). He likened God’s initiative in seeking the lost to a woman diligently searching her house for a lost silver drachma, which was probably part of her marriage dowry (Luke 15:8-10). In the parable of the Ten Virgins He illustrated what it means to be ready for the Second Advent (Matt 25:1-13). In His account of the persistent widow pleading for justice from an unscrupulous judge He drove home the necessity for prevailing prayer (Luke 18:1-8). By the example of Lot’s wife He also warned His followers against attachment to the world (Luke 17:32; cf. Gen 19:26).

He commended a poor widow who dropped two tiny copper coins in the treasury: “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For they all contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, her whole living” (Mark 12:43-44, RSV). The conundrum regarding whose wife a woman would be in the resurrection who had had seven husbands did not come from Jesus, but from the Sadducees who tried to make the doctrine of the resurrection appear ridiculous. But in

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>As a balance to these strong statements it must in fairness be recognized that occasionally Rabbinic writings reflect a sincere appreciation of women, particularly of outstanding ones. Albrecht Oepke cites the saying, “Her husband is adorned by her, but she is not adorned by her husband” (Gn. r., 47 on 17:5). Then he continues, “Before God[,] wives have equal if not greater promise than their husbands (Ex. r., 21 on 14:15; Tanna debe Eliahu Rabba, 9; Rab. gest., 247 A.D.; b Ber., 17a). Particular mention may be made of Beruria (Veluria? Valeria?), the daughter of R. Chanina ben Teradion, and wife of R. Meir (c. 150 A.D.) [,] as an outstanding and quick-witted woman, or of Rahel, the wife of Akiba, as an example of one who manifested an extraordinary piety and readiness for sacrifice in the Jewish sense.”—*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1:782.

<sup>7</sup>B. Qid, 82b.

<sup>8</sup>B. Qid, 496.

<sup>9</sup>Alicia Craig Faxon, *Women and Jesus*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>Johannes Leipoldt, *Jesus und die Frauen*, p. 25.

dealing with it He revealed profound truths regarding the life to come (Matt 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-30). In the parable of the two sons our Lord made the startling statement that publicans and harlots would enter God's kingdom ahead of the chief priests and the elders of the people (see Matt 21:28-32).

Jesus also drew a lesson from the story of the queen of the South (that is, of Sheba), who visited Solomon in OT times (Matt 12:41-42; Luke 11:31-32). In His first recorded sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth He spoke of the widow of Zarephath who ministered to Elijah, as an example of a Gentile who was blessed by a prophet of God (Luke 4:25-26).

Looking to judgment day, Jesus declared, "There will be two women grinding together; one will be taken and the other left" (Matt 24:41; Luke 17:35, RSV). John records that Jesus declared that in a little while they would be separated from Him, and then in a short time they would see Him: "You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world" (John 16:20-22).

Clearly, women had a prominent place in Jesus' teaching, as well as in His service. It is to be noted that the Gospel of Luke more than any of the others emphasizes Jesus' teaching about, and relation to, women. It has sometimes been designated as the Gospel of womanhood. All told, some 13 women who are not mentioned in the other Gospels are mentioned in Luke.

## Marriage and Divorce

The outstanding aspect of life where Jesus took issue with the social laxness of His time was in the area of marriage and divorce. He set forth a high ideal of marriage and condemned the easily obtained divorces in the Jewish society of His day.

When He was in the trans-Jordan territory of Perea and on His final approach to Jerusalem, He was confronted by some Pharisees who sought to entrap Him with the question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" (Mark 10:2, RSV). Note that they did not ask, "Is it lawful for a woman to divorce her husband?" They were thinking only of the rights of a man, and gave no consideration to the rights of a woman. In Judaism it was well-nigh impossible for a woman to divorce her husband, though desertion was possible.

In His reply our Lord asked, "What did Moses command you?" (vs. 3). Jesus evidently intended to direct their attention to the original institution of marriage given in Gen 1:27 and 2:24. But instead the Pharisees referred to the passage in Deut 24:1-4 concerning the status of a divorced woman in relation to her former husband.<sup>11</sup> They replied to Jesus, "Moses, allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to put her away" (Mark 10:4, RSV).

The intention of the Mosaic provision was to protect a wife from hasty and unjust treatment. In the Semitic world it was easy for a man to divorce his wife; he simply ordered her out of the house.<sup>12</sup> The Deuteronomic code allowed divorce on condition that her husband "found some indecency in her." But a legal procedure required the husband to present his wife with a certificate of divorce, allowing her to remarry. This legal requirement was never intended to sanction easy divorce, or divorce at all;<sup>13</sup> it was designed to protect a wife from a capricious husband.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p. 354.

<sup>12</sup>Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, s. v. "Divorce."

<sup>13</sup>John Murray, in *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, s. v. "Divorce."

<sup>14</sup>Horn.



In the days of Jesus there was a dispute between the disciples of Shammai and the disciples of Hillel (the heads of two prominent rabbinical schools) regarding the meaning of the phrase in Deuteronomy translated, “Some indecency” (RSV), or “something shameful” (ASV). Both of these famous teachers accepted divorce but differed concerning the grounds on which a divorce could lawfully be granted.<sup>15</sup>

The school of Shammai interpreted “some indecency” as something morally shameful, such as adultery, or a failure to observe Jewish laws about wifely conduct.<sup>16</sup> The school of Hillel took a much more liberal position, allowing divorce on the most trivial grounds—anything that might give the husband displeasure, such as burning food or putting too much salt in the soup.<sup>17</sup>

According to Matthew’s Gospel the Pharisees asked Jesus, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” (Matt 19:3). The question may have been designed to force Jesus to take a position with one or the other of the rival schools<sup>18</sup>—apparently in an attempt to trap Him (Matt 19:3; Mark 10:2). John the Baptist had been executed for denouncing the conduct of Herod Antipas and Herodias. Jesus was in Perea, which was part of Antipas’ jurisdiction. Perhaps Jesus could be led to say something that would cause the tetrarch to seize Him, as well.

But in His reply Jesus sought to elevate the concept of marriage by pointing to its origin (compare the Genesis Creation account). The provision in Deuteronomy was a concession to man’s “hardness of heart.”<sup>19</sup> But God’s ideal for marriage is revealed in the original state in Paradise. That original plan called for lifelong union. “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one” (Mark 10:7-8).

This *henōsis* (oneness) includes more than sexual union. (“Joined” may well be used in the figurative sense, meaning “adhere closely to,” or “be faithfully devoted to.”)<sup>20</sup> It is a union that has the sanction of God Himself, and is therefore sacred and inviolable. Hence Jesus added the warning, “What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (vs. 9). This was Jesus’ concept of the ideal in marriage. Divorce was not in God’s plan.<sup>21</sup>

In dealing with the Pharisees’ question our Lord placed the wife on a status of equality with her husband. He did not recognize a double standard of sexual morality. The husband, no less than the Wife, was required to maintain fidelity to the marriage partner.

But even more important than what he said about women, or about marriage and divorce, are the accounts of how Jesus related to women. In this respect His position might have been called revolutionary. A contemporary theologian puts it this way:

“In this relationship his life style was so remarkable that one can only call it astonishing. He treated women as fully human, equal to men in every respect; no word of depreciation about women, as such, is ever found on his lips. As the Savior who identified with the oppressed and disinherited, he talked to women and about women with complete freedom and candor.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* 2:332ff.

<sup>16</sup> Lane, p. 353.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; Goerge Foot Moore, *Judaism* 2:123ff.

<sup>18</sup> Frederick C. Grant, “The Gospel According to St. Mark,” *The Interpreter’s Bible* 7:795.

<sup>19</sup> Lane, pp. 355-56.

<sup>20</sup> F. Hauck, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4:733.

<sup>21</sup> Ethelbert Stauffer, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 1:649.

<sup>22</sup> Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female*, p. 94.

## Christ's Signs and Wonders on Behalf of Women

How did Jesus relate to women? How did He treat them?

### Jesus Made Provision for His Mother

Let us note first how He related to His mother. A man's true self is often best revealed in his own home, to those who are closely associated with him. What was Jesus' attitude toward His mother? How did He regard her status as a woman? How did He relate to her? The gospels present four incidents that give us some indications regarding Jesus' relation to Mary.

The first of these was at the Passover visit in Jerusalem when Jesus at the age of 12 was becoming a *bar-mitzvah*, a son of the law (Luke 2:41-51). It was a great epoch in Jesus' life, for He now revealed a consciousness of His Messianic mission. When the Passover feast was over, Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem. His absence was not discovered until the conclusion of the first day's journey. With great anxiety Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem to look for Him. When Mary discovered Him in the school of the rabbis she reprovably asked, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously" (vs. 48, RSV). His answer was somewhat mystifying: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (vs. 49, RSV).

These were indeed strange words for a boy of 12. Jesus was disclaiming the paternity of Joseph and declaring His sonship to God. Nevertheless, Jesus showed no disrespect to Mary and Joseph. The record states, "And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them" (vs. 51, RSV).

The second episode took place in Cana, where, according to John's Gospel, Jesus performed His first miracle, or "sign" (John 2:1-12). Jesus, His disciples, and His mother were guests at a wedding festival. He was now nearly 30 years of age. When the supply of wine was exhausted during the feast, Mary suggested that He do something to reveal His true Messianic dignity. Jesus' answer at first seems harsh: "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (vs. 4, RSV).

While there is nothing derogatory in the address "woman" (it may be one of respect and affection),<sup>23</sup> it may appear to be an unusual way to address a mother. Perhaps the time had come to let Mary know that it was not her place to make suggestions about His Messianic work. Jesus is no longer under her direction and authority.

Yet while hanging on the cross Jesus made provision for His widowed mother, and addressed her as "woman" (John 19:26-27). At the wedding feast Mary did not take offense at Jesus' reply, or regard it as a sharp rebuke. She instead gave expression to her faith by saying to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). Jesus responded to that faith by performing His first miracle—turning water into wine. He then accompanied His mother to Capernaum, and from there separated from His family to go on His mission.

The third incident apparently occurred at Capernaum (Mark 3:19), where a large crowd had gathered to hear Jesus teach (Matt 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). At this time our Lord was so busy that He scarcely had time to eat (Mark 3:20). Reports of this reached His family, who were concerned not only about His physical well-being but about His mental balance, as well. Jesus had healed a blind and mute demoniac, and the scribes and Pharisees attributed His

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<sup>23</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 167; Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 363, "voc., as a term of respect or affection, mistress, lady."

power to Beelzebul, the prince of demons (Matt 12:24). Jesus showed the unreasonableness of such a charge, and warned the Jewish leaders against blaspheming the Holy Spirit (vss. 25-32). At this juncture Mary and His brothers arrived to take Jesus away to a much-needed rest. Because of the crowd, however, they were unable to reach Him. So they sent word that they were waiting for Him outside. But Jesus refused to go out to see them. Apparently He felt that He was grossly misunderstood even by His own mother. Mary was seemingly again trying to direct His Messianic work. Jesus took this occasion to make a pronouncement concerning His true family: “Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mark 3:35, RSV; Matt 12:50).

Connected with this experience was a woman’s exclamation, “Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!” (Luke 11:27, RSV). In a male-dominated society a woman’s claim to recognition was in rearing a son. How fortunate was the mother of a son like Jesus! This woman’s exclamation, recorded only by Luke, echoed the song of Elizabeth before Jesus’ birth, “Blessed are you among women!” (Luke 1:42) or perhaps the words of Mary’s *Magnificat*, “Henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Luke 1:48). Similar ascriptions of blessedness occur in rabbinical writings,<sup>24</sup> the most significant being, “Blessed is the hour in which the Messiah was created. Blessed is the womb from which he came.”<sup>25</sup>

In His reply Jesus shows the inadequacy of such a remark. Mary’s place as His mother did not bring her salvation. This is dependent upon a spiritual relationship. “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28, RSV).

There can be little doubt that Jesus was devoted to His family. Nevertheless He recognized a higher loyalty to God, and to a larger family—the family of God. Even His earthly family loyalty was to take second place to the paramount loyalty to God. This is no denial of the claims of family love, but that love must not interfere with love and service for God. This is an important truth to be kept in mind in every age.

In the final scene we see Mary standing by the cross of Jesus (John 19:25-27). Jesus loved His mother. What could He say that would brighten her heart at such a time? All He could do was to commit her to the care of the beloved disciple John, who accepted the sacred trust given him.

## **Jesus Worked Miracles on Behalf of Women**

Several times in the Gospels Jesus is pictured as working miracles on behalf of women. This readiness to help women again distinguishes Him from the rabbis. While there is a profusion of rabbinical miracle stories, only a few tell of women being helped.<sup>26</sup>

Early in His Galilean ministry our Lord was a guest in the home of Simon Peter in Capernaum, where He was told of the illness of Peter’s mother-in-law. Although it was the Sabbath day, Jesus made her well (Matt 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39). His action violated not only the Pharisaic rules of Sabbathkeeping but also the norms of propriety in dealing with women. The rabbis declared that a man was not to look at a beautiful woman, even if she were single, nor at a married woman, even if she were not beautiful, nor even at a woman’s lovely attire.<sup>27</sup> To take a woman’s hand was quite shocking to Jewish sticklers for propriety. But

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<sup>24</sup>Aboth 2.10; 2 Baruch 54.10.

<sup>25</sup>Pesiqta 149a.

<sup>26</sup>Leipoldt, pp. 16-17.

<sup>27</sup>B. Aboda zara 18b, quoted in Leipoldt, pp. 17-18.

to help a sick woman, Jesus was willing to break rabbinical Sabbath rules, as well as the accepted rules of social propriety.

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus had compassion on a bereaved widow of Nain and raised her son to life (Luke 7:11-17). Jesus, His disciples, and a great crowd were approaching the gate of the village just as the funeral procession was moving toward the cemetery. The plight of the widowed mother who had lost her only son touched the Master's heart. In such a situation she was helpless and defenseless. The bier on which the body of the young man lay was not an enclosed coffin, but a litter consisting of a board with narrow sides attached. It was customary for the body to be wrapped in linen cloth, but with the face exposed. Although contact with the dead would render Him ceremonially unclean (Num 19:11), Jesus stepped up and touched the bier. The pallbearers stopped, and Jesus raised the young man to life.

At Capernaum (Matt 9:1) Jesus also raised the 12-year-old daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue (Matt 9:18-19, 23-26; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 8:40-42, 49-56). Again ignoring the fact that contact with the dead would make Him ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev 21:11), our Lord took her by the hand and said, "'Talitha cumi'; which means, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.'" Thus, Jesus demonstrated that He valued human need above ritual requirements.

On the way to Jairus' home Jesus healed a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for 12 years (Matt 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48). She had spent all or her financial resources on physicians and remedies, only to be pronounced incurable (Mark 5:26). According to Jewish law a woman in this condition was in a state of perpetual uncleanness. (Lev 15:25-33.) Apparently she lacked the opportunity or the courage to confront Jesus directly and ask for help. Perhaps she feared she might be refused. But she had faith to believe that if she could only reach out and touch His garments she would be healed. She managed to make her way through the crowd near enough to touch "the fringe of his garment" (Matt 9:20, RSV). The moment she did so she was healed.

Even though contact with such a person rendered our Lord ritually unclean, He did not reproach her for touching Him. He did, however, insist that she reveal her identity in the presence of the vast crowd. Alicia Craig Faxon has correctly assessed the situation with these words:

"Not only did He heal her from her physical illness, but He released her from her fears and suffering, often concomitants of sickness but frequently existing by themselves. . . . Jesus also liberated this woman from her feelings of inferiority and unworthiness. He called her forth from her hiding place and confirmed her as a person. He acknowledged her faith and her determination.

"And He called her out of passivity into activity in holding her responsible for her acts. He said in effect, 'Don't feel unworthy and inferior; you are a person worthy to be healed, worthy to claim my attention. Stand up and acknowledge your personhood, your rights as a human being.'"<sup>28</sup>

### **Jesus Tested a Woman's Faith**

The Syrophenician woman's plea to have her possessed daughter healed was at first refused (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30), not because of her sex, but because she was a Gentile. Jesus was trying to break down His disciples' prejudice by taking them into Gentile territory. By treating

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<sup>28</sup>Faxon, pp. 50-51.

the woman this way gently rebuked His disciples and drove home a much-needed lesson.<sup>29</sup> The woman's persistence led Jesus to exclaim, "'O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed instantly" (Matt 15:28, RSV).

The Gospel of Luke also records Christ's Sabbath healing of a woman who had been physically deformed for 18 years (Luke 13:10-17). Jesus addressed her in the synagogue, told her that she was freed from her infirmity, and publicly laid His hands on her. In doing so He violated Jewish traditional Sabbath laws and disregarded the social proprieties of His time. When the ruler of the synagogue publicly expressed his indignation Jesus replied, "Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?" (Luke 13:15-16). If a domestic animal bound for a few hours can be loosed for watering on Sabbath, could not a woman, yes, a daughter of Abraham, be loosed from the bond of an 18-year infirmity on the Sabbath?

### Jesus Related His Teachings to Women

One of the most remarkable illustrations of Jesus' willingness to help a person was His visit with a Samaritan woman (John 4:4ff.). The Jews looked upon the Samaritans with considerable contempt.<sup>30</sup> On one occasion they expressed their hostility toward Jesus by calling Him a Samaritan and one who was demon-possessed (chap. 8:48). The Samaritans were regarded not only as enemies but as ceremonially unclean. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus went so far as to say, "He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like to one that eats the flesh of swine."<sup>31</sup> John's explanation, "For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (chap. 4:9, RSV), probably means, "Do not use vessels in common" (NEB). According to the Mishnah, "The daughters of Samaritans are [deemed unclean as] menstruants from their cradle."<sup>32</sup> This means that the Samaritan woman was regarded as ceremonially unclean by the Jews, and that this uncleanness would be conveyed to the water utensil she carried.<sup>33</sup>

David Daube asserts, "By asking the woman to give him to drink, Jesus showed himself ready to disregard that hostile presumption respecting Samaritan women for the sake of a more inclusive fellowship."<sup>34</sup>

Jesus was fully aware of her sordid life, and He tried to arouse her slumbering conscience. He offered her living water and revealed Himself as the Messiah (vss. 25-26).

At this juncture the disciples returned from buying food and were amazed to find Jesus conversing<sup>35</sup> with a woman (vs. 27).<sup>36</sup> No rabbi would have done such a thing. In fact the rabbis had a saying: "A man shall not be alone with a woman in an inn, not even with his sister or his daughter, on account of what men may think. A man shall not talk with a woman in the street,

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<sup>29</sup>DA 401-3.

<sup>30</sup>See, e.g., Sirach 50:25-26.

<sup>31</sup>Sheb. 8.10 (Danby ed.), p. 49.

<sup>32</sup>Nid. 4.1 (Danby ed.), p. 748.

<sup>33</sup>Kel. 1.1 ff (Danby ed.), p. 605.

<sup>34</sup>David Daube, "Jesus and the Samaritan Woman," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 69 (1950): 138.

<sup>35</sup>For, *meta* plus the genitive as suggesting the idea of *communication, with*, see C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, p. 61; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, p. 611.

<sup>36</sup>John 4:27. The translators of the KJV mistakenly translated *meta gunaikos* as "with *the* woman." "The translators of the King James Version, under the influence of the Vulgate, handle the Greek article loosely and inaccurately."—Robertson, p. 756. "It was 'a woman,' any woman, not the particular woman in question."—Ibid.

not even with his own wife, especially not with another woman on account of what men may say.”<sup>37</sup>

The disciples, however, did not outwardly question their Master’s behavior. Often they had seen Him violate Jewish conventions, and apparently they were able to control their scruples while Jesus remained in Sychar for two days evangelizing the Samaritans.

### **An Adulterous Woman Finds Forgiveness**

The story of the adulterous woman (John 7:53-8:11) discloses Jesus’ tender dealings with women—in this case, a woman of ill repute. The account asserts that she was “caught in the act of adultery” (John 8:4, RSV). But the record makes it clear that she was brought to Jesus for the sole purpose of trapping Him into saying something that could be used against Him.<sup>38</sup> They hoped He would either acquit the woman, thus in effect setting aside the Law of Moses, or condemn her, thus challenging the Roman authorities who alone had the right to impose capital punishment.

These would-be guardians of the law revealed their own male prejudices. Why was not the man who had committed adultery with her also brought before Jesus? Why was he allowed to escape?<sup>39</sup> According to the Mosaic law both the adulterer and the adulteress were to be executed (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22).

Death by stoning was prescribed only for a man and a betrothed virgin who were guilty of adultery (Deut 22:23-24). Apparently stoning became the method of executing others guilty of sex crimes. But it seems that women were dealt with more severely than were men.<sup>40</sup>

Not only did this woman’s accusers drag her into Jesus’ presence but they placed her in full view of everyone. Instead of immediately answering the loaded question of the scribes and Pharisees, however, Jesus stooped and began writing in the sand. We can only speculate as to why He did this.<sup>41</sup> He may have chosen to ignore these professed guardians of the law.<sup>42</sup> Or He may have wished to spare the woman further embarrassment. One scholar suggests, “The Lord is tortured with the horror of it all. He would not look at them or her.”<sup>43</sup>

Nor does the passage reveal what He wrote, though several manuscripts include the expression “the sins of everyone of them” after the word “ground”<sup>44</sup> Derrett<sup>45</sup> suggests that He wrote part of Exod 23:1, “You shall not join hands with a wicked man, to be a malicious witness” (RSV). Morris thinks He may have written the words He later spoke.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Strack-Billerbeck 2:438, quoted in Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 274.

<sup>38</sup>Jewett, p. 96.

<sup>39</sup>As a matter of fact, Ellen G. White in DA 461, asserts, “These would-be guardians of justice had themselves led their victim into sin, that they might lay a snare for Jesus.”

<sup>40</sup>Note Ellen G. White: “With all their professions of reverence for the law, these rabbis, in bringing the charge against the woman, were disregarding its provisions. It was the husband’s duty to take action against her, and the guilty parties were to be punished equally. The action of the accusers was wholly unauthorized.”—Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>See the discussion of this point in DA 461, and MH 88.

<sup>42</sup>Morris, p. 888.

<sup>43</sup>William Temple, quoted in Morris, n. 20.

<sup>44</sup>These include U II 73 331 364 700 782 1592 and some Armenian MSS; cf. DA 461: “There, traced before them, were the guilty secrets of their own lives.”

<sup>45</sup>J. Duncan M. Derrett, “Law in the New Testament: The Story of the woman Taken in Adultery,” *Journal of New Testament Studies* (10 (1963-64): 18ff.

<sup>46</sup>Morris.

When these men, impatient at Jesus' delay and indifference, pressed for an answer, He replied, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7, RSV). Thus He "not only sidestepped the snare which his critics had laid, but them down to size." It was a "devastating rebuke to male arrogance."<sup>47</sup>

Though He did not condone the behavior of the adulterous woman, He did not condemn her, but admonished her, "Go, and do not sin again."

### **Sympathizing Women From Jerusalem**

Another scene near the close of Jesus' life is worth noting.

On the way to Golgotha to be crucified, Jesus was attracted by the demonstration of grief by a company of women who followed Him on the *Via Dolorosa* (Luke 23:27-31). This company apparently consisted of sympathizing women from Jerusalem. Alfred Plummer notes, "In the Gospels there is no instance of a woman being hostile to Christ."<sup>48</sup> Although He was touched by the grief of these Jerusalem women, He felt that it was misplaced. Our Lord was not being driven to an unwilling death, but was voluntarily giving His life for the world—even for them. These women would do better to weep for the same cause for which He wept—a doomed Jerusalem whose judgments might have been averted. "Weep for yourselves and for your children," He urged (w. 28, RSV). He foresaw the doom of Jerusalem. If an innocent one like Jesus could be crucified, what would be the fate of guilty Jerusalem?

### **Close Associates Revered Christ's Instruction**

An outstanding example of Jesus' association with women, and his high regard for them, is seen in His close friendship with Martha and Mary. These two women are introduced in Luke's Gospel with the words, "Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching" (Luke 10:38-39, RSV).

The unnamed village where these sisters lived, according to John's Gospel, was Bethany, situated less than two miles from Jerusalem (John 11:1, 18). Because of the prominence of these women, John referred to Bethany simply as "the village of Mary and her sister Martha." Apparently these sisters were unmarried and were living together in the little village. Since Luke represents Martha as the mistress of the home (Luke 10:38), likely she was the older of the two. Her Aramaic name means "lady," which may indicate that she came from a fairly wealthy circle.<sup>49</sup>

Contrary to rabbinical custom, Jesus not only accepted the hospitality of Martha's home but also taught His message to her and her sister. Just as "people pressed upon him to hear the word of God" at the Sea of Galilee (chap. 5:1); so Mary took a seat at His feet and eagerly listened to the word.<sup>50</sup> ("To sit at someone's feet" was an idiomatic way of saying "to study under someone." As a young man, Paul was educated "at the feet of Gamaliel" in Jerusalem [Acts 22:3]. To sit at a teacher's feet suggests the humble position of the learner. The Jewish rabbi Joezer of Zerediah is reported to have said, "Let thy house be a house of meeting for the wise

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<sup>47</sup>Jewett.

<sup>48</sup>Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke*, p. 528.

<sup>49</sup>*Marta* is the feminine form of *mara* "master." See Leipoldt, *Jesus und die Frauen*, p. 128, n. 189.

<sup>50</sup>Greek, *logon*.

[recognized teachers], and bedust thyself with the dust of [that is, sit at] their feet, and drink with thirst their words.”<sup>51</sup>

Although there is no evidence that there was a formal teacher-student relationship between Jesus and Mary, such as existed between a rabbi and a *talmîd*, our Lord did not hesitate to impart His teachings to her and to her sister. In Judaism, women, as a general rule, were not allowed the privilege of studying under a rabbi. George Foot Moore says, “Some of them may have been taught by their fathers or their husbands at home or read the Bible, but since this involved the learning of the ancient Hebrew language, it is probable that such cases were rare. . . Instruction of women in the unwritten law was still more rare.”<sup>52</sup> Some of the rabbis were strongly opposed to efforts to teach women. Jeremias cites two sayings of Rabbi Eliezer (about A.D. 90), whom he describes as the “tireless upholder of the old tradition.”<sup>53</sup> “If a man gives his daughter a knowledge of the Law it is as though he taught her lechery.”<sup>54</sup> “Better to burn the Torah than to teach it to women.”<sup>55</sup> Jesus was not bound by such Pharisaic notions, but enjoyed discoursing with women who hungered for spiritual food.

It seems evident from Luke’s account that Martha, as well as Mary, loved to sit and listen to the teachings of our Lord. However, while Mary sat at Christ’s feet and listened to His words,<sup>56</sup> Martha became distracted by domestic interests. Irritated by Mary’s neglect of the household duties, she inquired, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me<sup>57</sup> to serve alone? Tell her then to help me” (Luke 10:40, RSV). With sublime tact, Jesus defended Mary.

His mild rebuke of Martha contains an invaluable point: “Martha, Martha, you are fretting and fussing about so many things; but one thing is necessary. The part that Mary has chosen is best; and it shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41-42, NEB).<sup>58</sup>

### Martha Trusted Jesus Implicitly

Although there is no specific record of Jesus’ having visited this Bethany home before the death of Lazarus, our Lord frequently stayed there.<sup>59</sup> Following the triumphal entry Jesus went out to Bethany with His disciples (Mark 11:11), and returned to Jerusalem the next morning.

The account of the death and resurrection of Lazarus (John 11) indicates the closeness<sup>60</sup> of Jesus’ relation with the sisters and their brother and His affection for them (John 11:5). This is

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<sup>51</sup>Aboth 1.4.

<sup>52</sup>George Foot Moore, *Judaism* 2:128.

<sup>53</sup>Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, p. 373.

<sup>54</sup>Sot. 3.4, quoted in Jeremias, loc. Cit.

<sup>55</sup>J. Sot. iii.4. 19a 7.

<sup>56</sup>NEB. The aorist tense of *parakathestheisa* means, “having taken her place at the Lord’s feet”; *ékouen*, however, is the imperfect, suggesting her persistence in listening.

<sup>57</sup>Some MSS read the aorist, *katelipen*, “indicating that she had been assisting before she was drawn off by Jesus’ presence,” Marvin Vincent, *Word Studies* 1:358. However, if one follows Nestle in reading the imperfect, *kataleipen*, it would mean, “She had continued to leave me.”

<sup>58</sup>The Greek manuscripts have various forms of vs. 42. Some read, “few things are needful” (not an elaborate meal such as Martha was planning). Others read, “one thing is needful,” which may refer to one dish, or the spiritual communion Mary had chosen, or, perhaps, does it refer to both? The reading of some MSS, “few things are needful or only one,” seems to be a conflation of the other two.

<sup>59</sup>See DA 524: “At the home of Lazarus Jesus had often found rest. The Saviour had no home of His own; He was dependent on the hospitality of His friends and disciples, and often, when weary, thirsting for human fellowship, He had been glad to escape to this peaceful household, away from the suspicion and jealousy of the angry Pharisees. Here He found a sincere welcome, and pure, holy friendship. Here He could speak with simplicity and perfect freedom, knowing that His words would be understood and treasured.”



especially evident in Jesus' conversation with Martha after Lazarus' death. "If you had been here," she cried, "my brother would not have died" (vs. 21, RSV). But then she added, "And even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (vs. 22, RSV).

What did she mean? She had come to trust Jesus implicitly with full assurance of His interest in them, His compassion for them, and His power to do what should be done. Jesus assured her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha responded bravely, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (vs. 24, RSV). Jesus replied, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (vss. 25-26, RSV). Of special significance was Martha's response, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (vs. 27, RSV). No greater affirmation of faith was made by any of Jesus' followers. After assuring Mary, as well, Jesus went to Lazarus' grave and raised him to life.

### Jesus Awakened a Loyal Following Among women

The supreme example of Mary of Bethany's<sup>61</sup> devotion to Jesus was her anointing of Him at a feast in Bethany a few days before the crucifixion. While the guests were reclining at the table, Mary came in with "a pound<sup>62</sup> of costly ointment of pure nard,"<sup>63</sup> broke the alabaster flask containing the perfume, and poured it on Christ's head. This was more than an act of courtesy and respect.<sup>64</sup> One writer suggests: "The breaking of the flask was perhaps the expression of the whole-heartedness of her devotion. Having served this purpose it would never be used again."<sup>65</sup> The act of pouring the perfume on Christ's head was perhaps in recognition of His royalty as the Messiah.

According to the Gospel of John, Mary "anointed the feet of Jesus"<sup>66</sup> with very expensive perfume,<sup>67</sup> valued, according to Mark, at "more than three hundred denarii." A denarius was apparently an average day's pay for a laborer in the vineyards (Matt 22:2, 9-13). It was a great personal sacrifice for Mary, undoubtedly expressive of her supreme devotion to Jesus.

Worthy of note also was Mary's use of her tresses to wipe His feet (John 12:3; cf. Luke 7:37ff). In the eyes of the Jews this was a shocking act, since respectable women kept their hair

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<sup>60</sup>Leon Morris, p. 538.

<sup>61</sup>For a discussion of the problem of identifying the various women named "Mary" Magdalene and the sinful woman of Luke 7:37ff., see the discussion in the 5BC 764-67, and the article on "Mary" in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*.

<sup>62</sup>The Greek for "pound," *ultra*, is evidently the equivalent to the Latin *libra*, consisting of about 12 ounces.

<sup>63</sup>*Muron* means "ointment" or "perfume." *Nardos* is evidently a transliteration of *nrd* (cf., Cant 1:12; 4:13, where the LXX has *nardos*), and refers here to the oil extracted from the root of the nard plant. The origin and meaning of the adjective *pistikos* is uncertain. Several plausible suggestions have been offered: (a) that it is equivalent to *pistēs* meaning "genuine" (see Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* xii.43 [26]); (b) that it is to be derived from *pinō* (drink), and means "liquid" (Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1408); (c) that it is a scribal corruption of *spikatoi* (Latin, *spicatum*), the name of an unguent; (d) that it is a transliteration of *pysthq'* which denotes the pistachio nut, the oil of which was used for perfumes.

<sup>64</sup>See Luke 7:46; Ps 23:5; William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pp. 492ff.

<sup>65</sup>C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, p. 415.

<sup>66</sup>There is no reason to think that the Gospel accounts are mutually exclusive. She could well have poured the ointment on both Jesus' head and His feet. Ellen White in DA 559 declares, "Breaking her box of ointment, she poured its contents upon the head and feet of Jesus; then, as she knelt weeping, moistening them with her tears, she wiped His feet with her long, flowing hair."

<sup>67</sup>It has been suggested that the nard came from an herb grown in the high pasture land of the Himalayas. This would explain its great cost (Madeleine J. and J. Lane Miller, *Encyclopedia of Bible Life*, p. 204).

bound and covered. Mary's behavior suggested that she was a woman of loose morals. (The hair of a woman suspected of adultery was let down by the priest.)<sup>68</sup> But Jesus could read the motives of her heart and saw her gesture as an expression of deep gratitude for His kindness and affection. "She has done a beautiful thing to me," He declared (Matt 26:10; Mark 14:6, RSV). And He predicted that wherever the gospel story would be told in future generations, her act of love would be remembered.

One of the striking differences between Jesus and the Jewish rabbis of His day was in His acceptance of women as followers.<sup>69</sup> Such a course of action was certainly unprecedented in the first century.<sup>70</sup> According to Luke's Gospel, as Jesus traveled through the cities and villages proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, He was accompanied by two groups—the 12 disciples, and a band of Galilean women (Luke 8:1-3). Not only are these women represented as itinerating with Him but are said to have used their means to support Him and His followers. Moule has rightly observed:

"It is difficult enough for anyone, even a consummate master of imaginative writing, to create a picture of a deeply pure, good person moving about in an impure environment, without making him a prig or a prude or a sort of 'plaster saint.' How comes it that through all the Gospel traditions without exception, there comes a remarkably firmly-drawn portrait of an attractive young man moving freely about among women of all sorts, including the decidedly disreputable, without a trace of sentimentality, unnaturalness, or prudery and yet at every point, maintaining a simple integrity of character?"<sup>71</sup>

The identity and marital status of most of the women in the group with Jesus are not revealed. Only three of them are named: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. In addition to these Luke refers to "many others." Since *gunē* in Greek can mean "wife," as well as "woman," and in view of the Palestinian custom of early marriages for women, William E. Phipps argues that these women must have been married.<sup>72</sup> He further suggests that some of them probably were the wives of the 12 disciples, but there is no evidence for this.

Luke informs us that some of these women had been healed "of evil spirits and infirmities" (Luke 8:2, RSV). Among these was Mary Magdalene. Not only did the women accompany Jesus and His disciples on their preaching tour, they also showed their love and devotion by using their financial resources in supporting this band of missionaries (vs. 3;<sup>73</sup> cf. Mark 15:41).

By accepting support from women Jesus departed from rabbinical teaching. It was an accepted rule that a rabbi not be waited on by a woman.<sup>74</sup> But Jesus disregarded such rules. One writer conjectures that the seamless tunic, woven from top to bottom" (John 19:23-24, RSV), "may well have been the gift of one of . . . [the] affluent women."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Sotah 1:5, Danby ed., pp. 293ff.

<sup>69</sup>Rudolph Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup>Joachim Jeremias, pp. 375ff.

<sup>71</sup>C.F.D. Moule, *The Phenomenon of the New Testament*, p. 63.

<sup>72</sup>William E. Phipps, *Was Jesus Married?* p. 101.

<sup>73</sup>The imperfect tense of *diēkonoun* suggests that the ministering of these women was a continuous act. Although some good MSS read *antō*, (to him), the preferred reading is *antois*, (to them). See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament*, p. 144.

<sup>74</sup>Claude G. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*, pp. 217ff.

<sup>75</sup>Jewett, p. 97; Leipoldt, p. 32.

## Women at Golgotha and the Tomb

The Galilean women eventually followed Jesus on His last journey to Jerusalem, and remained loyal to Him to the very end (Matt 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 23:49-56). At Golgotha “the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance,” and at the risk of their lives witnessed the terrible death of their Lord. They observed Joseph of Arimathea remove the body of Jesus from the cross and place it in a new rock-hewn tomb (Luke 23:50-24:1).

Sunday morning they found the tomb empty, but were told by two angels that Jesus was alive. Thus they were eyewitnesses to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (1 Cor 15:1-4). They were the first to receive the message of the resurrection. They were chosen over the 12 apostles to be among the first witnesses.<sup>76</sup>

The angels reminded the women of what Jesus had predicted in Galilee regarding His betrayal, death by crucifixion, and resurrection. In the light of these words they were able to interpret the empty tomb “to the eleven and to all the rest” (Luke 24:8-9, RSV). Thus they became the first heralds of the resurrection.

## Women As Apostles

In the light of Jesus’ words recorded in John 6:44, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (RSV), we may well ask. Were these faithful women self-appointed disciples of Jesus? Or can it be said of them as truly as of the 12: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (John 15:16, RSV)?

Certainly without our Lord’s gracious call they could hardly have accompanied Jesus in His ministry as they did.<sup>77</sup>

But if Jesus was a champion of women, and even allowed them to accompany Him on His mission, why did he not choose one or more women as apostles?

To choose a woman as an apostle would have been unwise in view of the social and cultural environment of the first century. According to the book of Acts, one of the chief functions of the 12 was to be that of witnessing to Jesus Christ and His resurrection (Acts 1:8, 21-22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39-42; 13:30-31). In a society where women were not allowed to bear public testimony, it would not have been prudent for Jesus to have chosen women for such a mission. This does not mean that our Lord was opposed to the testimony of women, but such testimony might have been easily dismissed because of Jewish prejudice. It was far more vital at this juncture to get a hearing for the testimony of His apostles concerning Christ than to carry on a crusade for the equality of women.

Theologically, one can see in the selection of the 12 apostles the nucleus of a new Israel.<sup>78</sup> Their selection was a symbolic act showing the continuity of Jesus’ disciples with ancient Israel.<sup>79</sup> Just as the 12 sons of Jacob became the representatives of God’s people in OT times, so the 12 apostles are representatives of the reborn people of God. Their appointment looks backward to the old Israel, as well as forward to the new Messianic community.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Cranfield, p. 464.

<sup>77</sup>Leipoldt, p. 27.

<sup>78</sup>M. E. Thrall, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*, p. 94.

<sup>79</sup>George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 109.

<sup>80</sup>Karl Heinrich Rengstorff, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2:326.

The latter becomes evident when one considers the eschatological role Jesus predicted concerning them: “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28, RSV; cf. Luke 22:30). Since in this prophetic role they correspond to the 12 patriarchs, it is natural that they would be men.<sup>81</sup>

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In contrast to the Rabbis, Jesus used many illustrations from the life experiences of women. He obviously did not regard them as second-rate human beings but in every respect as equal to men. When questioned regarding divorce, He set forth God’s ideal of marriage as an inviolable lifelong union of a man and a woman. He plainly condemned the trivial procedure by which men in His day divorced their wives. Marriage called for fidelity on the part of both partners, and He recognized no double standard of sexual morality.

Jesus’ own relation with women, and His treatment of them as equals, was revolutionary in His time. He freely associated with, and presented His message to, both men and women. Women were treated in every sense as on the same level with men.

He treated His own mother with respect and deference, and was concerned about providing for her future even as He hung on the cross. He departed from Jewish conventions and rules of propriety by conversing with women and teaching them publicly and privately. Many of His miracles were performed on behalf of women. More than once He risked ceremonial defilement to minister to them. Among His special friends were such women as Martha and Mary of Bethany. He graciously accepted Mary’s affectionate act of anointing, and described it as a beautiful expression of love.

Although He did not designate women as apostles, He did accept a group of Galilean women as followers, permitting them to accompany Him in His mission and accepting their financial support. While Jesus accepted the devotion and love of women, His association with them was always on a high spiritual plane.

Thus by His style of life, in opposition to the age in which He lived, and by His open acceptance of women and His respect for their personalities, Jesus definitely championed women’s right to honor and dignity.

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<sup>81</sup>World council of Churches, *Concerning the Ordination of Women* (Geneva, 1964), p. 9.

VI  
AN EXEGESIS OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15  
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Sakae Kubo

The basic content of 1 Tim 2 deals with prayer and worship. In vss. 1-2 Paul urges prayers for kings and all those in authority; in vs. 8 he exhorts men to pray without anger or disputing; in vss. 9-10 he counsels women to dress modestly with decency and propriety; in vss. 11-15 he forbids women to teach or exercise authority over men and learn in silence and submission.

The major problem in the exegesis of the passage (11-15) is found in vs. 15—*sōthēsetai dia tēs teknogonias*. The rest of the passage is straightforward enough.

The passage reads in this way in the RSV:

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.”

**Exegesis**

**Verse 11. “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness.”** Ordinarily one would expect no such instruction given the customs and practices of the times. The Jews probably had a different section for the women in the synagogues, either in one part of the synagogue divided by a low wall<sup>1</sup> or in the gallery section.<sup>2</sup> But apparently there was something in the Christian gospel that brought a sense of liberation to women. At least they began to act less passively than heretofore, and Paul had to lay down some rules for their behavior in public worship. If they pray or prophesy, they must wear a veil (1 Cor 11:2-16). Otherwise they must keep silent in church (1 Cor 14:34-35). Thus here also in 1 Tim Paul finds it necessary to give the instruction he gave to the Corinthian church.

**Verse 12. “I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent.”** Paul did not forbid women to teach. He instructed the older women to teach the younger (Titus 2:3-4). Elsewhere in the NT we find Priscilla and Aquila teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26). Euodia and Syntyche “contended at [Paul’s] side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers” (Phil 4:3, NIV). Apparently also he is not forbidding praying or prophesying on the part of women.

Some suggest that what Paul is forbidding in this specific situation is the official teaching of a woman before the church, an authorized proclamation of the word with ecclesiastical authority.<sup>3</sup> E. F. Scott says that “the word teach must be taken in the technical sense of making a set public address.”<sup>4</sup> J. M. Ford carries this thought a step farther by interpreting *authenthein* as exercising “supreme authority” and *didaskein* in the sense of “formulating doctrine.” She feels that the prohibition is directed “not against teaching in general, but having the final decision

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<sup>1</sup>Philo, *Contemplative Life*, III.

<sup>2</sup>E. L. Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece*. The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy, 1930 (London, 1934), pp. 47-48.

<sup>3</sup>George Gunter Blum, “Das Amt der Frau im Neuen Testament,” *Novum Testamentum* 7 (1964): 157.

<sup>4</sup>E. F. Scott, *The Pastoral Epistles, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary* (London, 1936), p. 26.

about such teaching,” that is, “teaching in the capacity of a bishop.”<sup>5</sup> She has carried her point farther than the evidence warrants even though her point is that this passage does not forbid ordination or teaching on the part of women as long as they are not placed in the office of bishop.

N. J. Hommes, on the other hand, takes the opposite position in regard to teaching, which he affirms is not connected with an office. There was a large group of qualified teachers in each congregation who participated freely, and it was done with discussion and admonition. It cannot be equated with our preaching, where one person speaks and all the rest listen. What is in view in this passage, he feels, is a rather informal type of service with many participants, and that the women addressed here are *married* women who are being admonished not “to be bossy over one’s husband.” Paul is concerned with upholding the ideal of the Christian housewife.<sup>6</sup> From this Hommes concludes that this passage in no way forbids the ordination of women as ministers; it is not even dealing with this matter but with the matter of the conduct of a Christian wife who should not upstage her husband in the Christian service as carried on in Paul’s day. Some feel that the context, while addressed to married women, includes women in general and implies the proper relationship between men and women whether married or single. While it is also true that we cannot equate teaching in this context with preaching in our day, it is not difficult to see that this instruction would have applied equally had such practice been in force.

Exegetes usually see this passage as more than a simple instruction in the course of the normal situation of the church. The Epistle itself indicates that women were playing a relatively active but negative role in the affairs of the church. Paul refers to the danger of young widows becoming “gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not” (1 Tim 5:13, RSV). He says some of them have “already strayed after Satan” (5:15, RSV), and sees danger of wives becoming “slanderers” (3:11). And in 2 Tim he says that the heretics “capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses, who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth” (3:6-7, RSV). When this is connected with the fact that the heretics were teaching celibacy, there is some reason to feel that this and the following verse originated in a controversial situation. Kelly comments thus: “His repeated insistence on the point may be due to a suspicion on his part that the Ephesian errorists were exploiting the readiness of religiously-minded women to claim what he considered an unbecoming prominence for themselves.”<sup>7</sup>

**Verse 13. “For Adam was formed first, then Eve.”** The reasons for “the above prohibition are set forth. The first of these is that chronological precedence indicates superiority. This argument is similar to that found in 1 Cor 11:8-9: For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (NIV). Paul, however, softens this argument when he goes on to say, “In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God” (1 Cor 11:11-12, NIV).

**Verse 14 “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.”** The second reason women should not teach and have authority over men was that the first woman was deceived while Adam was not. While they both sinned and Paul considers Adam the representative of mankind (Rom 5:12), the point here is that Eve was led

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<sup>5</sup>J. M. Ford, “Biblical Material Relevant to Ordination of Women,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 10 (1973): 683.

<sup>6</sup>N. J. Hommes, “Let Women Be Silent in Church,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 4 (1969): 5-22.

<sup>7</sup>J.N.D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Harper’s New Testament Commentaries (New York, 1963), p. 68.

astray through deceit while Adam deliberately sinned. One who teaches or is in a position of authority must not be so easily led astray. One who is thus vulnerable cannot be trusted to teach. The teacher, on the contrary, is one who leads, guides, and strengthens so that people will not go astray. But what has Eve to do with the women in Paul's day? The Hebrew concept of solidarity, in this case, of all women with Eve, is operative. Eve is an archetype and all women will breed true in the sense that they will partake of her characteristics and accept the relationship that existed between Adam and Eve. Barrett makes priority the difference not only in v 13 but also here. It is difficult to maintain that Paul is simply saying that Eve sinned before Adam.<sup>8</sup>

The key point here is not priority but weakness—the fact that she was deceived while Adam was not.

**Verse 15. “Yet the woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.”** There are two grammatical problems with this verse and two problems concerning interpretation. The first grammatical problem arises from the fact that the verb (will be saved) is in the third person singular without an expressed nominal or pronominal subject. Does this refer to Eve or does it go back to the “woman” in vss. 10 and 11? The rest of the verse clearly shows that the reference goes beyond Eve to all women in general, especially since the second verb (to remain) is in the plural. And that is the second problem, since the first verb is singular and the second is plural and neither has an expressed subject. It seems clear that the second verb in the plural and the first verb in the singular have the plural and the singular of “women” respectively as their subjects. However, some have suggested that the subject of the second verb in the plural refers to the children who are born, or the husband and wife. The first is difficult since it would mean that the woman will be saved simply by bearing children without manifesting any Christian qualities herself, or that her salvation is dependent on her children's conduct. It could mean all women who merely fulfill this physical function will be saved. The second brings in an extraneous matter (the husband) who is not in view at this place. It is better to take it as referring to the first subject and explain the plural as a natural change since Paul has been dealing with women in the plural (vss. 9-10) or in general (vss. 11-12).

The second set of problems is interpretive. It concerns the meaning of the word *sōthēsetai* and the phrase *dia tes tēknogonias*. The NIV (“But women will be kept safe through childbirth”) follows Moffatt's view, which has reference to Gen 3:16. Even though women must bear children in pain, nevertheless they will come through safely “if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety” (NIV). This physical sense is hardly likely, especially since this consolation is given only if they maintain a good Christian life. What of those who do not? There is no discernible difference between Christian and non-Christian women in this respect. Others<sup>9</sup> interpret the clause as a reference to the bearing of the Messiah by Mary; that is, women will be saved in a spiritual sense through *the* Child-bearing. Concerning this interpretation, Kelly says, “It is true, of course, that the child-bearing of Mary has undone the mischief of Eve, but it seems incredible that Paul should have expected his vague ‘through the child-bearing’ to be understood, without further explanation, of Christ's nativity.”<sup>10</sup> E. F. Scott interprets this verse to mean that women will be saved even though they must suffer the penalty of Eve's sin. “He [Paul] has implied that in consequence of Eve's transgression they are permanently under a cloud; but he

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<sup>8</sup>C. K. Barrett, *The Pastoral Epistles in the New English Bible*, The New Clarendon Bible (Oxford, 1963), p. 56.

<sup>9</sup>Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh, 1924), p. 33, following Ellicott, von Soden, and Wohlenberg.

<sup>10</sup>Kelly, p. 69.

adds, ‘do not mistake me; though still reminded of their sin, they fully share in the offered salvation.’”<sup>11</sup> He arrives at this conclusion by translating the preposition *dia* as denoting a condition rather than its usual sense of “by means of.” Thus he translates, “She will be saved even though she must bear children.” This translation, to say the least, is unusual. S. Jebb has added another interpretation. “However, she may be *saved from falling into this error* of usurping authority and thus being deceived by Satan, by keeping to the proper function for which she was made. Bearing children will save her from being tempted to ‘lord it over’ the men” (emphasis his).<sup>12</sup> The problem with this interpretation is that the author has put too much freight into the word *sōthēsetai*. The meaning is expanded beyond what is justified. Another objection is that childbearing does not remove the temptation and is not the point of Paul’s remarks. Paul is simply directing them to what he considers their proper role. The temptation to “lord it over” men was not the weakness of women without children only, even though unmarried women may have figured prominently in the unrest there.

The interpretation that most commentators accept, and the most natural of them all, is to take *sōzō* in a spiritual sense and childbearing and rearing as denoting her divinely appointed function. But with this she must remain in faith, love, and sanctification with modesty. Even though a woman was deceived and led man to sin, nevertheless women may be saved if they fulfill their duty and maintain their Christian experience. To seek to usurp the function of men by teaching would jeopardize their salvation just as Eve did. The way of salvation is the way of submission in the fulfillment of the womanly functions. According to Jeremias the entire section (vss. 11-15) seeks only to prove that the asceticism which goes against the ordinance of creation, promoted by the errorists (1 Tim 4:3) is contrary to Scripture. According to Schlatter, this section deals with the preservation of marriage. At home are the God-desired duties of the woman—this is the Christian solution to the question of women which stands in sharpest contrast to the ascetic enthusiasm.<sup>13</sup> There is no doubt that this heretical teaching has something to do with what Paul says here. But it is questionable whether this section seeks only to prove that this ascetic teaching was false as Jeremias affirms. Even if the heretical teachings loom in the near background, the problem of the subordinate role of women cannot be solved simply by saying that Paul was attacking the doctrine of the heretics. He still places women in a subordinate position and prohibits them from teaching.

### Implications

This passage is an excellent case for the application of hermeneutical principles. No one can apply the Bible literalistically in an absolutely thorough manner. This is true not only because there are elements in Scripture directed at specific cultural situations, but also because there are elements which stand in tension due to man’s situation in sin. In certain portions of Scripture polygamy is socially accepted but over against this stands the ideal monogamous marriage relationship in Eden and the teachings of Jesus. This is true with the practice of slavery militating against the idea of man’s value and integrity, which is a central teaching of Scripture. Our passage must be understood in the light of Paul’s statement of the equality of man and woman in Christ and of the theological implication of Gen 1 that man and woman together make the image

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>12</sup>S. Jebb, “A Suggested Interpretation of 1 Tim 2:15,” *Expository Times* 81 (1969-70): 221.

<sup>13</sup>J. Jeremias, “Die Briefe an Timotheus und Titus,” *Neutestament Deutsch* 9 (Göttingen, 1954), p. 18.



of God and that one without the other is incomplete, not only with reference to marriage but to the totality of the spheres of life.

The temptation in hermeneutical questions of this sort is to take the shortcut by focusing and concentrating on statements dealing with specific cases rather than on principles derived from the total thrust of the Scriptures. While it is true that each specific case applies a general principle, that application may be valid only for that particular context and situation. Some may feel compelled on the basis of a specific case to enforce the practice of women wearing veils (not hats); but others may feel that the principle applied in this case is concerned with avoiding offence to society that would result from moving too quickly to change customs in situations where moral value is not in question.

The problem is complicated, however, since hardly anyone would argue for making a literalistic application of the Bible without reference to context. Rather, one must take the Bible as a whole as the basis for determining what is general principle applicable to all times and what is application of general principle to a specific time and place. There are two things that need to be kept in mind when biblical counsel given in one specific context is being applied to a contemporary situation. The first is to understand the biblical teachings aright and the second is to read discerningly the historical situation and context in which one lives. The application of biblical insights must sometimes be carried out at the risk of direct conflict with society. At other times the insights must await the leavening influence of Christian principles upon society and then the church must take the initiative in their application when the time becomes ripe. In the words of Raymond Stamm, "The love (*agape*) [1 Cor 13:13] which never fails suggested to him [Paul] certain restraints in deference to the prevailing social customs and moral conditions. Today this same love may require us to transcend these restrictions. Indeed, if we do not follow its prompting, we may falsify the very spirit of love which determined Paul's solutions for his day."<sup>14</sup>

Thus there are two possible approaches to the application of this passage. The first is to apply the passage literalistically without taking into full consideration the biblical principles regarding the role of women or by interpreting these principles as having spiritual but not social validity. Thus, the cultural situation is not a factor in this application. This first approach takes Paul's statement forbidding women to speak in church and commanding her subordination to men as a principle which is valid for all situations, with the implication that women may never be allowed to function as ministers. Supporters of this view would point to the manner in which Paul establishes his point. His support is the priority of Adam's creation over Eve's, and Eve's deception by the serpent. These two facts, they say, are not culture conditioned but remain true for all time.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Raymond Stamm, "The Status of Women Workers in the Church," *Lutheran Quarterly* 10 (1958): 158.

<sup>15</sup>The first reason Paul gives also in 1 Cor 11:8-9. But there he softens his argument when he goes on to say, "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God" (1 Cor 11:11-12). In regard to the second reason, Paul elsewhere speaks of woman as being equal with man in Christ (Gal 3:28). Paul is aware of what it means to be in Christ and how Christ has brought new insights to men through his redemptive activity. After men sinned, woman became subordinate to man but with Christ's redemption man and woman stand on equal footing as in Gen 1 before sin. The coming of Christ has restored the original relationship between man and woman. However, the working out of this principle cannot be accomplished overnight. For example, the full impact and significance of the sacrifice with respect to the cessation of animal sacrifices took time. The meaning of baptism and its implication for the equality of all took time, as the disciples themselves hesitated to open the door of salvation to all on an equal footing. Christianity's implication for slavery took a bit longer. Thus it is not surprising that while Paul proclaims the equality of men and women in Christ, yet because of the specific situations with their potential for confusion and

J. M. Ford, mentioned earlier, is willing to apply this passage to our time, but says the passage deals with the office of one who formulates doctrine, that what Paul is forbidding to women is “teaching in the capacity of a bishop.”<sup>16</sup> Thus she does not interpret the passage as forbidding women to serve as teachers, which she feels Paul allows.

Though giving almost an opposite explanation, N. J. Hommes comes to the same general conclusion as Ford. According to him, teaching in the NT was an informal affair in which many took part and, in fact, in which every man had a right to function. It has nothing to do with our present-day practice of preaching. What the passage is concerned with by its prohibition of teaching is the quiet and unobtrusive behavior of married women. Since it does not deal with what we today call preaching, this passage is not relevant to the discussion concerning the ministry of women.<sup>17</sup>

The second approach to the interpretation of this passage is to consider the specific prohibition as directed to a specific cultural situation such as the statements regulating behavior between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10:28; 11:3; cf. 15:29 with 1 Cor 8) and statements regarding slavery (Col 3:22-4:1; Eph 6:5-9). Paul does not call for the abolition of slavery, although he appeals for masters (apparently Christian masters) to be humane to their slaves and for Christian slaves to serve their masters well. The establishment of social equality between Jews and Gentiles was apparently hard fought. It was after many years, if ever, that the Christian Jews were willing to accept the Gentiles on equal terms. Apparently within the social structure of the Christian church there were slaves and masters of slaves. It took much longer to resolve the slavery issue than the Jew-Gentile issue, which probably was not fully resolved until after the destruction of Jerusalem. It was only a little more than a century ago that the slavery issue was resolved in America. And yet Paul in his day said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). In his day Paul was able to see, at least to a large extent, the fulfillment not only of the spiritual but also of the social equality of the first pair (Jew-Gentile). The equality of the second pair (slave-free) was not achieved socially in Paul’s day although he felt they were equal before, and in, Christ. Paul did not seek to abolish slavery in the church, to say nothing about those outside the church. But he sought among Christians to remove the worst of conditions. Between Jew and Gentile he probably did little outside the church, but at least he sought to erase barriers within the church. Is the third of this triad (woman-man) to be looked at in the same way? That is to say, was Paul as concerned about the equality of man and woman as he was about Jew and Gentile; but while the time was ripe to deal with the latter, the social mind set and structures were not far enough advanced to deal with the former? By proclaiming the basic equality between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, man and woman, did not Paul lay the groundwork for the establishment of actual social equality among these?

In a similar context to that of 1 Tim, chap. 2, Paul treats the relationship between husbands and wives (Eph 5:22-33) and between masters and slaves, but he goes farther when he says, “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God” (1 Cor 11:11-12). This statement is similar to that of Gal 3:28, “there is neither male nor female.” In other words, Paul had already laid down the basis for equality between man and woman as he had

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disorder, Paul not only urges caution but must use the strongest possible arguments against a practice that is unwise in the situation.

<sup>16</sup>Ford, p. 683.

<sup>17</sup>Hommes, pp. 5-22.

between Jew and Gentile, master and slave. But as long as a Christian lives in a culturally-conditioned world, he must take into cognizance the existing structures of society and the effect of his behavior and practice upon the church. There was something liberating about the gospel that spoke to Jew and Gentile, slave and master, man and woman. Even though the social structures may be opposed to the equality of these pairs, the Christian yeast when truly alive begins to work. The consciousness of men is awakened slowly but surely—now on this issue, now on that—and the moment becomes ripe for the church to seize the initiative in establishing and exercising equality on all spheres.

However, this means that only where such consciousness prevails can the church actually implement this principle. In a world field there will be many places even today where the time is not ripe. This is true even in the United States. In some cases the specific application in 1 Tim 2:11-15 is still valid. There may be only a few churches that are ready for the full acceptance of the equality of women. Even in those churches it may be wise to have a woman minister only in the context of a multiple ministry staff. The readiness of the church must determine the implementation of this policy. However, in any case, the principle of equality between men and women can be affirmed and practiced with regard to wages and the holding of offices that may not entail ordination. The church at this time must make a distinction between two questions: Can women be ordained? and should women serve as ministers? To the former it should give an unequivocal “yes.” To the latter the local situation must be the determining factor.

Other factors lend their weight to this conclusion. The situation in our part of the world today is far different from that of Paul’s day. Women play roles in society and in the church to the extent that is difficult to imagine in NT times. Women serve as prime ministers, cabinet members, leading officials of church bodies, presidents of colleges and universities, lawyers, physicians, judges, senators and representatives, ministers of churches, and so on. Within the Adventist Church itself, we have women who are university professors, members of institutional boards, officials in the General Conference departments, seminary professors, academy teachers, Sabbath School superintendents and teachers, speakers on Sabbath, etc. Are these developments not already against a literalistic application of 1 Tim 2:11-15? If Paul’s statements regarding specific situations are applicable today on a one-to-one basis, we have an impossible task of turning back developments in this area unless we can reason literalistically as Scaer does and say that this does not forbid university professors, etc., but only women making a public proclamation in church.<sup>18</sup> To this Hommes would respond that if we would be literal in that respect we must say that this type of teaching has no correlation to our preaching of today and therefore this passage does not forbid ordination of women to the ministry.<sup>19</sup>

The three passages that speak of the breaking down of barriers in Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13; Gal 3:27-28; Col 3:9-11) all appear in baptismal contexts. Baptism is specifically mentioned in the context of the first two; and in the last, reference is made to putting off the old ways and putting on the new self that is concretized at baptism. Baptism is thus looked at as the great equalizer. When one is baptized in Christ, there is no longer male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile. As Scroggs says, Christianity “acknowledged the societal-leveling quality of baptism. The very event of initiation into the Christian community destroys the barriers between groups out of which the old world had lived. As Michel comments on Colossians 3:10f, ‘In the event of baptism all national, religious and social oppositions among men in the old eon have been

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<sup>18</sup>David Scaer, “May Women Be Ordained as Pastors?” *Springfielder* 36 (1972): 89-109.

<sup>19</sup>Hommes, pp. 21-22.

overcome.’’<sup>20</sup> Baptism was the outward expression of one’s faith in Christ, but faith in Christ is the real leveler. In Judaism circumcision was the seal of the covenant. It was done to a male and it was a national rite. The Jew had an advantage; his birth was his birthright. But faith erased all advantages. Jew and Gentile, slave and master, male and female now stood on the same level. This is the genius of Christianity and makes it a universal religion in which all are equal. It is not a national religion, or one limited to one economic class, or to one sex. It is international, classless, and without sex bias in its basic insight.

With this insight we should couple (a) Christ’s call to all to be His witnesses, and (b) Adventist theology of the ministry. Adventists consider all members commissioned to proclaim the gospel. But in order to facilitate the proclamation of the gospel those who are specifically gifted and called for this task are set apart and supported by the rest so that they can spend their full time in this work and share their expertise with the others. This means that, in addition to commitment to a call, ability is really the only criterion by which selection to this office is determined. In a real sense sex should have nothing to do with this function. It is no more a male function than the ability to sing is a male function. It is only tradition and custom, not our doctrines or deliberate reflections, that have kept us from ordaining women to the ministry.

Adventists as a minority church also have a more democratic ethos than the older established churches. Traditionally the minority churches have been much more democratic and open in the role they have given to women. Ellen White is typical of this openness of the Adventist Church. It is not an accident that the Anglicans, the Orthodox, and Roman Catholic communions have been the slowest and the most conservative in giving full rights to women.

On the basis of the hermeneutical principle and theological reflections given above, it seems to this writer that the Spirit is directing the church to actualize in the work of the church the proleptic insight of Scripture that there is no longer male and female, but that all are one in Christ Jesus.

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<sup>20</sup>Robin Scroggs, “Paul and the Eschatological woman,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 40 (1972): 292.

VII  
A BRIEF ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLICAL DATA  
REGARDING THE ROLE OF WOMAN

Frank B. Holbrook

**Creation of Woman—Her Status**

Two passages in the opening chapters of Genesis deal with the origin of woman. The first forms a part of the sublime summarization of Creation; the second is found in the supplementary account which supplies the details of her creation (Gen 1:26-28; 2: 18-24).<sup>1</sup>

In the first statement the divine determination to create the human race is stated: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image [*selem*], after our likeness [*demûth*]; and let them have dominion. . .’” The resultant act of creation is then summarized: “So God created man in his own image [*selem*], in the image [*selem*] of God he created him; male [*zakar*] and female [*negebah*] he created them.”

The term “man” [*adam*] is being used in its generic sense. Moses first observes the creation of the human order, and then notes that mankind was created in two sexes—male and female. It is significant to observe that both *sexes* are said to be created “in the image of God.” Whatever the implications of the phrase, both sexes were created reflecting that divine “image.”

In the supplementary account of the creation it is explained that the two sexes were not created at the same moment, nor in the same manner. The male (later called Adam) was created first. “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7).

Later Moses records the divine intention to make a companion for Adam. “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a *helper fit for him* [*ezer kenegdô*].’” Again, after the naming of the creatures by Adam, the statement is made: “But for the man there was not found a *helper fit for him* [*ezer kenegdô*]” (Gen 2:18, 20).

The Lexicons list *ezer* as meaning “help,” “succor” or in a concrete sense “one who helps,” “helper.”<sup>2</sup> *Neged* with the preposition *ke* is defined as meaning, “according to what is in front of = corresponding to.” The meaning of Gen 2:18 is thus rendered, “I will make him . . . a help *corresponding to* him, i.e. equal and adequate to himself.”<sup>3</sup> Or, in this context the phrase may be defined to mean “as his counterpart” with the extended sense of “fitting him, suiting him.”<sup>4</sup>

The LXX reading for Gen 2:18 is *boēthon katfauton*. *Kata* used in comparisons is given the sense of “corresponding with, after the fashion of.”<sup>5</sup> Thus the phrase may read, “A helper corresponding with him,” or “after the fashion of him,” In vs. 20 the phrase is *boēthos homoios autō*. The basic meaning of *homoios* is “like,” “similar.” It can also have the meaning “of the same nature.”<sup>6</sup> It can also have the extended meaning, “of the same rank or station.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The RSV is cited throughout.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston, 1907); Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon In Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1958).

<sup>3</sup>Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

<sup>4</sup>Koehler and Baumgartner.

<sup>5</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* 9<sup>th</sup> rev. ed., (Oxford, 1940 [1958]).

<sup>6</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. (Chicago, 1952).

<sup>7</sup>Liddell and Scott.

The simple sense of “like” seems adequate for the context, although the latter meaning could easily apply. The Lord designed to make a helper for the man—like him, or similar to him. After viewing the creatures brought before him and after naming them, Adam senses that there are none similar to himself, of the same kind of nature. There were certainly none of his rank and station in the creation.

At this point of realization and loneliness “the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [*’ishshah*], because she was taken out of Man [*’ish*]” (Gen 2:21-23).

Inspiration does not disclose the reason why the woman was created in this manner rather than in the manner by which the man was created. The first man was formed from the dust; the woman was derived in part from the man and “built” [*banah*] into a person. On the basis of this brief record some observations may be made:

**1. The woman is of the same flesh and substance as the man.** She is neither inferior nor superior in substance. She is *homoios*—similar to man. Adam acknowledges the woman to be “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23).

**2. Woman is man’s counterpart.** The unique manner of creating the woman would underscore the true kinship she was to have with man. Generically speaking, man is in two sexes; hence, he is incomplete without the woman. The two complement each other to make the whole. Woman is the essential complement or counterpart to the man. No doubt this particular manner of creation was designed also to undergird the unity of the marriage bond (“they become one flesh” [Gen 2:24]).

**3. Equality is implied.** Equality of person is suggested by the portion of the man’s body which was used in the creation of the woman. She is derived neither from his foot nor from his head, but from his side.<sup>8</sup>

**4. Her name implies an equality.** Adam’s statement upon receiving the woman indicates that he recognized her as a true complement to himself. “This at last [*zo’th happa’am*]” or “now at length” seems to be an allusion to his previous survey and naming of the animals, at which time Adam realized there were none similar to himself. “Now at length” the Lord has presented another being whom he recognizes as being fully of his kind. Doubtless being informed by the Creator of her origin, Adam promptly names her “Woman,” “because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>“God himself gave Adam a companion. He provided ‘an help meet for him.’—a helper corresponding to him,—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self; showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.”—PP 46.

<sup>9</sup>The Hebrew words for “man” and “woman” [*’ish*, *’ishshah*] appear to have different etymologies, but reflect (whatever was the first man’s language) Adam’s understanding of the origin of the woman. The term *’ishshah*, as far as kinship of sound is concerned, is a feminizing of *’ish* (man), and carries the sense of “she-man” or “female-man.” The English term “woman” has a similar sense, being a contraction of the Anglo-Saxon “wombman,” that is, “the man with the womb.” (*The Pulpit Commentary*, exposition on Gen 1:23; Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing: the Old and New Testaments . . . With a Commentary and Critical Notes* [New York, n.d.], vol. 1, exposition on Gen 1:23.) The sense of the term thus not only states the derivation of woman (*gunē ex andros*, 1 Cor 11:8), but it also may imply equality. Woman is the female aspect of man in the generic sense; he is the male aspect.

Inasmuch as the woman was created in “the image of God,” of the same substance as man, to be his counterpart, it may be concluded that the Creation account clearly indicates the divine intention that woman was to be viewed on an equality with the man.

There are, however, other factors in the account that suggest that a certain relationship was to be sustained between the two.

**1. The priority of Creation.** Adam was created first, Eve second (1 Tim 2:13).

**2. Dependence.** A certain degree of dependence of the woman upon the man is implied. The woman was made from the man. She is presented to the man. She is named by the man.

**3. Purpose of Creation.** The scripture record is that God purposed to make man “a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18).<sup>10</sup>

In the light of all the facts pertaining to the creation of woman, care must be taken not to read into these three points dealing with relationships more than the Creator intended. Priority of creation may indicate a certain headship of man in the relationship between the two sexes even before the entrance of sin. (Cf. 1 Cor 11:3.) There is also a certain relationship of dependence set forth as Eve is entrusted to Adam. However, neither the headship nor the dependence aspects of the relationship should be construed to indicate inferiority on the part of the woman. Difference of function does not necessarily indicate inferiority of being as some might infer. Neither is superior nor inferior to the other, for both are made in the image of God, and each has a given role to fulfill in the Creator’s purpose.

Nor is woman’s role as “helper” to be misconstrued to mean that she was intended merely as the slave or plaything of the man. Rather it is to be understood that man is in a sense incomplete. He is lacking a counterpart. Woman fills that need and enables man to fill the Creator’s objectives for the race. “She is the kind of help man needs, agreeing with him mentally, physically, spiritually. She is not an inferior being.”<sup>11</sup> The apostle Paul, while recognizing a certain headship of the man, states the necessary, mutual, interdependence of both. “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God” (1 Cor 11: 11-12).

### Effects of Sin and Judgment on Woman’s Status

The third chapter of Genesis records the entrance of sin into the earth. Eve was deceived into partaking of the forbidden fruit, and in turn became Satan’s agent to tempt Adam also to sin. Whereas Eve was deceived, Adam knew what he was doing, though neither scarcely could conceive the enormous consequences that would issue from their actions (Cf. 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2: 14).

The judgment that was pronounced by the Creator upon the woman was as follows: “To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you’” (Gen 3: 16). Two of the phrases are pertinent to this study: (1) “your desire [*teshûgah*] shall be for your husband,” and (2) “he shall rule [*mashal*] over you.”

*Teshugah* is defined as “impulse, urge,” or “longing.”<sup>12</sup> It occurs three times in the OT. In addition to the passage under consideration it is used to describe the passion of a figurative beast

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Paul: “Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Cor 11:9).

<sup>11</sup>H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH, 1942), p. 130.

<sup>12</sup>Koehler and Baumgartner; Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

about to spring upon its prey (Gen 4:7). Last, it is used to describe the yearning of a man for a woman: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire [*teshûgah*] is for me” (Cant 7:10).

Some have suggested that *teshugah* in the case of God’s judgment upon the woman was an implantation of a yearning or desire that the woman would have for the man “bordering upon disease”—a “morbid” yearning that she cannot banish from her nature, no matter how hard she may try to do so.<sup>13</sup>

Although the judgments pronounced on the pair are in one sense punishments, yet from another perspective they appear to have been designed to help mankind in the new situation of sin.<sup>14</sup> Sin is a divisive element tending to disunity and dissension. Faultfinding and rebellion between the pair and their posterity might have led to a division of the sexes which would have further perverted the Creation of God. It may be suggested that since the term *teshugah* is used in a healthy manner in the Song of Solomon, that the judgment on Eve (representing her sex) was in effect a strengthening of that desire (already present from the original Creation) to be in a bond of union with man. Regardless of what effects sin may have on the relationship of the sexes in the future, the two cannot separate to live apart independent of each other because of a deep, underlying attraction that continues to draw and to hold the two together.

“He shall rule over you.” *Mashal* consistently carries the sense of “rule,” “reign,” “have dominion over.” It is the term commonly used with reference to kings and those in position of authority. The rule may be benign or harsh depending upon the ruler; but the term itself does not imply harshness, but that of governing.

As has been previously observed, there was a certain headship accorded to man in the original creation. Now in the judgment on the first woman that headship is fixed. She is not thereby made inferior to the man, nor he superior, as far as their quality is concerned. Rather, the relationship between the two has been fixed. In this Judgment woman is placed under the care, protection, and government of the man. A certain right of independent action has been forfeited by Eve’s sin. Her status is now one of dependence; man is charged with her care. While, in a sense, this is a judgment, it would appear also to be a “confirmation and perpetuation of that authority which had been assigned to man at the creation,”<sup>15</sup> but which has now been made imperative in order to maintain a degree of harmony and stability between the sexes in the sin situation.<sup>16</sup>

Some may feel that this judgment which defines a relationship of headship to the man and dependence and submission to the woman is or was intended to be confined to the marital situation only, since it was in such a situation that the Judgment was given. Under inspiration the

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<sup>13</sup>So C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, comment on Genesis 3:16 (Grand Rapids, MI, 1949), vol. 1; Leupold, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup>For example, the judgment of hard work to wrest a living has proved an inestimable blessing to man in his sin state; whereas, idleness has been a curse (Gen 3:17-19).

<sup>15</sup>*The Pulpit Commentary*, exposition of Genesis 3:16.

<sup>16</sup>“In the creation, God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with his great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles enjoined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man’s abuse of the supremacy thus given him, has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter, and made her life a burden.”—PP 58-59.



apostle Paul, however, evidently understood the judgment to apply to womankind.<sup>17</sup> He states, “[They] should be subordinate, as even *the law* says” (1 Cor 14:34). To the best knowledge of this writer, the Mosaic codes do not make such a statement. The term “law” is probably referring to the books of Moses. Commentators generally agree that Paul is alluding to the divine judgment on Eve (Gen 3:16). The headship of the man and the dependence of the woman upon the man is the consistent point of view set forth in the Scriptures from this time on (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22-23; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

While the divine judgment placed woman in the care and government of man, such a relationship in no wise rendered her inferior. The arrangement was evidently designed to mitigate as far as possible the disruptive effects of sin. That the relationship has been abused none can deny. But abuse has not voided the divine decree defining this relationship. Where Christian principles have been cherished, woman’s sphere in human life has been a happy and useful one.<sup>18</sup> “Wherever its [Christianity’s] teachings and spirit prevail, she is made the loved companion, confidante and adviser of her husband.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Status of Woman in the Biblical Instruction**

In the role of parent equal honor is accorded the mother and the father. In the heart of the Decalogue is the fifth commandment. It heads the list of obligations to one’s fellowmen. Here is enshrined the Creator’s high regard for the mother. “Honor your father *and your mother*, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Exod 20:12).<sup>20</sup>

In a later statement of instruction the Lord reverses the order of the parents. “Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy. Every one of you *shall revere his mother* and his father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19:2-3).<sup>21</sup>

Children are enjoined to listen to instruction from both parents. “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and *reject not your mother’s teaching*” (Prov 1:8; see also 6:20). A curse is pronounced on unruly children who refuse to obey either parent. “The eye that mocks a father and *scorns to obey a mother* will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures” (Prov 30:17).

Both parents were to be respected even in their old age. “Hearken to your father who begot you; and *do not despise your mother when she is old*” (Prov 23:22).<sup>22</sup> Judgment is threatened for one who curses his parents. “If one curses his father *or his mother*, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness” (Prov 20:20). In the theocracy that judgment was death. “Whoever curses his father *or his mother* shall be put to death” (Exod 21:17; cf. Lev 20:9). Death might also be the penalty exacted upon an incorrigible offspring who refused to “obey the voice of his father *or the voice of his mother*” (Deut 21:18-21).

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<sup>17</sup>Some commentators interpret these Pauline passages to apply to the relation between a married woman and her husband rather than to women in general.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Paul’s counsel for the husband and wife (Eph 5:21-33).

<sup>19</sup>“Woman,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, (1915).

<sup>20</sup>This respect for both parents is reflected also in the NT. Cf. Eph 6:1-2; Col 3:20.

<sup>21</sup>One of the curses later recited by Israel in Canaan pertained to those who dishonored their parents (Deut 27:16).

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Jesus’ care of Mary at the cross (John 19:26-27).

It would seem that such a high regard for the position and instruction of the mother would engender in each generation of young people a high respect for womanhood in general among those who served God.

The women of Israel appear to have mingled freely with the men in the social gatherings of the nation. It was required of all males to appear before the Lord three times a year (Passover week, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles, see Exod 23:14-17; 34:23), yet the brief records indicate that wives, boys and girls, widows, orphans, and slaves of both sexes attended these festivals (Deut 16:11, 14; 1 Sam 1:1-2; Luke 2:41-42).

Israelite women were not to be kept in ignorance regarding their religious faith. Moses instructed that every seven years the priests were to publicly read the law at the Feast of Tabernacles to the assembled people—"men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns" (Deut 31:10-13). It is recorded of Ezra that he presented the law "before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding" (Neh 8:2-3).

Women were present at wedding festivities. Although it seems to have been the task of the groom to provide for the wedding feast, yet in the one instance recorded in the NT a woman freely acted on her own to have the supply of wine replenished (John 2:1-11).

It may be interred in the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that women moved about in public without face veils. Abraham feared that the Egyptians would observe Sarah's beauty. And the record is that "the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh" (Gen 12:14-15). When Eliezer met Rebekah beside a well in Haran, she was apparently without a veil, for the beauty of her features is referred to. She also appears to have traveled without a veil in Eliezer's caravan until she saw Isaac in the distance, at which time she discreetly veiled herself (Gen 24:15-16, 63-65). It may also be inferred that Rachel, as a shepherdess, was without a veil. Jacob publicly kissed her without shame in the presence of the other shepherds (Gen 29:9-11).

While the biblical picture of womanhood in Israel is a high one, it does not follow that in every department of life she functioned as a full equal. The overtones of headship and dependence carry throughout. However, it is not to be inferred that God thereby intended her demeaning or degradation. It may provide further insight to survey some of the civil and religious statutes as they related to women. These items are sometimes cited to prove that women were considered inferior.

## **Laws of Inheritance**

Women normally did not receive an inheritance—the possessions going upon the death of the father to the sons. However, if a father died and had no sons, his inheritance was "to pass to his daughter." If there were no daughters in the immediate family, the inheritance was to pass to a kinsman on the father's side (Num 27:6-11). On the surface this seems to imply a complete disregard for the man's widow and her care. If the disposal of the property belonging to Elimelech is typical, it may be inferred that in actual practice the property was held by the widow, and could have been *sold* to the husband's near kinsman (Ruth 4:3, 5). Job, who lived prior to the Mosaic legislation, chose to give an inheritance to each of his daughters as well as to his sons (Job 42:15).

## Divorce

In the Mosaic legislation permission was granted a man to divorce his wife (Deut 24:1-4). From this it has been inferred, “Her husband can repudiate her, but she cannot claim a divorce.”<sup>23</sup> However, actual practice may not have been so one-sided. Jesus referred to the possible divorce of a man *by his wife*. “And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:12).<sup>24</sup>

## Punishments

In acts of adultery both the woman as well as the man were similarly punished (Lev 20:10-21; Deut 22:22-27). “Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death” (Lev 20:10).<sup>25</sup> Both men and women were punished by death if they attempted to practice spiritism (Lev 20:27).

## Slavery

Sometimes the following portion of the Mosaic code is cited to show a woman’s inferior status in the Israelite economy.<sup>26</sup> “When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.” This seems to indicate that the father had absolute control over a daughter and could sell her into perpetual slavery on a whim, if he so chose. It is not questioned that parents had authority over their children. But in actual practice parents in financial distress could and did sell *sons* as well as daughters (Neh 5:5, 8). It is doubtful that Hebrew parents sold either their daughters or their sons unless dire circumstances forced them to do so for survival.

The law cited, however, is not dealing with true slavery. In this instance the daughter is “sold” to become either the wife (probably a secondary wife) of the owner or the wife of his son.

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<sup>23</sup>Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York, 1961), p. 39.

<sup>24</sup>In some instances a husband was never permitted to divorce his wife (Deut 22:28-29). Rabbinical Judaism permitted a girl who was betrothed in her minority (up to 12 years and one day) the right of refusal. Before two witnesses she could adjure the contract and be freed of either her betrothal or her marriage state without the need of a bill of divorce. (The Mishnah, *Yebamoth*, 13.1, tr. Herbert Danby [London, 1933], p. 237; Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* [Grand Rapids, MI, 1953], p. 144.)

A wife also had the right of insisting on being divorced by her husband if he was afflicted with boils or leprosy or was engaged in the livelihood of tanner or coppersmith. (The Mishnah, *Kethuboth* 7.10, tr. Herbert Danby, p. 255.) In addition to these instances Edersheim notes that divorce was obligatory if either party became heretical or ceased to profess Judaism. (Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 158.)

According to the Mishnah, a “woman may write her own bill of divorce.” “The woman herself may bring her own bill of divorce, save only that she must say, ‘It was written in my presence and it was signed in my presence.’” (*The Mishnah*, Gittin 2.5, 7, tr. Herbert Danby, pp. 308-9.) If the wife might write out her own bill and present it, it may be inferred that she might at times have initiated the moves to have her husband give her a bill of divorce.

Josephus records the instance in which Salome, the sister of Herod the Great, sent her husband a bill of divorce “and dissolved her marriage with him.” He notes, “this was not according to the Jewish laws: for with us it is lawful for a husband to do so; but a wife, if she departs from her husband, cannot of herself be married to another, unless her former husband put her away.” (*Antiquities*, XV. 7.10, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, tr. William Whiston, [London, n.d.], pp. 410-11.) Perhaps Josephus states general custom. It is evident from the Mishnah citations that there were situations in which a wife might cause her marriage to be dissolved.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Jesus’ prevention of a miscarriage of justice with regard to the woman taken in adultery. The other guilty party was purposely kept from the scene in an attempt to entangle Jesus in answering to His ruin or discredit (John 8:1-11).

<sup>26</sup>O. J. Baab, “Woman,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (New York), vol. 4.

It she did not please the “buyer,” he might let her be redeemed by another Hebrew, but he was forbidden to sell her to foreigners. If he gave her as a wife to his son, he was “to deal with her as with a daughter.” If he chose to keep her for himself and yet marry another, he was ordered to “not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights.” “And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.” Thus, if the owner did not fulfill his obligations, the woman became a free woman, and the father was not required to refund the money for which she was “sold” (Exod 21:7-11).

With regard to arranging for a marriage of a son, the records indicate that the father usually led out in securing a bride.<sup>27</sup> In the absence of the father, the mother might do so.<sup>28</sup> Naomi sought to provide a husband for her daughter-in-law (Ruth 3:1-2). It would also appear that the father might choose to whom he would give his daughter in marriage (Josh 15:16-17; 1 Sam 18:17). However, it does not follow that this indicated an arbitrary exercise of authority. The will of the daughter also appears to have been consulted. Rebekah is asked by her family, “‘Will you go with this man?’ She said, ‘I will go’” (Gen 24:58).<sup>29</sup>

## General Worship

It was but natural for the husband as head of the home to be also the priest of the family and thus to lead out in the worship of the family. As far as the records go, it would appear that in the patriarchal and Mosaic periods the husband offered the required sacrifices, but not the wives.<sup>30</sup> Women attended the festivals and ate of the sacrificial meals.<sup>31</sup> It was customary for women to worship and to pray at the sanctuary, and to support the temple with gifts.<sup>32</sup>

## Ritual Purification After Childbirth

According to the ritual laws a woman who gave birth was ritually unclean and spent a period of 40 days in a state of uncleanness if she gave birth to a boy and twice that long (80 days) if she gave birth to a girl (Lev 12:1-8). Some cite this custom as evidence of the inferior status of women in Israel—that daughters were less desirable than sons.<sup>33</sup>

The birth of a son was considered a cause of great rejoicing (Jer 20:15; Job 3:3),<sup>34</sup> but it does not follow that the birth of a girl was a sad event among God’s people. No doubt the fact that the son would carry on the family line, and the hope that some son would be the Messiah affected the picture. But a happy family of boys and girls was prized. David prayed, “May our

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<sup>27</sup>So Abraham and Judah (Gen 24; 38:6).

<sup>28</sup>Hagar secured a wife for her son (Gen 21:21).

<sup>29</sup>“ . . . the woman had, in case of betrothal or marriage, to give her own free and expressed consent, without which a union was invalid.” (Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 143.)

<sup>30</sup>Noah, Gen 8:20; Abraham, Gen 12:7-8; Jacob, Gen 35:1; Job, Job 1:5.

<sup>31</sup>Hannah, 1 Sam 1:3-5; ct. Lev 7:11-15; Deut 16:1-15.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Hannah, 1 Sam 1:9-19; the widow and her coins, Luke 21:1-4. Solomon’s temple contained two courts—a “great court” for the worshipers and an inner court for the priests (2 Chr 4:9). This being the case, men and women must have worshiped the Lord together in this court. The later temple constructed by Herod had four courts: the court of the Gentiles, the court of the women, the court of men, and the court of the priests. Women could approach no nearer the altar of burnt offering and the sacred apartments than the court of the women. Does this fact reflect rabbinical restriction on an earlier freedom enjoyed by Israelite women? (Siegfried H. Horn, “Temple,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*.)

<sup>33</sup>Baah.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Hannah’s longing for a son (1 Sam 1:11).

sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace” (Ps 144:12).

The inspired pen recorded of Job’s daughters born after his affliction, “In all the land there were no women so fair as Job’s daughters.” So proud was he of them that he “gave them inheritance among their brothers” (Job 42:15). When the women of Bethlehem rejoiced with Naomi over the birth of Obed, they did not fail to remind her of the value of Ruth, her daughter-in-law. She “is more to you than seven sons” (Ruth 4:15).

The ritual law does not state the reasons for the varying length of time in the purifying period. We do not know the “whys” and “wherefores” of many aspects of the ritual. But in this instance it is not necessary to construe that it reflects the attitude of the Israelites toward their offspring. Nor does it reflect the divine attitude, for both sexes were created in the image of God, and both are the recipients of the same grace (Gen 1:26; 3:15; 1 Pet 3:7).<sup>35</sup>

In concluding these first three sections of this survey a few observations and comments are in order:

1. It would appear that God created the woman to be an equal with the man, although there was to be a headship on his part.

2. Judgment due to the sin situation has confirmed that headship of the man and the dependence of the woman. For her best good and for the best ends of the race this was to be a governing relationship of loving care and protection. The woman was not thus inferior nor the husband superior. But this relationship would enable the race to come as close as it could in reaching the divine ideals. True love for the woman would have rendered her lot a happy one.

3. We may infer that the sinning of both men and women has resulted in the degradation at times of the woman at the hands of the man. Polygamy and divorce were a part of this degradation.

4. The Mosaic instruction regarding the role of woman preserves to a large degree God’s ideal for her place in life. The OT ideal shows woman to be highly honored and respected and enjoying a wide freedom of action and usefulness.

5. In considering the Mosaic instruction and the OT picture of woman two points must be kept in mind:

A. When the Mosaic instruction is given (fifteenth century B.C.) there is an accommodation of the divine instruction to the deep-seated social customs of the surrounding cultures. There is an adaptation of the divine will. For example, slavery, a well-established social institution is not abolished, but the condition of the slave is somewhat mitigated. We may infer that there is a similar accommodation to custom with respect to the role of woman.

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<sup>35</sup>One explanation for the unequal time for purification is as follows: “The reason why the duration of the mother’s uncleanness is twice as long at a girl’s birth as at a boy’s would appear to be that the uncleanness attached to the child as well as to the mother, but as the boy was placed in a state of ceremonial purity at once by the act of circumcision, which took place on the eighth day, he thereupon ceased to be unclean, and the mother’s uncleanness alone remained; whereas in the case of a girl, both mother and child were unclean during the period that the former was ‘in the blood of her purifying,’ and therefore that period had to be doubly long. See Luke ii. 20 [sic; Luke 2:22], where the right reading is, ‘When the days of *their* purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished.’ For eight days the infant Saviour submitted to legal uncleanness in ‘fulfilling all righteousness’ (Matt. iii. 15), and therefore the whole forty days were spoken of as ‘the days of *their* purification’” (*Pulpit Commentary*, exposition on Leviticus 12:5).

B. The second point is similar. There is a certain accommodation of the instruction to “the hardness” of the human heart. Some things were permitted which were not necessarily endorsed. “From the beginning it was not so.”<sup>36</sup> We must recognize a certain “times of this ignorance” which would give way to a more perfect understanding as progressive revelation disclosed more clearly the perspectives of the divine heart and as the conscience of mankind would become more enlightened.<sup>37</sup> One authority comments significantly, “Every decline in her [woman’s] status in the Hebrew commonwealth was due to the incursion of foreign influence.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Roles Women Filled in Biblical Times**

The normal role of women in the history of the biblical records was naturally that which lay closest to her sex—that of wife and mother. The preparation of food for the family meals and the serving of it was a daily task,<sup>39</sup> also the care and early training of the children (1 Sam 1:22; 2:19; Ruth 4:16, etc.).<sup>40</sup> Another daily task usually devolving upon the woman was the drawing of water for the family needs (Gen 24:16; John 4:7).<sup>41</sup>

Although the headship of the husband was recognized by the wife,<sup>42</sup> yet in the godly household his headship was not one of stifling suppression. There was not only respect for her person and activities, but also considerable freedom and team approach to the family plans. It was Sarah who first proposed that Abraham marry her slave, Hagar. She also requested that Hagar and Ishmael be dismissed from the encampment (Gen 16:2; 21:10-12). The tender care of Elkanah for his childless wife is seen in his words to her: “Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:8).

When Nabal refused to furnish David’s troops with food, his wife Abigail did not hesitate to assume the reins of authority to avert the massacre she knew would result (1 Sam 25). The “wealthy woman” of Shunem regularly invited Elisha to stop at her house for entertainment whenever he was in the area. It was she who both invited him and proposed to her husband that they construct a room for the prophet, to which her husband consented (2 Kgs 4:8-10).

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<sup>36</sup>Part of Jesus’ statement pertaining to divorce in the OT (Matt 19:8).

<sup>37</sup>Eidersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 142.

<sup>38</sup>“Woman,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (1915), 5:3101.

<sup>39</sup>Jesus referred to women “grinding at the mill” which was probably a daily task (Matt 24:41). For other instances of food preparation and serving see Gen 18:6; 27:14; Luke 10:38-42; John 12:2.

It must not be construed that men—at least in certain periods of biblical history—were ignorant of the culinary art or felt it was beneath their dignity to serve a meal. Abraham personally served his three guests with the food that Sarah and his servant had prepared (Gen 18:8). Jacob knew the art of making red pottage (Gen 25:29). Esau also knew how to prepare “savory food” which his father enjoyed (Gen 27:4, 31). Gideon prepared a meal for his angel visitor (Judg 6: 19). The Master Himself twice miraculously provided a meal for the multitudes which His disciples assisted in serving (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-9).

<sup>40</sup>Again it should be noted that the father was also deeply involved in the training of his family. God said of Abraham, “I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord . . .” (Gen 18:19). Paul indicated the characteristics of a godly father when he compared his manner of labor with that of a father: “for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God . . .” (1 Thess 2:11-12). The apostle also refers to the “discipline” that a worthy father will administer to his children when it is needed (Heb 12:9).

<sup>41</sup>Male servants might also perform this task (Luke 22:10).

<sup>42</sup>“So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (1 Pet 3:5-6).

Beyond the limits of the usual home duties women sometimes occupied other roles: (1) shepherding,<sup>43</sup> (2) exercising rulership as a judge,<sup>44</sup> (3) a position of leadership in the Exodus of Israel,<sup>45</sup> (4) gleaning in the fields,<sup>46</sup> (5) counseling,<sup>47</sup> (6) ruling as queens,<sup>48</sup> (7) construction workers,<sup>49</sup> (8) business (Prov 31:10-31).<sup>50</sup>

It should also be observed that the odes of Deborah, Hannah, and Mary of Nazareth indicate the degree of intellectual culture a woman of Israel might attain (Judg 5; 1 Sam 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55).

While the men of Israel led out in the religious activities of the nation, the records indicate that women at times shared in this area of life to a considerable extent: (1) exercised the prophetic gift,<sup>51</sup> (2) contributed and helped prepare materials for the tabernacle,<sup>52</sup> (3) contributed

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<sup>43</sup>Usually a man's task, but sometimes performed by women. Rachel and the daughters of Jethro are examples (Gen 29:9; Exod 2:16-19).

<sup>44</sup>Deborah (Judg 4:4). Barak refused to fight without her presence.

<sup>45</sup>"I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Mic 6:4).

<sup>46</sup>Ruth (Ruth 2:2, 7, 21-23).

<sup>47</sup>Wise woman of Tekoah employed by Joab to persuade David to bring Absalom back from exile (2 Sam 14). See also the actions of the wise woman of Abel which averted the destruction of her city (2 Sam 20:15-22).

<sup>48</sup>Athaliah by usurption in Judah (2 Kgs 11:1-3). Her mother, Jezebel, exercised considerable power in the northern kingdom although not sole ruler (1 Kgs 16:31-32; 2 Kgs 9:22). In other lands: the queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1); Candace, queen of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:27).

<sup>49</sup>Some women assisted in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under the general supervision of Nehemiah. The record is, "Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, *he and his daughters*" (Neh 3:12).

<sup>50</sup>This ode in praise of the virtuous wife observes her business sense and ability (vss. 16, 24). Lydia, a Gentile "worshiper of God" and later a Christian convert, was a "seller of purple goods" (Acts 16:14).

<sup>51</sup>A number of women are listed as exercising this gift: Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36), the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:9). Some women such as Noadiah are referred to as exercising a counterfeit prophetic gift (Neh 6:14; Ezek 13:17). Satan has also used some women as spirit mediums (1 Sam 28:7; Acts 16:16). In the time of Paul he implies that women might pray and prophesy in the public service (1 Cor 11:5).

It is sometimes suggested that God calls a woman to the prophetic office only if there are no suitable men available. This may be inferring more than the records indicate. Huldah was contemporary with Jeremiah and possibly with Habakkuk and Zephaniah. In the eighteenth year of his reign Josiah became acquainted with the contents of "the book of the law" which the high priest had recovered in the temple (2 Kgs 22:3, 8). At this time Jeremiah had been active for about five years, having begun his work in Josiah's thirteenth year (Jer 1:2). However, it was to Huldah that the king sent his deputies to "inquire of the Lord for me" (2 Kgs 22:12-20). Why did he not consult Jeremiah or possibly Zephaniah or Habakkuk?

Miriam the prophetess was associated in leadership with Moses and Aaron. She and Aaron could say, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" (Num 12:2). In these two instances of Miriam and Huldah we have women prophets functioning in association with and at the same time as men who also had the prophetic gift. Evidently they were called to the prophetic office because there was a need for their witness and not because there were no suitable men available at the time.

Women may have been recipients of other "spiritual gifts." Women were in the upper chamber when the Pentecostal outpouring occurred and believers spoke in languages other than their own (Acts 1:14). Peter declared that the miracle was a fulfillment of Joel's prediction that the spirit would be poured out on "your sons and your daughters" (Acts 2:17).

<sup>52</sup>"And they came, . . . and brought the Lord's offering to be used for the tent of meeting. . . . So they came, both men and women." "And all women who had ability spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen; all the women whose hearts were moved with ability spun the goats' hair" (Exod 35:21-22, 25-26).

financial support to care for the personal needs of Jesus and the twelve,<sup>53</sup> (4) ministered to the needs of the stranger, the poor, and the sick<sup>54</sup> (the office of the deaconess may have been established in the apostolic age),<sup>55</sup> (5) made their homes available for religious meetings or for workers' headquarters,<sup>56</sup> (6) did Christian witnessing and instructing.<sup>57</sup>

A number of women among God's people gained considerable renown. In addition to some previously mentioned we may cite Jael whose memory as a "war heroine" was perpetuated in the Song of Deborah. (Judg 5:24.) Esther became a queen of the Persian ruler, Xerxes (Esth 2:17). The writer of Hebrew lists two women in the "Hall of Faith" as examples of persons exercising genuine faith—Sarah and Rahab (Heb 11:11, 31).

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<sup>53</sup>“Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, . . . and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means” (Luke 8:1-3; ct. Martha's hospitality, Luke 10:38-42).

<sup>54</sup>The outstanding example in the NT was Dorcas who “was full of good works and acts of charity” as was evidenced in part by the “coats and garments” which she had made for the unfortunate. To this writer's knowledge the resurrection of Dorcas and that of Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12) are the only two recorded in the apostolic age, after Christ's ascension.

The apostle Paul's guidelines for accepting a widow into the number cared for by the church indicates that Christian women were to be noted for this type of ministry: “And she must be well attested for her good deeds, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the feet of saints, relieved the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way” (1 Tim 5:10). The gracious hospitality of women has often benefited God's servants. Cf. the widow's care of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:8-24).

<sup>55</sup>Phoebe, a member of the church at Cenchreae, is referred to by Paul as “a deaconess [*diakonos*] of the church at Cenchreae” (Rom 16:1). This is the same term in the Greek for the office of “deacon” (1 Tim 3:8-13). If the apostle is not attesting a similar office for women, he is indicating that Phoebe was ministering in some capacity to the needs of the church. “She has been a helper of many and of myself as well” (Rom 16:2).

<sup>56</sup>The “house of Mary,” the mother of John Mark, seems to have been a natural center for believers in the early church. Immediately upon his miraculous release from prison Peter went to this home and found believers gathered there praying for him. Lydia urges Paul and his company to stay in her home while they evangelize Philippi: “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” Luke adds, “And she prevailed upon us” (Acts 16:15). Priscilla and Aquila made their home a church center (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3-5).

<sup>57</sup>Chief among the witnessing women of the NT is Priscilla. She and her husband were effective in bringing the learned Apollos to Christ. “They took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:24-26). Paul addressed this couple as “my fellow workers in Christ Jesus [*tous sunergous mou en Xristō Iēsou*], . . . to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks” (Rom 16:3-4). In the same list of greetings to the church at Rome he notes two other women, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who are designated as “those workers in the Lord [*tas kopiōsas en kuriō*]” (Rom 16:12).

In counseling Titus Paul advises him to bid the older women “to teach what is good [*kalodidaskalos* (adj.), teaching what is good; (n.), teacher of virtue].” Furthermore, they are to “train [*sōphronizō*, literally to bring someone to his senses, but simply: encourage, advise, urge] the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited” (Titus 2:3-5).

In his epistle to the Philippians Paul refers to two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who had “labored side by side with me [*sunēthlēsan moi*] in the gospel.” Arndt and Gingrich render the phrase, “they fought at my side in (spreading) the gospel” (Phil 4:3).

While these references do not indicate that women in the Christian church were addressing congregations in preaching services, they do indicate that they were not restricted from witnessing to the truths of the gospel and in helping those in the congregation to make practical application of those truths to the daily life. They could be and were in a very real sense “workers in the Lord.” Social status need not prevent witnessing. It ought not to be forgotten that a little slave girl was basically instrumental in the winning of Naaman, “commander of the army of the king of Syria,” to the worship of the true God (2 Kgs 5).



In Paul's labors he was often successful in winning "leading women," and "Greek women of high standing" who were found attending the synagogues (Acts 17:4, 12). There is no reason to think that these new converts lost their positions of influence when they entered the Christian community. The apostles did not hesitate to preach the gospel to women. The visionary "man of Macedonia" resolved himself in the first instance into a group of "women who had come together" on a river bank for prayer. Paul's first convert in Europe was a woman—Lydia, "a seller of purple goods" (Acts 16:9-15). It was also the restoration of a demon-possessed slave girl that resulted in his imprisonment and the subsequent conversion of the jailer and his household (Acts 16:16-34).

Chloe was evidently a prominent woman in the Corinthian church. It was a report to Paul by members of her household ("Chloe's people") which prompted the apostle to write his first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:11). It is possible that one of the NT epistles was addressed to a Christian lady.<sup>58</sup>

The figurative use of the term woman is well known in Scripture. Cities and nations are referred to as women.<sup>59</sup> In a religious sense the convert is described as being "betrothed" to Christ, presented to Him "as a pure bride to her . . . husband" (2 Cor 11:2; cf. Hos 2:19). The bond between the follower of God and his Lord is compared and illustrated by the bond of marriage (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:14; Eph 5:22-33). Sarah and Hagar are allegorized by Paul as standing for the two covenants—one of faith, and one of works (Gal 4:21-31). In apocalyptic prophecy the symbol of a woman is used to represent the church in either her purity or her fallen condition, or in one instance as a personification of evil (Rev 12; 17; Zech 5:5-11).

In summary we may say that the records indicate that women were often held in high esteem, and that there was considerable freedom of action among them. According to their abilities and God's leading they appear able to function happily in their homes as respected companions of their husband, and yet do not seem to be restricted from expanding their role of activities beyond the immediate household tasks to other endeavors in both the secular and religious areas of life.

It may be surmised that if the role of any woman among God's people was severely limited, it was due to a limited amount of natural ability on her part, the influences of a changing culture on God's people, or the development of restricting rabbinical views. The ideal as set forth in woman's creation and even in the relationship designed by God subsequent to the Fall permitted a wide fulfillment of her person in everyday life, evidenced by the roles women occupied in both secular and religious areas of life.

### **Jesus' Relationship With Women**

In setting up the Harmony of the Gospels the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* lists 179 different items pertaining to the life of our Lord! The first 17 of the items cover the incarnation through His youth and young manhood, leaving a balance of 162 items or incidents

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<sup>58</sup>The epistle of 2 John. The *prima facie* evidence is that its recipient was a Christian woman. However, scholarship debates whether the epistle is addressed to a single individual or to a "corporate personality," that is, a church group. "The question must be treated as an open one." (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Old Tappan, NJ, 1907), p. 137.

<sup>59</sup>For example, the nation of Judah is designated the "daughter of Zion" (Jer 6:2, 23). The kingdom of Babylon is characterized as "virgin daughter of Babylon," "daughter of the Chaldeans" (Isa 47:1). Samaria and Sodom are viewed as "elder" and "younger" sisters of Jerusalem (Ezek 16:46). Jerusalem is noted as "your mother" (Isa 50:1), and the New Jerusalem as both "our mother" and as the "Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Gal 4:26; Rev 21:9).

extending from the ministry of John through the close of the Gospel records. Of these 162 items, 18, or a little more than 11 percent, depict the Master's ministry in relationship with women. If items were eliminated from the list which did not involve people the percentage of those that involved women would be somewhat larger.<sup>60</sup> A similar relationship is seen in the Master's parables. The same source lists 40 parables, 4 of which (10 percent) have women as part of their subject matter.<sup>61</sup>

Christ's first miracle was performed at a wedding festivity which He honored with His presence. It came in response to the faith of His mother (John 2:1-11). In the Gospel of John, Christ's first verbal declaration in plain terms that He was the Messiah was made to a woman—a Samaritan, one of the Saviour's earliest converts (John 4:25-26). He did not hesitate to break rabbinical convention to converse openly with her in public (see John 4:27).<sup>62</sup>

The Master's first resurrection miracle was prompted by His compassion for a widow who sorrowfully proceeded with the body of her dead son to his grave. "Do not weep," were His tender words to her before He raised the young man to life and to her arms (Luke 7:11-17).<sup>63</sup>

The Gospels record the healing of several women by the Saviour.<sup>64</sup>

The Saviour had a care for the mothers who in the interest of their children had sought His blessing for them. He was "indignant" with the disciples who thought the Master should not be bothered with such (Mark 10:13-16). One of the greatest incidents in the life of Jesus which illustrated His tenderness with sinners was His dealing with the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11).

The question as to how the Master and His disciples maintained themselves during the years of His ministry appears to be answered by Luke's record that certain women (some of whom were in high positions of influence) provided for Him and His party.<sup>65</sup>

The major incident in the life of Jesus by which He evidently intended to demonstrate to the twelve that the gospel of salvation was for all nations and not for the Jew alone concerned the pagan woman of Phoenicia and her devil-possessed daughter (Matt 15:21-25).<sup>66</sup>

It is a poor widow's love offering of "two copper coins" that is noticed and commented upon by the Master as illustrating the true spirit of giving (Mark 12:41-44).

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<sup>60</sup>5 BC 196-97.

<sup>61</sup>5 BC 205-6.

<sup>62</sup>An ancient Jewish work (*Aboth R. N.* 2 [1d] cited in Strack and Billerbeck, 2:438) advises: "Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no, not with his own wife" (cited in 5BC 941, comment on John 4:27). Christ's conversation with a woman was "contrary to all Judaeian notions of a Rabbi" (Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, one-volume abridged ed. [Grand Rapids, MI, p. 93].

<sup>63</sup>The second resurrection was that of the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:41-42, 49-55). His crowning miracle was the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11).

<sup>64</sup>Peter's mother-in-law (Matt 8:14-17); the invalid who had a hemorrhage for 12 years (Matt 9:20-22); the woman who had been in a crippled condition for 18 years (Luke 13:10-17).

<sup>65</sup>"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, *and also some women* who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, *who provided for them out of their means*" (Luke 8:1-3). Martha's example is probably typical: Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house . . ." (Luke 10:38-42). From the previous reference it would appear that some of these ladies at times traveled with the group that attended the Saviour.

<sup>66</sup>The other occasions of His ministry to non-Jews were: the Samaritan woman and others of her nation (these persons were partly Jewish [John 4:5-42; Luke 17:11-19]), the Roman centurion (he built the Jews a synagogue, and the request for his servant's healing was presented by the Jewish elders [Luke 7:1-10]), the demoniacs of Gergesa (Matt 8:28-34, the Greeks who asked to see Jesus near the close of His life (John 12:20).

A grateful Saviour acknowledges Mary's gift and promises that the act will never be forgotten. "She has done a beautiful thing to me . . . Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (Matt 26:6-13).<sup>67</sup>

The Saviour's great heart encompassed the whole of mankind. None lay outside the circle of His love because of their sex or status. When He was informed that His mother and brothers desired to see Him, He replied pointing to His followers: "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12:46-50).

One of Christ's last acts was to entrust the keeping of His mother to His disciple John. In spite of the physical pain and the mental anguish He was enduring on the cross, He showed His tender concern for her future welfare (John 19:25-27).

Some of the women "who had come with him from Galilee" watched as Jesus was tenderly removed from the cross and laid in the tomb. They "saw the tomb, and how his body was laid." Reluctantly they left their precious Lord to prepare further embalming materials for returning after the Sabbath (Luke 23:55-56).

It was to these women that Christ first appeared upon His resurrection. He disclosed Himself first to Mary Magdalene near the garden tomb (John 20:11-18). A short time later He was seen by the other women whose worship He fully accepted. "And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Hail!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me'" (Matt 28:5-10; cf. Luke 24:2.2-23). It is interesting to note that the first proclaimers of the risen Saviour, the first to attest the great truth of the resurrection of the Son of God, were women!

From the foregoing data it is evident that the Master had a high respect and a tender regard for womanhood. He does not regard them as inferior persons. They are in all respects the equal recipients of His grace—whether Jew or Gentile. He who conversed with the brilliant Nicodemus and others did not consider it beneath His dignity to converse with the spiritually hungry Mary "who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." He gently rebuked the perturbed Martha: "You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

It would appear that He did not hesitate to break rabbinical custom to speak openly in public with them in ministering to their needs. His dealing with the Samaritan woman has remained throughout the Christian era as the classic model for Christian soul winning. He accepted their physical care of His needs and those of His disciples. To the extent that they were able, He appears to have permitted them to be associated with Him in His labors and travels.

### **The Apostle Paul and Women**

Some who read the inspired writings of the apostle Paul in a casual manner may feel that he had little respect or concern for women—if not plain antagonism. Before examining certain passages which may suggest such concepts, it would be appropriate to observe the nature of the apostle's personal relationships with women.

His own treatment of women may be inferred from his counsel to Timothy on this point: "Treat . . . older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity" (1 Tim 5:1-2).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>"And as He went down into the darkness of His great trial, He carried with Him the memory of that deed, an earnest of the love that would be His from His redeemed ones forever."—DA 560.

<sup>68</sup>He refers to Phoebe as "our sister Phoebe" (Rom 16:1).

Such counsel indicates the respect, appreciation, and love that the apostle had for womanhood in general, and for Christian women in particular.

As noted earlier, the apostle never hesitated to labor for the salvation of the women whom he met. His first labors in Europe were among a group of women who met for prayer on a riverbank. From this group he baptized Lydia (Acts 16:13-15). The record of Acts specifically notes that among his converts in Thessalonica and Beroea were “leading women” and “Greek women of high standing as well as men” (Acts 17:4, 12). His success at Athens was small; only a few believed. Two of this group were designated by name, one of whom was a woman by the name of Damaris (Acts 17:32). Chloe was one of his prominent converts in Corinth (1 Cor 1:11). We may infer that Eunice, the mother of Timothy, and possibly Lois, his grandmother, were also converts of Paul in Lystra (Acts 14:6-7; 16:1). He commends to Timothy their sincere faith in God and their careful transmission of it to Timothy (2 Tim 1:5).

Some women were associated at times with the apostle in labor. We are not informed, however, just what they did. One couple already mentioned (see n. 57) Aquila and Priscilla met Paul on his first trip to Corinth. On the two recorded occasions on which he sends them greetings he reverses the natural order (husband-wife) and places her name first (wife-husband), which may indicate that the apostle recognized her as the more active one in Christian service or the more capable. Both are equally referred to as “my fellow workers.” “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks; greet also the church in their house” (Rom 16:3-5; see also 2 Tim 4:19).

Another woman whose faithful service he evidently admired was Phoebe (see n. 55), who probably was entrusted with the delivery of his epistle to the Romans. He commends her to the church at Rome and asks that they assist her in her personal errand, noting also her assistance to himself and others. He said, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself” (Rom 16:1-2).

Two other women who at one time had worked with him were Euodia and Syntyche (see n. 57). Friction had evidently developed between these two Christian ladies. In his epistle to the Philippians Paul begs them to come to an agreement and requests a fellow worker in Philippi, “help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel.” He includes them with others as “my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil 4:2-3).

One evidence of the apostle’s warm-hearted associations with both men and women is seen in his characteristic greetings in his epistles. The chief example is found in the closing chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Twenty-six specific persons are sent greetings (most of whom he calls by name) together with general greetings to members of two families. Of the twenty-six specific persons, seven are women (Rom 16:3, 6, 12-13, 15). The apostle’s comment regarding some of them is revealing of his Christian affection and appreciation:

1. “Greet *Prisca* and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life. . . .”
2. “Greet *Mary*, who has worked hard among you.”<sup>69</sup>
- 3-4. “Greet those workers in the Lord, *Tryphaena* and Tryphosa.”
5. “Greet Rufus, . . . also *his mother* an mine.”
- 6-7. “Greet . . . *Julia*, Nerus and *his sister*.”

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<sup>69</sup>Textual evidence is stronger for *humas* (you) than for *hēmas* (us); the latter is the Greek text for the KJV, “Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.”

The epistle to Philemon is also addressed to “Apphia our sister” as well as to Philemon and Archippus. Apphia may have been the wife of Philemon, but this can only be conjectured (Phil 2). In Paul’s last letter before his martyrdom two women are listed in his greetings. Priscilla (Prisca) heads a list of three persons to whom he sends greetings. Claudia, a Christian woman, is one of four listed who send their greetings to Timothy (2 Tim 4:19-21).

Evidence from the records clearly indicates that the apostle did not hate or despise women. To the contrary, his personal relations among them were in all respects exemplary of Christian kindness and consideration. He labored for their salvation as did his Master, and considered them equal to men as candidates for salvation.<sup>70</sup> He had many friends among them, some of whom were associated with him in his gospel work, and he welcomed their considerate care of his personal needs (cf. “his mother *and mine*”).

### **Paul’s Teaching Regarding Women**

Paul recognizes the relation between man and woman which God had fixed subsequent to the Fall. The man is to exercise headship, govern, care for, and protect the woman—his trust. The woman is dependent upon his care, and is to be submissive to the governing authority (1 Cor 11:3; 14:34).<sup>71</sup>

In terms of husband-wife relationships the apostle sought to elevate the position of Christian wives. Wives were to respect their husbands and be submissive to their headship. But this was a voluntary submission, for they were to submit just as the church chooses to be submissive to the will of Christ. Husbands are instructed to care for and love their wives in the same manner as Jesus who loved the church, even dying for it. If followed, such counsel would inevitably have improved the status of any woman to a position of consideration, respect, and genuine companionship as an equal, and yet withal, subject to a gracious headship which would enable a given family to attain as close as possible to God’s ideal in a world of sin (Eph 5:22-33).

Counsel is also given by the apostle regarding women’s dress and their general activities in the home, church, and community (1 Tim 2:9-10; 5:11-14; Titus 2:3-5). Church leaders are instructed in the manner they are to care for Christian women who are widows (1 Tim 5:1-16).

### **Paul’s Teaching Regarding Women in a Public Role in the Church**

Two statements by the apostle on the matter of Christian women speaking in public services of the assembled congregation or functioning in administration have caused considerable concern as to the proper role of the modern woman in the church. The following are the apostle’s two basic statements on these points:

1. “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak [*ou gar epitrepetai autais lalein*, literally—it is not being permitted to them to speak], but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful [*aischron*] for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor 14:33-35).

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<sup>70</sup>His great declaration on this point is in Galatians: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:28-29). This evidently was general apostolic teaching for the apostle Peter notes that men and women are “joint heirs of the grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7).

<sup>71</sup>Cf. the statement of Peter (1 Pet 3: 1-7; Eph 5:22-23) about husbands and wives.

2. “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit [*epitrepō*] no woman to teach [*didaskēin*] or to have authority [*authentein*, have authority, domineer over someone] over men [*andros*]; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:11-14).

There is general agreement among the commentators that the apostle is dealing with the matter of women speaking in the general assembly of the church. Considering the confused condition in the Corinthian church, one might be inclined to view Paul’s sharp command in the Corinthian epistle as limited to that congregation. But his statement to Timothy some years later indicates that neither he nor church custom permitted women, as a general course, to address the members of the congregation in a public manner, nor to audibly voice questions in the service.

Because women have filled useful roles in the church in different periods of the Christian era subsequent to the apostolic age, and have at times spoken in services of the church with the evidence of God’s blessing in souls brought to Christ, such counsel by the apostle seems difficult to understand. Commentators take two positions with regard to it: (1) Regardless of what Christian women may do at present, this apostolic counsel is permanent and good for all time.<sup>72</sup> (2) The counsel is not permanent, but was directed to the general culture in view of the attitudes toward women in Paul’s time. Time and place must be considered.<sup>73</sup>

With respect to this latter position it would be in order to sketch the cultural viewpoint of Paul’s day toward women. The modern historian, Will Durant, commenting on Paul’s Instruction observes, “This was the Judaic and Greek view of woman, not the Roman.”<sup>74</sup> A statement by Thucydides who lived in the fifth century B.C., Greece’s golden age, is repeated by Plutarch (d. A.D. 120) with apparent approval: “The name of a decent woman, like her person, should be shut up in the house.”<sup>75</sup> Commentators also believe that Paul’s rule enjoining silence upon women in

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<sup>72</sup>“No rule in the New Testament is more positive than this; and however plausible may be the reasons which may be urged for disregarding it, and for suffering women to take part in conducting public worship, yet the authority of the apostle Paul is positive, and his meaning cannot be mistaken” (Albert Barnes, *Notes Explanatory and Practical on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* [New York, 1868], p. 294).

Lenski argues that one cannot say that “what Paul wrote was well enough for his time and age which assigned a different position to women than does ours. If woman is now assigned a different position, this is done, not by God, but by man, and by man in contradiction to God. The claim that the sexes are equal collides with the simple fact that God did not make them equal, and no amount of human claiming can remove or alter the divine fact” (R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* [Columbus, OR, 1946], pp. 616-17).

<sup>73</sup>“Paul evidently meant this to be a general rule, and one which ought to be normally observed; for he repeats it in 1 Tim. ii.11, 12. At the same time, it is fair to interpret it as a rule made with special reference to time and circumstances, and obviously admitting of exceptions in both dispensations” (*The Pulpit Commentary*, exposition on 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35).

“One can hardly imagine in the light of his own teaching, far less in that of the subsequent development of the church, that these lines could possibly represent the great apostle’s final judgment on the place that devoted women should take in the life of the Church” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, exposition on 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35).

“Further, it goes without saying that the reason for this (partial) silence imposed on women must be sought solely in a concern not to violate the rules of propriety that were generally observed at the time. We are, then, here in the realm of the relative. Calvin was well aware of this. It is permissible to suppose that in our own day, when women enjoy all rights and shock no one by speaking in public, the restriction enjoined by the Apostle no longer has the same force” (Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* [London, 1962], pp. 154-55). The same author cites Calvin on 1 Cor 14:35: “. . . it is part of the prudent reader to consider, that the things of which he here treats are intermediate and indifferent, in which there is nothing unlawful, but what is at variance with propriety and edification” (*Comm.*, E Tr., p. 469, cited in Hering, p. 110).

<sup>74</sup>Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ* (New York, 1944), p. 597.

<sup>75</sup>Plutarch, citing Thucydides, cited by Will Durant in *The Life of Greece*, p. 305.

the public assembly was “a rule taken over from the synagogue.”<sup>76</sup> If so, we are probably observing the effect upon Jewish society (the context in which the Christian church emerged) of some of the strictures of rabbinical Judaism.<sup>77</sup>

### **Paul’s Counsel a Matter of Advisability**

The apostle’s clearest statement on the equality of the sexes seems to suggest that his counsel on women speaking in the congregation was advisable because of the cultural situation of his time. First his statement, and then a brief analysis of it: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Here is a manifest declaration of equality insofar as divine redemption is concerned. Three pairs of classes are set forth—Jew and Greek, slave and free, man and woman. None stands above another. All are upon the same plane—sinners in need of grace. All are equally loved of God and may equally share in His love. There are no restrictions because of birth, status, or sex. This is the apostolic echo of John 3:16.

However, it is evident from the records of the NT that the implications of such a perspective could not always be realized in that age because of certain deep-seated social institutions and viewpoints held by the society at that time. The successful promulgation of the gospel message necessitated certain expedient approaches so that its onward progress might not be hindered and honest hearts turned away who might have been saved. Let us examine the statement more closely.

**1. Jew-Greek.** While the apostle could truly say, “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek” (Rom 10:12), for all practical purposes he had to act as though there were. He had to take cognizance of the feeling and gulf which existed between the two classes.

Recall his repeated phrase in Romans, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (1:6; 2:9-10). It would appear that his strategy was to present the gospel first in the synagogues to the Jews and their Gentile converts, and then later to the raw pagans. On two occasions when expelled from the synagogue he is recorded as speaking thus: “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).<sup>78</sup>

While we may be sure that the apostle never hesitated to share his faith with any honest inquirer, it would not have been the part of wisdom to have begun his formal work in any city with raw Gentiles, and then later to have tried to reach his Jewish kinsmen. Such a procedure would have cut him off from many a Jewish mind. Although he recognized all men as potential recipients of God’s grace, the exigencies of the situation dictated that for the best progress of the Gospel the Jew should be sought for first, then the Gentile.

**2. Slave-free.** The saving gospel of Christ was not withheld from the slave. But here again the master doubtless had the first opportunity to hear the gospel message. But more than that is the fact that the apostles did not carry out all the implications of the gospel in a direct attack

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<sup>76</sup>Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, comment on 1 Corinthians 14:34, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1914), p. 325.

<sup>77</sup>Adam Clarke asserts that the Rabbis taught that “A woman should know nothing but the use of her distaff,” and cites a certain Rabbi Eliezer as saying, “Let the words of the law be burned, rather than they should be delivered to women” (*Bammidbar Rabba*, sec. 9, fol. 204, cited in Clarke, 6:278).

<sup>78</sup>Spoken in the synagogue in Antioch (Pisidia). To the Jews of Corinth he said, ““Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles”” (Acts 18:6).

upon the institution of slavery. Christian masters are not instructed to release their slaves. The Christian slave is instructed to be content with his lot. (Of course, if freedom was granted, he was to take it [1 Cor 7:20-24].) Christian slaves were instructed: “Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ” (Col 3:22-25; cf. Eph 6:5-8; 1 Pet 2:18-25; 1 Tim 6:1-2).<sup>79</sup> Masters who are Christians are instructed to treat their slaves fairly, and to treat them as they would treat Christ (Col 4:1; Eph 8:9).

In time past some have construed these statements to mean that the apostle upheld the institution of slavery. But nothing could be further from the spirit of the gospel Paul preached. He himself makes it clear that the situation of the times required this approach to slavery which he and the other apostles were taking. “Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of an honor, *so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed*” (1 Tim 6:1).

To have made a frontal attack upon such a deep-seated institution would have caused many noble minds to have written Christianity off as a deeply subversive movement, harmful to human society and human welfare. For the sake of the gospel’s outreach, lest it be unnecessarily hindered, it was best to seek to secure the personal salvation of both master and slave, but not to attack the institution of slavery. However, the oblique approach in which Christian masters and slaves were encouraged to love and treat one another as they would Christ tended toward the eventual freedom of the slave and the abolition of the custom.

**Male-female.** While recognizing the biblical principle of headship on the part of the man, the apostle never hesitated to offer personal salvation to the woman. However, the customs that the society of that day imposed upon woman—her wearing a head covering (some versions say a veil) in public places, her silence in the general assembly, her secondary position in general—the apostle did not attack frontally. Just as the slave is counseled to be submissive to his social lot, so the woman is encouraged to submit with good grace to her situation (2 Cor 11:3-16; 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

On the other hand the application of the teachings of Christ to both men and women could not fail (if obeyed) in elevating the women of the church to a position of respect, consideration, and Christian equality. Note some of Paul’s statements: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, . . . Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. . . . Let each one of you love his wife as himself” (Eph 5:21-33; cf. Col 3:19). While these words concern married women, the spirit of such instruction would teach similar respect for womanhood in general.

As with the inequalities of the master-slave relationship in Paul’s time, so with the inequalities of the male-female relationship—wisdom did not dictate a direct attack on them. Paul seems to be thinking about the influence of Christian women in that society. “Bid the older women . . . to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, *that the word of God may not be discredited*” (Titus 2:3-5). The customs prevailing in his society likewise seems to be in his mind when he forbids Christian women to speak in the church. “*As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. . . . For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church*” (1 Cor 14:33-35). Shameful for whom? And why? The implications seem to be that such actions would be considered as bad taste and out of order by the society in general.

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<sup>79</sup>They are to “adorn the doctrine or God” by their exemplary lives (Titus 2:9-10).



Galatians 3:28 suggests that although God regards all as equal, it was advisable for cultural reasons of the times to give certain counsels, particularly regarding slaves and women. For that reason it may be suggested that the counsel forbidding women to speak in public assembly or to assume an administrative role in the church was advisable in Paul's time because of the circumstances of society at that time.

### **Paul's Reasons to Deny Women Public Speaking and Administration Roles**

If it is argued that the custom of the times prompted the inspired instruction that women should wear a head-covering ("veil"—RSV) in public, should not speak in church or aspire to administrative roles; and that such a breach in deep-seated customs would have brought reproach upon Christianity—it will immediately be countered that the apostle does not cite such reasons for his instruction. It is necessary then to examine his specific reasons, for it is true that he does not specifically state custom as his reason, though he seems at times to allude to it.

**1. Speaking.** "As in all the churches of the saints, . . . For *they are not permitted to speak* [*literally*, it is not being permitted to them to speak], but *should be subordinate*, as even the law says" (1 Cor 14).

**2. Teaching authority over men.** "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; . . . For *Adam was formed first, then Eve*; and *Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived* and became a transgressor" (1 Tim 2).

**3. Uncovered head.** "*The head of a woman is her husband . . . . For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.* (For man was not made from woman, but *woman from man*. Neither was man created for woman, but *woman for man*" That is why a woman ought to have a veil [RSV margin: Greek (a symbol of) *authority*] on her head" (1 Cor 11).

Obviously there is nothing sinful in the public appearance of an unveiled woman. No condemnation was attached in earlier centuries as we have seen in references to Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. There is nothing sinful in a woman's voice, nor does she necessarily lack ability to communicate in a public assembly or to administer a program in the church as efficiently as a man. The records give us several women functioning among God's people in the prophetic role. Deborah and, perhaps, Miriam certainly occupied administrative functions. We have no directive from God that these things are in themselves sinful.

If we hear Paul correctly, the real issue in his time seems to have been a rebellion or revolt against the constituted authority in the church. In 1 Cor 14 he states that "it is not being permitted to them to speak." The natural question is, *Who* is forbidding it? Who has established the custom "in all the churches" that a woman may not speak in the public assembly? While it is true that the apostle states in 1 Tim 2 that *he* did not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over men, it does not follow that he alone was the source of the custom. *Evidently, the practice was the considered opinion of church leadership.*

One of the points Paul makes is that the woman "should be subordinate, as even the law says." In this case, subordinate to whom? There is no direct command in the OT stating that women should be silent in the public worship of the congregation. Commentators generally hold that the "law" Paul is referring to is the statement in the Pentateuch regarding Eve's punishment: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." This judgment, as previously noted, confirmed the headship of the husband in the family to care for and to govern the members of the home. Paul's statement would imply that just as headship of the home had been

placed upon the man, so it was to be understood that man should occupy the role of headship in the church. Women were to recognize and respect this headship of the church as well as of the home.

In his statement to Timothy Paul's reasons are quite similar. It is a question of headship in the family and in the church. Adam was formed first which implies his headship. It was when Eve faced the serpent independent of Adam that she was deceived. Independence of properly constituted leadership can have disastrous results. The uncovered, or unveiled, head seems to be a challenge to the wisdom of the leadership that counseled it to be worn. Paul's final note on that particular problem was, "If anyone is disposed to be contentious [desires to go veiless], we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (1 Cor 11:16). That was how the general church leadership saw it.

In short, the picture seems to be this: The changing culture of the centuries and the development of rabbinical Judaism altered the role of women in society, so that in the early days of Christianity it is restricted in some areas of life. Christian women at that time could have brought the early church into disrepute by exercising their "Christian liberty" in matters not sinful in themselves—such as addressing mixed congregations or going into public meetings with uncovered heads.<sup>80</sup>

Christian leadership of the church, exercising its authority to guide the church, counsels the women of the church to cover their heads, to be silent in the congregations, and to be submissive to their husbands and church authority. Some, however, wish to flaunt the regulations laid down for the best good of the church, and the apostle is reaffirming the guidelines and calling for Christian submission to the leadership "as even the law says."

### **Summary and Conclusion**

There has been some attempt to summarize briefly each area of this subject as the investigation has proceeded. It is fitting now to bring these summaries together.

1. The Creation records indicate that God created the woman to be on equality with the man. Each complements the other, and this makes "man" in the full sense of the term. Both were made in "the image of God."

2. Even in the sinless state, however, there seems to have been a certain headship conferred on the man.

3. The judgment that fell on the sinning pair confirmed the headship of the man and the dependent position of the woman. This did not render the woman inferior. The headship of the man and the dependence of the woman was probably effected by the divine will in order to enable mankind to attain to a degree (in the sin situation) the ideals God had for the race.

4. The sins of mankind have often resulted in the degradation of woman over the centuries of time, although this did not have to be. God is not to be faulted for His judgment.

5. Mosaic instruction preserves to a large degree God's ideal for womanhood, but it may be inferred from the records that the divine instruction was adapted to the cultural situation of the times and the hardness of men's hearts. Progressive revelation would bring enlightenment regarding God's ideal.

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<sup>80</sup>They do seem, however, to be permitted to pray or prophesy publicly. Paul may have conceded this from the viewpoint of the direct control of the Holy Spirit which would be evidenced, at least with respect to prophesying (see Clarke, vol. 6, comment on 1 Cor 14:34-35; 11:5).

6. Women in biblical times exercised considerable freedom in their roles as wives and homemakers. They also occupied other roles beyond the home in both religious and secular fields. The exercise of the prophetic gift was the highest role that a woman in Bible times filled in the church. In secular lines it was that of a ruling judge or queen.

7. The Saviour showed no discrimination between the sexes. His miracles were often performed in behalf of women or their loved ones. He regarded them as persons to be redeemed, and disregarded rabbinical traditions that would have prevented Him from publicly addressing them. He often accepted their hospitality and assistance in aiding Him in His work.

8. The apostle Paul, like the Saviour, never hesitated to share the gospel with women, among whom he made many converts. He had many friends among them. Some of them also assisted him in his labors. He appreciated the considerate care that various women rendered him. The apostle gave various lines of instruction regarding the life and duties of Christian women.

9. The apostle, however, along with the leadership of the church in his time, did forbid Christian women to publicly address the assemblies of Christians, or to speak out in the assemblies, or to assume any role of leadership. This study suggests that the evidence derived from Gal 3:28 indicates that this church regulation was advisable for the onward progress of the gospel because of the view of women generally held by the society of that time. To have permitted Christian women to exercise such freedoms as going to public meetings without proper head coverings or assuming roles of leadership, would have brought unnecessary reproach upon the movement.

10. It is suggested by this study that the real issue involved was not that the fact or acts of speaking and leadership were sinful in themselves, but rather that partially liberated Christian women were challenging the leadership of the church and its judgment.

Just as man was given headship of the home, so he was to exercise headship in the corporate worship of the congregation. Christ gave authority to the church. The leadership (as it sought to oversee the church in harmony with Christ's will) was to be respected and obeyed. Its best judgment in those circumstances was that women should be silent in the churches, and it was becoming for Christian women to accept the judgment of the leadership and for the sake of the gospel not to exercise what some of them would have considered to be their Christian liberty.

11. If the foregoing study is a correct analysis of the situation, then it would follow that a change in time and place—a change in society's perspective regarding the role of woman—would make it possible for the leadership of the church to use the resources of its women on a wider scale.

The constituency of the church is never in its proper place to challenge the good Judgment or the leadership which has resulted from a full session of the church in deliberative thought. Today education is being made available to both sexes, and women are being highly trained and educated to fill many roles hitherto denied to them. There is a greater freedom for them to function in many areas of thought and action. Generally speaking, most cultures would no longer regard a woman as being out of place if she were to address congregations of Christians or even to assume some roles of administration. In a changing society the leadership of the church may well consider how it may now best utilize the vast potential for Christian action which lies in its women members. This reservoir of ability should move into action by directives from the leadership, and not by rebellious actions on the part of its membership.

**VIII**  
**THE ROLES OF WOMEN**  
**IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH**  
**SIGNIFICANCE OF ELLEN G. WHITE COUNSELS**  
E. Marcella Anderson

**Preface**

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church draws its faith and doctrine from the Bible only (*sola scriptura*), it sees the work of Ellen G. White as a particular fulfillment of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church and a special bestowal of the “spirit of prophecy” in the end of time.

The fact that a woman—Ellen G. White—was chosen by God (after two men had declined the commission) to be His special messenger to the remnant, makes her writings on the roles for women in the church especially pertinent. No other person had a greater impact upon the form and character of this church.

“In ancient times God spoke to men by the mouth of prophets and apostles. In these days He speaks to them by the *Testimonies* of His Spirit. There was never a time when God instructed His people more earnestly than He instructs them now concerning His will and the course that He would have them pursue.”<sup>1</sup>

So this paper draws heavily upon Mrs. White’s writings as it attempts to portray God’s twentieth century counsel on the roles of women in this church. It will consider God’s call of women to positions of trust; it will canvass similarities and differences between the roles of men and women in the church; it will draw together counsel regarding specific callings for women; and finally it will attempt a summary and conclusions.

**Positions of Trust**

The God who inhabits eternity is looking for loving, self-sacrificing women who will give of their time, means, and selves to hasten the ushering in of His kingdom of glory. Such women will not be wasting precious time in useless, seemingly endless, discussion on woman’s elevated sphere and her rights.<sup>2</sup> Instead they will be investigating what is the true “right of every daughter of Eve to have.”<sup>3</sup>

“Women who might develop good intellects and have true moral worth are now mere slaves to fashion. They have not breadth of thought nor cultivated intellect. They can talk understandingly of the latest fashion, the styles of dress, this or that party or delightful ball. Such women are not prepared to intelligently take a prominent position in political matters. They are mere creatures of fashion and circumstance. Let this order of things be changed. Let woman realize the sacredness of her work and, in the strength and fear of God, take up her life mission.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>4T 147.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. FE 75.

<sup>3</sup>FE 85.

<sup>4</sup>3T 565.

Truly, “when women are wanted with well-balanced minds, with not a cheap style of education, but with an education *fitting them for any position of trust*, they are not easily found.”<sup>5</sup>

The Lord has a work for the women of our church, but do they realize the high mission that is theirs by the grace of God? “Sisters, we may do a noble work for God if we will. Woman does not know her power.”<sup>6</sup> By the light reflected from the Saviour’s countenance, self-sacrificing women may receive a power from Him “that exceeds that of men. They can do in families a work that men cannot do, a work that reaches the inner life. . . .”<sup>7</sup> “When the believing women shall feel the burden of souls, and burden of sins not their own, they will be working as Christ worked. They will consider no sacrifice too great to make to win souls to Christ.”<sup>8</sup>

The qualifications of women such as the Lord would like to use in these last days are clearly delineated:

“All who work for God should have the Martha and the Mary attributes blended—a willingness to minister and a sincere love of the truth. Self and selfishness must be put out of sight. God calls for earnest women workers, workers who are prudent, warmhearted, tender, and true to principle. He calls for persevering women who will take their *minds* from self and their personal convenience, and *will center them on Christ*, speaking words of truth, praying with the persons to whom they can obtain access, laboring for the conversion of souls.

“Oh, what is our excuse, my sisters, that we do not devote all the time possible to searching the Scriptures, making the mind a storehouse of precious things, that we may present them to those who are not interested in the truth? Will our sisters arise to the emergency? Will they work for the Master?”<sup>9</sup>

With the vision of the gentle, loving Saviour ever before them—gained by that morning by morning thoughtful hour contemplating His life and then continuing to abide in Him—such women workers can be a mighty power for the upbuilding of Christ’s kingdom on earth.<sup>10</sup>

“Women of firm principle and decided character are needed, women who believe that we are indeed living in the last days, and that we have the last solemn message of warning to be given to the world. They should feel that they are engaged in an important work in spreading the rays of light which Heaven has shed upon them. When the love of God and His truth is an abiding principle, they will let nothing deter them from duty or discourage them in their work. They will fear God and will not be diverted from their labors in His cause by the temptation of lucrative situations and attractive Prospects. They will preserve their integrity at any cost to themselves.”<sup>11</sup>

### **The Issue of Equality**

When considering the matter of whether women should take more prominent leadership roles in the church, particularly along ministerial lines, the question arises as to whether men and women should attempt to fill identical roles in the church. Did Eve, in being deceived by the enemy, forfeit that right for herself as well as for all modern Eves?

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<sup>5</sup>FE 118, emphasis supplied.

<sup>6</sup>4T 642.

<sup>7</sup>WM 145.

<sup>8</sup>Ev 465-66.

<sup>9</sup>6T 8, emphasis supplied.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. DA 83; John 15.

<sup>11</sup>WM 149.

## In the Physical Realm

In the beginning, “Eve was not quite as tall as Adam. Her head reached a little above his shoulders. She, too, was noble, perfect in symmetry, and very beautiful.”<sup>12</sup> Eve was “to be loved and protected by him [Adam].”<sup>13</sup>

There are differences in the physical constitutions of men and women; hormones are a determining factor. Because of androgens produced in the male, he is the more aggressive of the sexes and has more of the leadership quality (generally evident throughout the animal kingdom). Most men do not have the quality of nurturance, which characteristic is especially woman’s and is supreme in fitting her motherhood. According to studies at the University of Wisconsin (Harlow), those females who haven’t been mothered properly are disasters at being mothers themselves, hence the need for true mothers in Israel.

Much of the physical weakness of women is due to fashion and a much-too-sedentary existence. This is not always the case; there are healthy and strong women in our day—comparatively, that is, after six thousand years of degeneracy and decay.

“Is it at all necessary that there should be so large a number of feeble, helpless women in our world? No; I answer, decidedly; no. The opinion prevails in this generation that women do not need active, vigorous muscles and strong, sturdy frames; but does not reason tell us differently? It is argued that by nature their muscles are softer and feebler, and their strength and power of endurance less. We admit that this is the case, but why? Because for many generations back false ideas, degenerating in their influence, have been brought in through their efforts to meet the standard of fashion. The great master-worker, Satan, has not been idle. He has brought in a varied of fashions, and has led men and women to encourage delicate idleness.”<sup>14</sup>

“There is danger that the women connected with the work will be required to labor too hard without proper periods of rest. Such severe taxation should not be brought upon the workers. Some will not injure themselves, but others, who are conscientious, will certainly overwork. Periods of rest are necessary for all, *especially women*.”<sup>15</sup>

With the above counsels in mind, here is very practical advice drawn from a different setting, but with applicable principles:

“Let no man consider it his place to judge of the amount of labor a woman should perform. A competent woman should be employed as matron, and if anyone does not perform her work faithfully, the matron should deal with the matter. Just wages should be paid, and every woman should be treated kindly and courteously, without reproach.”<sup>16</sup>

## In Mental Ability

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<sup>12</sup>SR 21.

<sup>13</sup>PP 46.

<sup>14</sup>E. G. White MS 138, 1898.

<sup>15</sup>Ev 494, emphasis supplied.

<sup>16</sup>CH 314.

Mental characteristics are much more difficult to measure than the physical. Unfortunately, feebleness of mind and body go hand in hand; “continued inactivity is one of the greatest causes of debility [weakness] of body and feebleness of mind.”<sup>17</sup> But no one need remain in such a state.

“Our sisters have been too willing to excuse themselves from bearing responsibilities which require thought and close application of the mind; yet this is the very discipline they need to perfect Christian experience.

“. . . There are hundreds and thousands who can work it they are so disposed. Up to the present time they have done nothing but serve themselves. This class of do-nothings and know-nothings, as far as the work to be done in God’s cause is concerned, will never hear the well done from the lips of the Majesty of Heaven.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Differences That Must Be Preserved**

In all the various roles in which men and women seem to have equality, the latter need to cling to womanly grace or modesty.<sup>19</sup> Do we see this Christian grace among the majority of worldlings? Among the proponents of “women’s lib”? Does the status quo of women today really represent liberation? God’s messenger wrote:

“I was pointed back to God’s ancient people, and was led to compare their apparel with the mode of dress in these last days. What a difference! What a change! Then the women were not so bold as now. When they went in public, they covered their faces with a veil. In these last days, fashions are shameful and immodest. They are noticed in prophecy.”<sup>20</sup>

Also there must be “a preservation of those barriers of reserve that should exist between men and women.”<sup>21</sup> With the undercurrent of fashion and philosophy sweeping toward unisex, the following counsel is certainly pertinent and applicable.

“There is an increasing tendency to have women in their dress and appearance as near like the other sex as possible, and to fashion their dress very much like that of men, but God pronounces it abomination. . . .”<sup>22</sup>

“It [such a style of dress] is not modest apparel, and is not at all fitting for modest, humble females who profess to be Christ’s followers. God’s prohibitions are lightly regarded by all who would advocate the doing away of the distinction of dress between males and females. . . .

“God designed there should be a plain distinction between male and female dress, and has considered the matter of sufficient importance to give explicit directions in regard to it; for the same dress worn by both sexes would cause confusion, and great increase of crime. St. Paul would utter a rebuke, were he alive, and should behold females professing godliness with this style of dress.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Distinctive Duties and Mission of Women**

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<sup>17</sup>2T 524.

<sup>18</sup>RH, Dec. 1 2, 1978.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Ev. 467.

<sup>20</sup>1T 188.

<sup>21</sup>CH 363.

<sup>22</sup>1T 457.

<sup>23</sup>2SM 477-78.

As far as church-related work is concerned, there are unique tasks for men and for women. The following quotation gives some examples:

“There are so many kinds of work too laborious for women, which our brethren are called to engage in, that many branches of missionary work are neglected. Many things connected with different churches are left undone that women, if properly instructed, could attend to. Our sisters might serve as church clerks, and the church business would not be so sadly neglected. There are many other offices connected with the cause of God which our sisters are better qualified to fill than our brethren, and in which they might do efficient service.”<sup>24</sup>

In the work of carrying truth to families, “in many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot.”<sup>25</sup>

Without question, when available to her, it is in her own home that woman can find “the most sacred, elevated office that she can fill.”<sup>26</sup> Her distinctive duties there may be summed up thus:

“There is a work for women that is even more important and elevating than the duties of the king upon his throne. They may mold the minds of their children and shape their characters so that they may be useful in this world and that they may become sons and daughters of God. Their time should be considered too valuable to be passed in the ballroom or in needless labor. There is enough necessary and important labor in this world of need and suffering without wasting precious moments for ornamentation or display. Daughters of the heavenly King, members of the royal family, will feel a burden of responsibility to attain to a higher life, that they may be brought into close connection with heaven and work in unison with the Redeemer of the world. . . . They will be in sympathy with Christ, and in their sphere, as they have ability and opportunity, will work to save perishing souls as Christ worked in His exalted sphere for the benefit of man.”<sup>27</sup>

So every mother has a responsibility to her children that is “paramount to everything else.”<sup>28</sup> Also, as has been made plain above, all women should feel they can do something in the work of bringing souls to Christ; domestic cares are not to be an excuse.<sup>29</sup> Especially if a woman’s mother role has diminished or has not been taken up, the following may be true:

“Woman, if she wisely improves her time and her faculties, relying upon God for wisdom and strength, may stand on an equality with her husband as adviser, counselor, companion, and co-worker, and yet lose none of her womanly grace or modesty.”<sup>30</sup>

In areas where it is appropriate for the wife to assume a role similar to that of her husband, she should not contend for such, but rather she should aspire to qualify herself so that she can and will naturally fill that position whenever and wherever opportunity arises. “We have an earnest desire that woman shall *fill* the position which God *originally designed, as her husband’s equal*. . . . We may safely say that the dignity and importance of woman’s mission and distinctive duties are of a more sacred and holy character than the duties of man.”<sup>31</sup>

## Wherein Lies Equality?

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<sup>24</sup>WM 147.

<sup>25</sup>Ev 493.

<sup>26</sup>MYP 326.

<sup>27</sup>3T 483-84.

<sup>28</sup>WM 158.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. WM 165.

<sup>30</sup>Ev 467.

<sup>31</sup>3T 565, emphasis supplied.



It should be noted in the following quotation that God's plan is for women to fill, and be satisfied in, a certain sphere. Also, in the beginning Eve was on an equality with Adam to do individual thinking and acting.

"A neglect on the part of woman to follow God's plan in her creation, an effort to reach for important positions which He has not qualified her to fill, leaves vacant the position that she could fill to acceptance. In getting out of her sphere, she loses true womanly dignity and nobility. When God created Eve, He designed that she should possess neither inferiority nor superiority to the man, but that *in all things she should be his equal*. The holy pair were to have no interest independent of each other; and yet each had an *individuality in thinking and acting*. But after Eve's sin, as she was first in the transgression, the Lord told her that Adam should rule over her. She was to be in subjection to her husband, and this was a part of the curse. . . ."<sup>32</sup>

Since "the very essence of the gospel is restoration,"<sup>33</sup> the religion of Christ permeates the marriage relation and restores to it the original beauty, harmony, and love. A family needs a spiritual head, and in the Lord's plan it is the husband;<sup>34</sup> or, in his absence, the wife and mother.<sup>35</sup> However, both father and mother are to be responsible for maintaining religion in the home;<sup>36</sup> in fact, they are both referred to as "heads."<sup>37</sup>

Ellen White exercised her womanly grace of modesty when it came to opportunities to speak at times that both she and her husband were available. When they both visited a church and she was asked to take the regular preaching hour, it was her custom to decline the invitation and let James preach in the morning service while she would speak at an afternoon or evening session.

This section closes with the same thought with which it was opened: Husband and wife stand as equal before God, because of the restoration made possible by the gospel, in their ability and right to think and to act as individuals.

"There are circumstances under which it is proper for a woman to *act* promptly and independently, moving with *decision* in the way she knows to be the way of the Lord. *The wife is to stand by the side of the husband as his equal*, sharing all the responsibilities of life, rendering due respect to him who has selected her for his life-long companion."<sup>38</sup>

The church is composed of individuals and families, each family being a miniature church. In the larger church, as in the smaller, do we not have basically the same relationship of men to women and vice versa? Should we not expect that the gospel would restore to women in the church the ability and right to act in leadership roles, as "spiritual heads" in Israel? However, the picture would be truly beautiful only if women would preserve their Christian grace of modesty by not seeking for themselves high places or honor and by giving due respect and preference to men who are spiritual leaders of the church. This brings us to the next sub-title.

### **The Golden Rule on Rights**

Heaven's beautiful harmony was marred by self-seeking. It is altogether possible for the same thing to happen in the church.

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<sup>32</sup>3T 484, emphasis supplied.

<sup>33</sup>DA 824.

<sup>34</sup>AA 215.

<sup>35</sup>CG 519.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. AH 321.

<sup>37</sup>CG 521.

<sup>38</sup>Ev 494, emphasis supplied.

“He [Lucifer] sought for himself the highest place, and every being who is actuated by his spirit will do the same. Thus alienation, discord, and strife will be inevitable.”<sup>39</sup>

“It is Satan’s object to keep Christians occupied in controversies among themselves. . . . We have no time now to give place to the spirit of the enemy and to cherish prejudices that confuse the judgment and lead us away from Christ.”<sup>40</sup>

Instead of seeking the highest place, what would love do? “Love not only bears with others’ faults, but cheerfully submits to whatever suffering or inconvenience such forbearance makes necessary.”<sup>41</sup> Our great Exemplar, Jesus, “did not contend for His rights.”<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, those who have the true spirit of their Master “will treat their fellow men as they would treat Christ. *No one will ignore the rights of another.*”<sup>43</sup> In other words, we should seek to promote the rights of others—not our own.

The practice of the golden rule will reach its height under the latter rain or refreshing from the presence of the Holy Spirit. “When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the souls of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as Christ loved.”<sup>44</sup> The more God’s servants seek to abide in Jesus as He did in His Father—communicating through prayer and study of the Word—the more will the above demonstration of out flowing love be seen in the church. “Restless modern Eves” might ponder the following:

“But in attempting to climb higher than her original position, she [Eve] fell far below it. This will most assuredly be the result with the Eves of the present generation if they neglect to cheerfully take up their daily life duties in accordance with God’s plan.”<sup>45</sup>

Would it not be the better part of valor for women to let the Lord fight their battles for them?

“If any are qualified for a higher position, the Lord will lay the burden, not alone on them, but on those who have tested them, who know their worth, and who can understandingly urge them forward. It is those who perform faithfully their appointed work day by day, *who in God’s own time will hear His call, ‘Come up higher.’*”<sup>46</sup>

## Leadership Roles in the Church

### Counseling

A real need exists for women who, with proper education, could help bear the burden that many ministers are now staggering under—to advise, counsel, and sympathize with those who have questions, problems, and trials. In particular, consecrated women, as messengers of mercy, could help their sisters in the faith, in the light of this admonition from the Lord:

“If any woman, no matter who, casts herself upon your sympathy, are you to take her up and encourage her and receive letters from her and feel a special responsibility to help her? My brother, you should change your course with regard to such matters, and set a right example

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<sup>39</sup>DA 435-36.

<sup>40</sup>9T 216.

<sup>41</sup>5T 169.

<sup>42</sup>DA 89; cf. COL 171.

<sup>43</sup>7T 209, emphasis supplied.

<sup>44</sup>9T 209.

<sup>45</sup>3T 483.

<sup>46</sup>MH 477.

before your brother ministers. Keep your sympathy for the members of your own family, who need all that you can give them.

“When a woman is in trouble, let her take her trouble to women.”<sup>47</sup>

“Our sisters generally have a hard time with their increasing families and their unappreciated trials. I have so longed for women who could be educated to help our sisters rise from their discouragement and feel that they could do a work for the Lord. This will bring rays of sunshine into their own lives, which will be reflected into the lives of others. God will bless all who unite in this grand work.”<sup>48</sup>

## **Health Evangelism**

Medical missionary work is to be the entering wedge for the entrance of the gospel, the preparatory work that helps to produce sound minds in sound bodies so that the gospel in its fullness can be appreciated; but for real effectiveness Jesus Christ must be lifted up (John 12:32). It is also true that some persons must first see Christ in His purity and beauty of character and have the assurance of sins forgiven before their health begins to spring forth speedily (Isa 58:8).

Many statements make it evident that both men and women are to be engaged in the specialized work of medical evangelism. Two follow immediately: “In almost every church there are young men and women who might receive education either as nurses or physicians.”<sup>49</sup> To the young men and young women who are being educated as nurses and physicians I will say, Keep close to Jesus.”<sup>50</sup>

The vital importance of combining the work of the ministry and of medical evangelism is evidenced in the following sample quotations, because healing for both soul and body is to come through the church. The healing art was never to become so highly commercialized—thus exalting the human above the divine and effectually leaving God, the only source of true healing, out of the picture—as it has become throughout the world.

“Ministers and physicians are to work harmoniously with earnestness to save souls that are becoming entangled in Satan’s snares. . . . This work belongs just as surely to the doctor as to the minister. By public and private effort the physician should seek to win souls to Christ.”<sup>51</sup>

“The faithful physician and the minister are engaged in the same work. They should work in complete harmony. They are to counsel together.”<sup>52</sup>

“No influence should be exerted to turn young men aside from qualifying themselves for ministerial missionary work. To this we may attach the word ‘medical’; for it is essential that the gospel minister shall have a knowledge of disease and its causes. . . . This is a part of the gospel.”<sup>53</sup>

“Medical missionary work is in no case to be divorced from the gospel ministry. . . . Without this union neither part of the work is complete.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Ev 460.

<sup>48</sup>6T 114.

<sup>49</sup>CH 506.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 590.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 336.

<sup>52</sup>Ev 546.

<sup>53</sup>Ev 547.

<sup>54</sup>CH 524.

In this context there are certain safeguards that the Lord wants us to observe in this important work. It seems that in very personal situations, in counseling (as seen above) or in medicine, women are to help their own sex, and men likewise.

“Women should be educated in medical missionary lines, that as they go forth to heathen countries, they may help those of their sisters who need help.”<sup>55</sup>

“It is better that our physicians be married men, whose wives can unite with them in the work. Both the doctor and his wife should have a living experience in the things of God.”<sup>56</sup>

“There should be a much larger number of lady physicians, educated not only to act as trained nurses, but also as physicians. It is a most horrible practice, this revealing the secret parts of women to men, or men being treated by women [for the same reason].

“. . . And the wages of the woman should be proportionate to her services. She should be as much appreciated in her work as the gentleman physician is appreciated in his work.

“Let us educate ladies to become intelligent in the work of treating the diseases of their sex. They will sometimes need the counsel and assistance of experienced gentlemen physicians. When brought into trying places let all be led by supreme wisdom. . . .

“We ought to have a school where women can be educated by women physicians, to do the best possible work in treating the diseases of women.”<sup>57</sup>

This last statement, penned in 1907, along with other similar counsels, reveal that women qualified as physicians, in our sanitariums and hospitals or in a specialized school to train women physicians, are indeed in positions of responsibility and leadership. Now ponder the following elevated concept regarding the true medical missionary:

“If you are a Christian and a competent physician, you are qualified to do tenfold more good as a missionary for God than if you were to go forth merely as a preacher of the word. I would advise young men and women to give heed to this matter.”<sup>58</sup>

Unite the preceding thought with the next one, while noting that many physicians would no longer meet one of the conditions—that of being a salaried worker in one of our institutions:

“The work of the true medical missionary is largely a spiritual work. It includes prayer and the laying on of hands; he therefore should be as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel. Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians, are to be set apart as such. This will strengthen them against the temptation to withdraw from the sanitarium work to engage in private practice. No selfish motive should be allowed to draw the worker from his post of duty. We are living in a time of solemn responsibilities; a time when consecrated work is to be done. Let us seek the Lord diligently and understandingly.”<sup>59</sup>

The question then arises, Why, if men missionary physicians are ordained, women medical evangelists should not be?

## Literature Evangelism

Closely tied in with the work of the gospel minister and the medical evangelist is that of the literature evangelist. In fact, the three lines of missionary endeavor are to be inseparably bound

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<sup>55</sup>MM 246.

<sup>56</sup>CH 585.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 364-66.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 504.

<sup>59</sup>Ev 546.

together, through Jesus, the greatest Medical Missionary. All are to be uplifting Christ who, “hanging upon the cross . . . was the gospel.”<sup>60</sup>

“God works by means of instruments, or second causes. He uses the gospel ministry, medical missionary work, and the publications containing present truth to impress hearts. . . . The gospel ministry, medical missionary work, and our publications are God’s agencies. One is not to supersede the other.”<sup>61</sup>

“Genuine medical missionary work is bound up with the ministry, and *the canvassing work is to be a part both of the medical missionary work and of the ministry*. To those who are engaged in this work, I would say: As you visit the people, tell them you are a gospel evangelist, and that you love the Lord. . . .”<sup>62</sup>

Women should join the ranks or literature evangelists. This is stated in several instances, but let this brief statement suffice: “Not only men, but women, can enter the canvassing field. And canvassers are to go out two by two. This is the Lord’s plan.”<sup>63</sup>

## Ministerial Lines

Should women work more prominently in the forefront of the ranks of the church of God, perhaps in heralding the gospel message? They have in the past.

“In ancient times the Lord worked in a wonderful way through consecrated women who united in His work with men whom He had chosen to stand as His representatives. He used women to gain great and decisive victories. More than once in times of emergency He brought them to the front and worked through them for the salvation of many lives.”<sup>64</sup>

“Christ speaks of women who helped Him in presenting the truth before others, and Paul also speaks of women who labored with him in the gospel.”<sup>65</sup> In Gal 3:28 Paul clearly enunciated the equality principle that will operate as the result of the restorative power of the gospel: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NASB). What about our day? If the well-balanced, well-educated women were available to fill the many existing needy situations, the cause of God would richly prosper. The Lord has spoken plainly in this matter:

“You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel, *whose work testifies that they are essential to carrying the truth into families*. Their work is just the work that must be done, and *should be encouraged*. In many respects a woman can impart knowledge to her sisters that a man cannot. The cause would suffer great loss without this kind of labor by women. Again and again the Lord has shown me that *women teachers are just as greatly needed* to do the work to which He has appointed them *as are men*.”<sup>66</sup>

The minister and his wife who are truly converted are to unite their efforts in opening the Scriptures to souls in darkness.<sup>67</sup>

“The minister is paid for his work, and this is well. And if the Lord gives the wife as well as the husband the burden of labor, and she devotes her time and strength to visiting from family to

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<sup>60</sup>6BC 1113.

<sup>61</sup>Ev 547.

<sup>62</sup>RH, Jan. 15, 1901.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., Oct. 7, 1902.

<sup>64</sup>WM 158.

<sup>65</sup>Ev 465.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 493, emphasis supplied.

<sup>67</sup>Cf. MM 140.

family and *opening the Scriptures* to them, *although the hands of ordination have not been laid upon her*, she is accomplishing a work that is *in the line of ministry*. Then should her labors be counted as naught?

“Injustice has sometimes been done to women who labor just as devotedly as their husbands, and who are recognized by God as being necessary to the work of the ministry. The method of paying men-laborers, and not paying their wives who share their labors with them, is a plan not according to the Lord’s order, and if carried out in our conferences, is liable to discourage our sisters from qualifying themselves for the work they should engage in. God is a God of justice, and if the ministers receive a salary for their work, their wives, who devote themselves just as disinterestedly to the work, should be paid in addition to the wages their husbands receive, *even though they may not ask for this*.

“Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman’s work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages.”<sup>68</sup>

“The tithe should go to those who labor in word and doctrine, be they *men or women*.”<sup>69</sup>

## Departmental Work

Notice the broad vision of God’s messenger as the Spirit inspired her to write in 1913:

“As a people who claim to have advanced light, we are to devise ways and means by which to bring forth a corps of educated workmen for the various departments of the work of God. We need a well-disciplined, cultivated class of young men and women in our sanitariums, in the medical missionary work, in the offices of publication, in the conferences of different States, and in the field at large. We need young men and women who have high intellectual culture, in order that they may do the best work for the Lord. We have done something toward reaching this standard, but still we are far behind where we should be.

“As a church, as individuals, if we would stand clear in the judgment, we must make more liberal efforts for the training of our young people, that they may be better fitted for the various branches of the great work committed to our hands. . . .”<sup>70</sup>

“When a great and decisive work is to be done, God chooses men and women to do this work, and it will feel the loss if the talents of both are not combined.”<sup>71</sup> The great task of helping in God’s closing work on earth is before us; the evidence seems quite convincing that women should be just as involved in all lines of this work as are men laborers. In all departments, are not the talents of both needed in the decision-making or leadership roles as well as in the lowlier ones?

## Bible Work

We should be people of the Word, mighty in the Scriptures; and our women should be as earnest in this matter as are consecrated men working along such lines: “The plan of holding Bible-readings was a heaven-born idea. There are many, *both men and women*, who can engage

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<sup>68</sup>GW 452.

<sup>69</sup>Ev 492.

<sup>70</sup>RH, Feb. 13, 1913.

<sup>71</sup>Ev 469.

in this branch of missionary labor. Workers may thus be developed who will become mighty men of God.<sup>72</sup>

How will God's servants become involved in the "great reformatory movement" in connection with giving the last warning message to the world unless Christ's warm, compassionate, and zealous love in the heart and life moves them to action now?

"In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people. Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. *Hundreds and thousands* were seen visiting families and *opening before them the word of God*. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God. I heard voices of thanksgiving and praise, and there seemed to be a reformation such as we witnessed in 1844."<sup>73</sup>

### Preaching the Word

Many women might be surprised to learn that the testimonies of God's Spirit recommend that some of our sisters *preach* the truth. Carefully weigh these statements from the book *Evangelism*, pp. 471-72, and note the emphasis on the need for a twenty-fold increase in this work of women.

"Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary that first *preached* a risen Jesus. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of *preaching* the truth. . . . Zealous and continued diligence in our sisters tolling for the spread of the truth would be wholly successful, and would astonish us with its results."<sup>74</sup>

"There are women who should labor in the *gospel ministry*. In many respects they would do more good than the ministers who neglect to visit the flock of God."<sup>75</sup>

"There should be selected for the work wise, consecrated men who can do a good work in reaching souls. *Women also* should be chosen who can *present the truth* in a clear, intelligent, straightforward manner."<sup>76</sup>

Right at the beginning of this twentieth century there were Bible instructors who were active in laboring in the public ministry. "Sister R and Sister W are doing just as efficient work as the ministers; and some meetings when the ministers are all called away, Sister W takes the Bible and addresses the congregation."<sup>77</sup>

God's messenger gave the following counsel to another woman:

"Teach this, my sister. You have many ways opened before you. Address the crowd whenever you can; hold every jot of influence you can by any association that can be made the means of introducing the leaven to the meal. Every man and every women has a work to do for

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<sup>72</sup>GW 192.

<sup>73</sup>9T 126, emphasis supplied; cf. GC 612; RH, July 23, 1895.

<sup>74</sup>RH, Jan. 2, 1879, emphasis supplied.

<sup>75</sup>MS 43a, 1898, emphasis supplied.

<sup>76</sup>Ev 472, emphasis supplied.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 473.

the Master. Personal consecration and sanctification to God will accomplish, through the most simple methods, more than the most imposing display.”<sup>78</sup>

In this context of ministering and preaching, it is significant to note the value of literature evangelism as a preparation:

“All who wish an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those *who are fitting themselves for the work of the ministry*. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, *both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God*.”<sup>79</sup>

The above statement may be one of the most significant from the Spirit of Prophecy writings in favor of ordaining women to the gospel ministry, and the following is comparable:

“Young men and young women who should be engaged *in the ministry*, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.”<sup>80</sup>

### Laying On of Bands

Not much is said in the Spirit-inspired counsels regarding the ordination of women other than a significant passage in the *Review* in 1895:

“Let church-members awake. Let them take hold and help to stay up the hands of the ministers and the workers, pushing forward the interests of the cause. . . . If ministers and men in positions of authority will get out of the way, and let the Holy Spirit move upon the minds of the lay brethren, God will direct them what to do for the honor of his name. . . .

“Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be *set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands*. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is *another means of strengthening and building up the church*. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor. Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work. Place the burdens upon men and women of the church, that they may grow by reason of the exercise, and thus become effective agents in the hand of the Lord for the enlightenment of those who sit in darkness.”<sup>81</sup>

If it were important for women engaged in welfare ministry—or possibly a pastoral type of ministry with emphasis on reaching the “heart” of the family—to “be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands,” then surely it would be much more needful and significant to have them ordained to the work of being Bible instructors or preachers of the Word as gospel ministers. Would not this attach a solemnity, dignity, urgency, and vitality by God’s Spirit to the high office which they might fill?—remembering that God wants women of the church to have an “education fitting them for any position of trust.”<sup>82</sup> The assurance is that the church will be strengthened and built up as a result.

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 473.

<sup>79</sup>RH, Jan. 15, 1901, emphasis supplied.

<sup>80</sup>8T 229-30, emphasis supplied.

<sup>81</sup>RH, July 9, 1895, emphasis supplied.

<sup>82</sup>FE 118.



## Elevated Standards

The high standards applicable to ordaining men for the ministry should necessarily be observed in the same service for women should the church be led to this practice:

“There should be a close investigation of their experience. Do they know the truth, and practice its teachings? Have they a character of good repute? Do they indulge in lightness and trifling, jesting and joking? In prayer do they reveal the Spirit of God? Is their conversation holy, their conduct blameless? All these questions need to be answered before hands are laid upon any [woman to dedicate her to the work of ministering in Word or doctrine]. . . .”<sup>83</sup>

Paramount to every other qualification is that such women be devoted to Jesus Christ and His service, “maintaining a vital connection with God.”<sup>84</sup> Then it will be a natural outflow for them to be modest and godly, surrounded by a “sacred circle of purity.”

“Our sisters should encourage true meekness; they should not be forward, talkative, and bold, but modest and unassuming, slow to speak. They may cherish courteousness. To be kind, tender, pitiful, forgiving, and humble would be becoming and well pleasing to God. If they occupy this position, they will not be burdened with undue attention from gentlemen in the church or out. All will feel that there is a sacred circle of purity around these God-fearing women which shields them from any unwarrantable liberties.”<sup>85</sup>

Speaking of modesty of appearance, the dress question is more crucial with respect to women than to men. Since women have a power that exceeds that of men to influence and mold the inner lives of families, it stands to reason that the dress of women ministers would have much to do with the atmosphere that surrounds them and works either as a savor of life unto life or of death unto death. The counsels in regard to the dress of ministers should be explicitly followed in its adaptation to women. Ministerial dress, particularly in the pulpit, should point to Christ. This could be accomplished by keeping in mind and following the same principle that characterized the life of Jesus in this respect: “Only the beauty of heavenly truth must draw” one’s congregation or audience, however small; the living Word of God is to outshine everything else.<sup>86</sup>

## Summary and Conclusions

1. So many of our church women seem unaware of their high, holy calling and privileges in Christ Jesus, particularly with reference to missionary labors along various lay activity and ministerial lines.

2. They need more encouragement to step out in this work—after proper preparations and inspiration from daily taking time to behold the life and example of Christ—perhaps from their pastors or other leaders in the church. Remuneration might be the means of encouraging ministers’ wives to work as Bible instructors. More funds should be available to employ Bible workers in the conferences, *even if this means taking on fewer male workers*.

3. The ministry of conducting Bible studies in the home or larger meeting place is much needed and should be made to attract a class of women who want to be deep students of the Word, who have an earnest love for souls, who have other necessary qualifications. This need

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<sup>83</sup>RH, Oct. 21, 1890.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., Dec. 18, 1888.

<sup>85</sup>AH 334; cf. 5T 602; 4T 643; AH 330ff.

<sup>86</sup>DA 43.

not be “formal” Bible studies such as are customary, but a prayer and Bible study fellowship with our non-Adventist friends.

4. Some women of our church are called to be counselors or advisers, especially to their sisters in the faith. This would bring relief to many church pastors. Others should devote their time and efforts to welfare ministry such as consecrated deaconess or “Dorcas” workers might perform.

God calls some to be preachers of the Word, pastors to the “flock of God” as full gospel ministers. There is great need for women medical (health) evangelists and literature evangelists. And there should be a union of these two lines of endeavor with that of the gospel ministry. Some women in the categories just named should be in leadership roles so as to teach and/or train other women for the same kinds of work.

5. Certain consecrated and qualified women who work along the various lines of ministry such as mentioned under 3 and 4, should be set apart to their high and holy mission by prayer and the laying on of hands—especially medical evangelists who are hired by a medical institution or a mission board, associate pastors of the larger churches, or possibly fullfledged pastors of smaller churches, associate chaplains, associate (or assistant) publishing directors (secretaries).

8. In time, then, would not some of these women workers be thus fitted for higher positions of trust and leadership in God’s organized church? We do not propose that a woman be the General Conference president or even a union conference president, but there are certain leadership roles in the Sabbath School and education departments in local or union conferences that properly qualified women could fill.

7. The standards for the ordination of women workers and of relations between men and women workers must ever be kept high, that the truth as it is in Jesus might be preserved—pure and sacred.

**IX**  
**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN**  
**AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM, 1975**

LaVone Neff

**Ordination of Women**

Carol Anderson and Carter Heyward, ordained deacons in the Episcopal Church, were asked to help two bishops serve Communion. The large congregation, which included a number of Episcopal priests, divided into two lines to take part. The communicant first knelt as a male bishop put a wafer on his tongue, then moved over a few feet and knelt again as a female deacon held out to him the communal wine cup. Part way through the Eucharist both Ms. Anderson and Ms. Heyward had a surprise.

As Ms. Anderson extended the cup to a serious-faced young priest, he suddenly reached for it and tried to grab it away from her. "Go to blazes!" he hissed. "You're ruining the church!"

The deacon maintained her grip on the cup. "I can't," she calmly answered. "I'm busy."

Ms. Heyward was having problems of her own nearby. She too was serving a young priest. His fingers touched hers around the bowl of the cup. As he drank, he dug his long fingernails into her until tears came to her eyes. "I hope you burn in hell," he whispered, then moved on down the line.

Deacons Anderson and Heyward represent a growing phenomenon in American Protestant churches: women at the communion rail, in the pulpit, beside hospital beds, in armed-services chaplains' offices. Magazines, journals, and newspapers—both secular and religious—are crowding their pages with articles about the ordination and hiring of female clergy. Major book publishers are bringing out books such as Priscilla and William Proctor's *Women in the Pulpit*,<sup>1</sup> a survey of women's activities in today's churches; and Carter Heyward's *A Priest Forever*,<sup>2</sup> a statement of her own experiences and beliefs.

The women's movement is forcing itself upon our attention. It cannot force us to change our practice—no church that simply mimics other churches has a right to exist. But we must become aware of what other churches are doing and why they are doing it so that we can better understand the reasons for and implications of our own practice.

What are the other Protestant churches doing today? Has female ministry become the order of the day, or are female pastors a widely scattered but vocal handful well exploited by the press? Are the liberal churches clearly on one side of the ordination issue, the conservative churches on the other? To find out more about what is actually happening in the Protestant churches today, I sent a questionnaire or a personal letter to administrators of all the Protestant churches, as well as to deans of all the Protestant theological seminaries listed in the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*.<sup>3</sup> The responses I received represent more than 60 percent of all American Protestant church members. From the responses I was able to ascertain the following facts:

**1. Most churches permit women to be ordained to the ministry.** Nearly four fifths of the Protestants in my survey belong to churches that permit the ordination of women. This is not necessarily to say that four out of five church members would welcome a woman pastor. Many

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<sup>1</sup>(1976).

<sup>2</sup>(1976).

<sup>3</sup>(1975).

churches with a congregational form of government permit a great deal that is rarely carried out in practice.

A number of churches that do not ordain women will allow a woman to serve as supply pastor if the need is great. Fewer than 15 percent of the Protestants in my survey belong to churches that flatly refuse the pulpit to women. They refuse even if the nearest male is a Hindu deaf-mute in traction at a hospital a hundred miles away.

**2. Woman pastors make up only a small percentage of Protestant ministers.** In spite of the general acceptance of female clergy, most Protestants belong to churches whose female ministers make up less than 5 percent of the total clergy. All of the churches ordaining at least one woman for every 20 men have been doing so for 60 years or more. None of the recent converts to the ordination of women can even begin to reach the one-in-20 mark, let alone equality of hiring.

**3. Churches give a wide variety of reasons to support their practice.** Both those who ordain women and those who do not, cite Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and tradition to fortify their positions. The more I studied how other churches are looking at the ordination of women, the more convinced I became that I could not understand a church's practice apart from its theology. I therefore took the two groups—those who ordain women and those who do not—and subdivided them further according to the reasons behind their practice. In this article we will look first at the churches who do not ordain women, representing about 20 percent of the members of the churches who responded to my questionnaire and letters.

The churches who do not ordain women fall mostly into two categories. About two thirds refer to Scripture to support their practice. The remaining third appeals to tradition. This latter group is represented by the Episcopal Church, as well as a few smaller churches. If my study were not restricted to Protestant churches this group would also include the Roman Catholic and a number of Orthodox churches, thus becoming the single most important force against the ordination of women.

Sometimes the traditionalist position is ridiculed: “We can't do it because we've never done it before.” No doubt simple inertia can explain the resistance to change of some church members and leaders, but it would be most unfair thus to dismiss the millions who take tradition seriously.

Jesus chose 12 males to be His disciples, traditionalists point out. He vested authority in these men to lead the church and to keep it pure from doctrinal error. When a vacancy occurred among the church leaders the remaining leaders assembled and, guided by the Holy Spirit, chose a successor—a man. When the seven deacons were chosen, they were set apart by the laying on of hands (see Acts 6:1-7).

Ordination to sacred office qualified a man to act as a leader in the church. In the days before the printing press gave Christians the Scriptures in their own languages, the bishop decided what was true teaching and what was false doctrine. As the church transformed the Lord's Supper from a shared meal to a sacrament it became extremely important that an ordained priest officiate at the service. And priests, as everyone knew, were males.

The question, then, for the Episcopal Church, as well as for its larger cousin, the Roman Catholic Church, is this: Can an apostolic priesthood be preserved if women are admitted to it? On the more practical level, can a woman be given authority by God to lead the church? Can she be given power to administer the sacrament? For an Episcopalian with a traditional view of the meaning of the priesthood and a sacramental approach to the Eucharist, these questions cannot be dismissed lightly.

The larger group of Protestant churches who do not ordain women bases the practice primarily on Scripture. Churches in this group quote from the Creation and Fall accounts of Gen 1-3 and from Paul's prohibitions in 1 Cor 11:2-12; 14:34-35 and 1 Tim 2:11-15. Most of these churches emphasize a high view of Scripture.

These people take the Bible seriously. Although they do not always understand the Bible as we do, they are to be commended for their faithfulness in following what they believe. In general they believe Genesis teaches that man should have authority over woman. They understand Paul to mean that only men should lead the worship service.

The largest individual church in this group is the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, with 2.7 million members. The Missouri Synod gave women the right to vote in voters' assemblies and the right to hold certain administrative positions in 1969, claiming to understand these rights as avenues to service, not to power. The pastoral ministry, however, is still viewed in terms of power and authority. A woman cannot be a pastor in the Missouri Synod because, it is believed, she was created subordinate to man. Changing social circumstances, no matter how great, could never justify a female leader of worship.

Of the churches I contacted who for scriptural reasons do not ordain women, about half follow the Missouri Synod's example in forbidding only the pastoral ministry and the highest administrative posts to women. They allow women to teach, serve on committees, hold administrative offices, and in some cases even serve as supply pastors. The other half of this group are much more stringent in their interpretation of Genesis and Paul. Women may teach only the small children and other women; they may hold administrative offices only in connection with women's organizations; they may not serve as supply pastors no matter what the circumstances. The American Baptist Association, the Southern Methodist Church, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod are examples of this application.

The Mormon Church likewise claims to follow Scripture in restricting its priesthood to males. Female Mormons can administer only traditionally female organizations. Mormons are far from believing that Scripture is inerrant, so their position is not identical to that of, say, the Southern Methodist Church. All the same, in this case they apply the Scripture quite literally; their all-male priesthood seems to be in no danger of crumbling.

### **Woman Pastors in Protestant Churches**

Ten years ago I had Thanksgiving dinner with a family group that included a minister and her husband. An ordained minister of the Four-square Gospel Church, she with her husband pastored quite a large congregation. I had never seen a woman minister before. In fact, I found the whole idea rather amusing. The woman herself, however, was not amusing. She was a respectable, modest, attractive, middle-aged matron, much like the women I saw at church every week. As a college sophomore I was not sure how to reconcile my preconception of a woman minister with the woman across the table. The easiest approach was simply to ignore the fact that she was a minister, which I did.

In 1976 it is becoming difficult to ignore women preachers. About four out of five American Protestants belong to churches that ordain women to the ministry. More than 5,000 women are presently serving as pastors in Protestant churches. Several thousand more are studying theology at Protestant seminaries and graduate schools.

Prevailing social custom should never be used as a basis for church policy. On the other hand, a church sent to minister to the world needs to know where the world is. In this paper we

began by becoming acquainted with our closest neighbors, other American Protestants. We have looked at those Protestants who do not permit the ordination of women. Now we will look at the Protestants who do. I have divided the churches that ordain women into five groups: Congregationalists, Liberators, Cautious Liberators, Exegetes, and Old-Time Religionists.

### **Congregationalists**

Besides the Southern Baptist Convention, a number of smaller churches that include the word “Congregational” in their names make up this group. They generally permit, but do not promote, the ordination of women. Each congregation is on its own to decide.

I have talked by telephone with Albert McClellan, associate executive secretary of the Southern Baptist Convention. “We have a woman pastoring a church in Tennessee,” he told me. “There may be another one in Georgia—or is it Kentucky?” I asked whether any Southern Baptist congregation could have a female pastor if it wanted one. “Of course,” he assured me. “From the beginning of our church we’ve allowed the individual congregations to have the final say in the matter. But at present there doesn’t seem to be a great demand.” Mr. McClellan may have estimated on the low side. A recent newspaper article listed the Southern Baptist woman preachers at 15. At any rate, there are few for a church with more than 12 million members—yet the church does permit the ordination of women.

### **Liberators**

The second-largest American Protestant church, the 10-million-member United Methodist Church, joins with the United Church of Christ to lead this group. Sensitive to secular liberation movements, these churches promote liberation for oppressed minorities as well as for women. They make little reference to Scripture, although they express the belief that the gospel of Christ is a call to liberation. Problems of interpretation do not seem to bother them, perhaps because for them the Bible is the Word of God only in a general sense. (I should add that the opinion on liberation issues is often divided, particularly with regard to homosexuality. Although a gay caucus attended the recent United Methodist General Conference session, delegates continued to refuse to recognize homosexuality as a totally acceptable alternate life-style.)

The United Methodists now have nearly 600 ordained women serving as pastors. At least that many more are studying theology in seminaries and graduate schools. Although female pastors still make up less than 5 percent of their clergy, the number of United Methodist woman ministers is rapidly increasing.

### **Cautious Liberators**

The Lutheran Church in America, with more than 3 million members, leads this group. In many respects their publications resemble those of the Liberators (although I came across no reference to homosexuals in the Lutheran literature). Both emphasize social justice backed by affirmative-action programs to hire more women. The difference lies in their treatment of Scripture. The Lutheran Church in America at least touches on the Pauline statements about women in the church. Believing Paul’s essential thrust to be best expressed by Gal 3:28 (“there is neither male nor female”), they understand his pastoral judgments on the woman’s place in light of the socio-religious conditions of the Hellenistic world. The Lutheran Church in America does

not wish its 1970 decision to ordain women to be understood as acquiescence to social pressure, but as a response of the church to the need of the world.

## **Exegetes**

Another Lutheran group, the 2.5-million-member American Lutheran Church, leads those who have made a thorough study of scriptural passages and have arrived at the conclusion that women should be ordained as ministers. American Lutherans take issue with the conclusions of their sister church, the Missouri Synod, in their interpretation of the created order, in their application of Paul's statements about women, and in their view of the nature of the ministry.

While the Missouri Synod believes that man was created superior to woman, the American Lutherans deny that this is implicit in Scripture. While the Missouri Synod sees Paul's counsel as divinely dictated decrees valid for all time, the American Lutherans see it as conditioned by time and place. In other words, the fact that first-century Corinthian women were told to be quiet in church does not necessarily mean that twentieth-century New Yorkers are meant to follow the same advice. The office of pastor, to the Missouri Synod Lutheran, carries overtones of leadership and authority. The American Lutheran prefers to emphasize the servanthood of the minister.

The American Lutheran report, "What Do the Scriptures Say About the Ministry of Women in the Church"<sup>4</sup> concludes, "In the complex society of New Testament times, women carried out ministerial functions far in advance of their day; today when the limitations of that society are no longer with us, we should make use of the freedom and responsibility which we are given in the gospel."

## **Old-time Religionists**

A great many American Protestants, including more than a million members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and another million in the Assemblies of God, must wonder what all the fuss is about. They have been ordaining women for 60, 100, 200 years without affirmative-action programs or equal-opportunity-employment agitation. Many of these churches emphasize freedom in the Spirit. They may speak in tongues and hold healing services. On the other hand, the Church of the Nazarene is also included in this group. Although it has ordained women since 1908, it is emphatically opposed to the more spectacular "gifts of the Spirit." (It was a Nazarene church that ousted Pat Boone a few years back when he began praying in tongues.)

What then do these churches have in common? They share a marvelous indifference to the women's liberation movement. Some say the Bible compels them to ordain women. They cite Gal 3:28 and talk about the freedom of the gospel. Some speak of the recognition of gifts within their midst. Others say the Holy Spirit motivates them to ordain women. Having ordained women for years, they can afford to sit back and smile at the controversies raging about them.

It is said that politics chooses strange bedfellows. Certainly theology does the same. The peripherally Protestant Mormons join the staid Episcopalians in barring women from the priesthood. The evangelical Nazarenes join the liberated United Church of Christ in encouraging women to enter the ministry. And different groups of Lutherans glare at one another across the abyss.

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<sup>4</sup>*Inter-Church Relations*, (1972), p. 469.

A variety of factors contributes to the responses of the churches. Secular political ties, social pressures, and the news media are at least as influential in creating the present situation of women in the church as are a theology of inspiration, a concern for apostolic succession of the priesthood, and sensitiveness to the leadings of the Holy Spirit.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not ordain women to the ministry; yet a chief founder of our church, herself a powerful public speaker, was a woman. Women have always served as deaconesses. A few have recently been ordained as elders. A dwindling minority serve as high-level administrators of the church.

As more and more Protestant churches encourage women to enter the ministry, we too will be faced with some major decisions. We cannot make these decisions correctly apart from an adequate understanding of God's Word. Through careful Bible study we will be enlightened on matters involving cultural change. Whatever our decisions, our foremost concern should be one of bringing our lives into alignment with God's will.



**X**  
**SOCIETY, WOMEN, AND THE CHURCH**  
Betty Stirling

Church members are a part of society; and a church is, in some aspects, a social institution. Even though church members may live by a different standard of behavior from society as a whole, and obey a higher than earthly authority, they must make their decisions within, and relate to, the society in which they live. Hence, if the church is to know how to apply its basic principles within society, it must be acquainted with that society.

On the one hand, the church affirms the concept of the priesthood of all believers which implies the equality of believers. On the other hand, the church is confronted with the principle that liberties or rights implied by equality must not be exercised in cultures where their exercise would be offensive and thus hinder the church in its primary task of spreading the gospel. The purpose here is to characterize for the church the recent changing social attitudes toward women in order that the church may affectively apply its unique principles within contemporary society.

We will consider the conditions that have affected women's roles from 1900 to the present, and the changes in roles. Many church members were old enough when the twentieth century began to be personally acquainted with this segment of history, and to have seen the changes of each passing decade. The discussion will be limited to the United States, although similar patterns can be traced in other parts of the world, either contemporaneously or at a later period.

Certain events are important as context. During the years 1900 to the present, the United States has been involved in four wars: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnamese War. It suffered through a major depression and at least two notable recessions. Political movements felt by much of society include prohibition and its overthrow, the civil rights movement, and the anti-war, environmentalist, and other student protest activities.

Specific questions to be explored in this historical context include: What has been the American woman's place in the family since 1900? How has it changed? What has been her relation to the work force? How has she been educated? Where has she been in the political scene? What have been the attitudes of society toward her and her roles?

**Women in the Family**

When the twentieth century dawned, woman's place was in the home—as it had been since Eden. Not every woman was married, of course. Nor did every woman stay in the home—many had jobs. But the norm was home. In 1900 slightly more than 58 percent of the women aged 14 and over were married; over 15 percent were widowed; and an infinitesimal number were divorced. In 1970 the married category was almost 10 percent higher than in 1900; fewer were widowed, and about four percent were divorced. More women have married in recent years; mortality rates are down, while divorce rates are up. It should be noted that even though divorce rates have gone up, mortality rates among the married have declined. Remarriage is frequent among the divorced; so at any given time most women are married, and the number of broken homes is probably not greater than in 1900.

Changes in the family cycle have been striking. This is the life history of a family, beginning with marriage and ending with death of the spouses. In 1900 the typical family cycle started with the woman in her early 20s the man in his middle 20s. The woman's childbearing years extended into her early 30s; she had four or five children. By the time she was in her early 40s, the

children began to leave home. Before the last child left home, one of the spouses (typically the husband) died, leaving the other to launch the last child and live widowed for a while.

The family cycle in the mid-1970s is different. It starts earlier—about age 20 for the typical woman, early 20s for her husband. The children are fewer—two or perhaps three. They will be born early in the marriage. By the time the mother is in her early 30s they are in school. When she is in her middle 40s they have probably left the nest permanently. Increased life expectancy means that after the children leave, the typical couple will have 20 or more years together before death ends the family cycle.

What are the implications of these changing family patterns? Since more women are married now than in earlier times, fewer single women are available for the various jobs that society designates as women's jobs. Hence if these jobs are to be filled by women, the women will be married—or divorced or widowed. Since women get married at earlier ages, they have fewer years to work before marriage. In fact, they may be in school until marriage.

But another possibility appears: When married women have fewer children, and have these children earlier in marriage, and are married at younger ages, they are free of the major burdens of child care by age 35, which gives them 30 years of potential work time before the standard retirement age of 65. Some are ready for work by age 30, which gives an even longer period.

But home is more than child care. There is cooking, washing, housecleaning, and all the other necessary activities for keeping the family in working order.

A tremendous number of inventions have revolutionized these activities. The invention of the washing machine was important; the invention of the automatic washer and drier and no-iron fabrics was even more so. Automatic dishwashers, self-cleaning ovens, controlled-heat burners on stoves, microwave ovens and slow-cookers, no-frost refrigerators and freezers, and a host of other appliances have turned the kitchen into something that would not be recognized by the housewife of 1900. Add to that the supermarket and its abundance of prepared or semi-prepared foods, and the second car which makes it easier to get there.

Yet not all of this automation has reduced women's work, for with the availability of power to improve performance, the standards have gone up. More variety is expected in meals and more attention to good nutrition. Clothing is changed more frequently—children are no longer “sewed up” into the underware for the winter! The parlor is no longer reserved for company, but is the everyday family playroom—and that requires more cleaning. And with the car the woman frequently becomes the taxi driver to get all members of the family to their various appointments.

Another factor is also important. While the automatic washer reduces both time and energy needed for the family washing, it is much more expensive than the washboard. The automatic dishwasher is more expensive than the dishpan and dishrag. And vegesteaks are more expensive than navy beans. But since housewives are not paid for their labor, increased efficiency is not reflected in higher wages. Nor is the man paid more because his wife is more efficient. What frequently happens is that the woman must take an outside job in order to help pay for the tools that will make her home more efficient.

The trend in family-related responsibilities is that women have had to devote fewer years and less time per day to traditional women's activities of child care and homemaking. More of their now-lengthened lifetime is available for activities that are not related to the home. Yet at the same time higher standards and greater expectations in all family activities have often put a heavier psychological demand on the woman who has chosen to pursue outside work.

## **Women's Education**

By 1900 women in the United States had made important gains in higher education. They could choose to enter college, professional school, or graduate school. They were not welcome in all schools, but the number open to them was increasing. At the present time very few schools are closed to women students.

Women are still not well represented in many disciplines, however, and some of this lack of representation is due to either open or more subtle discrimination against them. Courses leading to work in the "women's occupations"—nursing, elementary teaching, secretarial—naturally have the highest proportion of women students. The humanities get many women students, possibly because of the tradition that the genteel woman should know a little about art, music, and French. Social sciences attract some women students. The natural sciences as a whole have fewer women enrollees, though it varies from a good proportion in biology to very few in physics and mathematics. The proportions of women students in programs for medicine, law, journalism, business administration, veterinary medicine, and engineering is low. It is increasing, though, because schools are under pressure to cease discriminating against women applicants, and more women are being encouraged to apply.

An interesting trend has been observed in the number of women who obtain higher degrees. The number of college graduates (baccalaureate degree) has more than doubled since 1900, though most of the increase came before 1920. The number acquiring master's degrees has increased in about the same way. But the proportion who have completed the doctorate actually declined after 1930, though it has recently begun to climb again. Probably the trend toward earlier marriage and the post-war baby boom discouraged long years of education.

The high educational level of women now is an encouragement to work outside the home. Few women have taken degrees in homemaking. Even home economics or family life education programs have seldom pointed toward wifehood or motherhood, though they may turn out to be useful for these roles.

The increasing likelihood that a married woman will return to school to complete an unfinished program or to improve her skills is another evidence of a changing view of the roles of women.

Changes being made in elementary and secondary textbooks to give a broader picture of women's activities will undoubtedly affect the way the new generation—both male and female—views women's roles.

## **Labor Force**

The most marked evidence of changing roles of women is the changing pattern of labor force participation. The labor force figures are also the most telling evidence of discrimination against women.

In 1900 about 5 percent of all married women worked outside the home at any given time. By the 1970s this labor force participation had risen to more than 40 percent.

The proportion of single women working has not changed as much, but the proportion of women who are single has declined. So the composition of the female labor force has changed from predominantly single to predominantly married.

The ages for working outside the home have also changed. When workers were principally single women, the average age of working women was in the late teens and early 20s. Now that

married women are in the majority, the average is in the late 30s and early 40s—women who have gone to work after having children.

The male-female distribution in the labor force has also changed. In 1900 fewer than 20 percent of all workers were women. In the 1970s it was about 40 percent.

The kinds of work that women do have shifted over the years. In the early years of the century domestic service and unskilled factory or other employment engaged the majority of women workers. During the first decade of the century women were breaking into the secretarial (stenographic)-business areas. And it is most interesting to see the comments of such magazines as *Ladies Home Journal*, which deplored the new trend. Such work was too difficult, too heavy, too tiring for women, and should be left with men!

During World War I women had further opportunity to invade fields dominated by men. With many young American men gone off to Europe, women took over some mechanical jobs and even drove streetcars. Nor did they relinquish all the jobs when Johnny came marching home. A cartoon of the era showed a woman, wrench in hand, refusing to leave the driver's seat in a trolley car while the former male driver fumed at the door.

The depression opened more positions, but largely because employers could hire women for less money. Equal work for lower pay had been traditional, and hard-hit businesses needed this solution. There were even cases reported of an employer firing a man and hiring his wife at half the salary. While such instances were no doubt few, the rumors that grew from them did nothing to improve the lot of the working woman, who was seen as "taking a job away from" a deserving man. The rumor also had it that he needed the money for his starving family while she was working for "pin money" for frivolous things. The facts show otherwise, of course.

During World War II women made their greatest gains in both number and kinds of jobs. A much larger proportion of men were taken into the armed forces than during World War I, leaving many openings. The material needs of war increased the number of jobs, while the pool of labor declined. "Rosie the Riveter" filled the void. And again, as after World War I, not all the Rosies chose to return home when the men came back.

In spite of women's entrance into "men's" jobs, however, they are still concentrated in certain fields associated traditionally with women—nursing, secretarial, elementary teaching, retail sales, and clerical work. While women are entering such professions as law, medicine, and college or university teaching in increasing numbers, they are only a small proportion of either the professional or the administrative workers.

Society has become more and more accepting of the working woman—as long as she does not demand equal treatment or the right to enter certain kinds of work. Officially, discrimination in both jobs and pay has ended, but much indirect and subtle discrimination still exists, as can be shown by the statistics of earnings, for example, in colleges.

### **Women's Rights**

The women's rights movement was going strong at the beginning of the twentieth century. The main focus, as it had been for many years, was the right to vote, but there was a push toward gaining legal equality in family matters, and some forays into the labor problem. While women were pushing into new fields, much of the labor force activity was an attempt to help the factory women get better treatment. By 1920 women had obtained the vote and made some legal gains, and the women's rights movement was slowing down.

The women's rights movement remained relatively quiescent through the twenties, thirties, and forties. In fact, by the fifties many women thought the rights movement was really finished. Women were entering the labor force in increasing numbers, and they were entering some new fields. It seemed to many only a question of time (possibly a long time) until they obtained full rights in the political, economic, and personal areas. The anti-feminist movement of the post-World War II years was a setback in some ways, but did not seem to have a major impact on either attitudes or behavior.

Then in the early 1960s a new women's rights movement began. In a way it was counter-movement to the anti-feminist movement, which in turn had been counter to the women's rights movement. The new movement at first worked through what came to be known as consciousness-raising—a groping for a meaning to life and an attempt to make sense of a totally home-centered role in a time of changing social conditions. The new movement, called women's liberation to distinguish it from the earlier movements, soon moved into radicalism, and spawned a number of organizations, some militant, some educational.

The women's lib movement has not really been one unified movement, but rather three loosely integrated movements: radical or revolutionary, reform, and moderate. The radical wing gets the headlines—and turns off many women who are not interested in separation from men or bra-burning or homosexuality. Yet it has been important for its militant calling attention to the injustices done to women. The reform wing has worked for legal change that would bring women equal rights with men. It has also worked for liberation for men. It is not separatist, but wants equality and integration. It is not out to destroy the family, but to strengthen the equalitarian family where men can have time to be fathers and women mothers. The moderate wing engages mostly in consciousness-raising. There are Christian women's groups in both the reform and the moderate wing.

The women's lib movement has had considerable impact on society since the middle 1960s. Many of the early leaders received their training in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and early 1960s; many continued to work for ethnic minority rights as well as for the rights of the women's minority. Equal opportunity, equal pay, and affirmative action are the result of the joint efforts of the two parallel movements.

### **Attitudes Toward Women**

The collective attitudes of members of society toward women can be examined through magazines, newspapers, radio, TV, and opinion polls. Magazines date from 1900. Radio, TV, and opinion polls are more recent. Polling began on a widespread scale in the 1930s. Analysis shows the following change in attitude as reflected in the public media:

1. Woman's place is in the home—1900-1914.
2. Woman's place is really in the home, but unmarried women should help out their country while men are off to war—1914-1918.
3. Woman's place is really in the home, but unmarried women can work, and married women without children can work in the early years of marriage—1918-1929.
4. Woman's place is in the home because she should not be taking work away from men—1929-1940.
5. Woman's place is really in the home, but the needs of the country take precedence over individual needs; so she should help out the war effort—1940-1945.

6. Woman's place is in the home, except if she needs to work temporarily to help her husband get through college, or when she is first married and doesn't have children—1945-1950.
7. Woman's place is in the home during the years her children need her; that is, mother's place is in the home—1950-1965.
8. A woman's place is wherever she chooses, providing she does not neglect her family, or take a job away from a man, or threaten his ego—1965-1973.
9. Where is a woman's place? Home, or work outside the home? The role definition is ambiguous in both areas.

Whenever the needs of society have called women out of the home to help, the home-bound-role expectation has been weakened. And once weakened, the behavior has not returned to an earlier stage. In attitude, the sentiment for a home-centered role strengthened after World War II. But the exceptions allowed the behavior to continue toward greater freedom in choice of roles.

### **Conclusion**

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have probably seen the greatest change in the roles of women in world history. An interacting combination of social conditions making it possible and desirable for women to participate in the economic, political, and social world—in connection with a series of family developments that reduced the time and involvement in traditional home roles—has thrown all members of society into a state of uncertainty. Behavior has moved in the direction of less exclusive focus on home roles, but attitudes have not always kept pace. Rising expectations of greater equality that are not matched by new cultural norms or social opportunities result in frustration to women.

What of the future? Emphasis on small family size because of overpopulation and environmental problems will reduce the need for women to devote a lengthy period of their lives to home roles. Economic conditions will doubtless require more of their attention to outside work. This shift will soon require girls to think as carefully about occupational choice as boys, since they will devote almost as much of their lifetime to paid employment. More regular participation in work will result in even more demand for an equal place in the decision-making levels of business, government, education, and church.

The time is here when women can choose marriage without outside employment (the traditional pattern), marriage with regular outside work or career, or career without marriage. The time when society will approve any of these choices as of equal value should not be far away. And it may be that not far in the future the same three choices will be open to men.

Society as a whole has made great progress in integrating women into full membership and encouraging full use of their talents. It still has a long way to go before there is true equality between men and women. But the knowledge that there is hope keeps people trying. Where does the church, as a social institution, fit into this picture?

**XI**  
**DIFFERENTLY BUT EQUALLY THE IMAGE OF GOD**  
**THE MEANING OF WOMANHOOD**  
**ACCORDING TO FOUR CONTEMPORARY PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANS**  
Fritz Guy

God created human being in His own image; in God's image He created it. He created them male and female (Gen 1:27; tr supplied).

“That is the immense double statement, of a lapidary simplicity, so simple indeed that we hardly realize that with it a vast world of myth and Gnostic speculation, of cynicism and asceticism, of the deification of sexuality and fear of sex completely disappears. It seems so incredibly naive to couple the statement that ‘man was made in the image of God’ with the statement that God ‘created them, one man and one woman.’ And yet in the whole long history of man’s understanding of himself this statement has only been made *once* and at this point. Otherwise, in a hundred different ways, man has always said something else which contradicts this statement; sometimes he says too little and sometimes too much; sometimes one aspect or another of the problem has been overemphasized; at other times men have cursed the fact that it exists at all. On account of this one statement alone the Bible shines out among all other books in the world as the Word of God.”<sup>1</sup>

This study does not intend to review the broad scope of contemporary theology relative to the role of women in the church; rather, the scope of this study is limited, and this focusing of the topic deserves a preliminary word of explanation.

Historical theology—which includes as its final installment the study of contemporary theology—has a twofold objective: it aims to be both descriptively accurate and constructively valuable. That is, first it endeavors to understand, as completely and correctly as possible, the persons or periods being considered.

Second it endeavors to make this particular part of the past available as a kind of conversation partner in the ongoing theological dialogue through which the church seeks to clarify its understanding of the eternal truth by which it lives and which it proclaims.

These two objectives are seldom exactly balanced, neither do they need to be; but both must be kept in mind. For if the descriptive task is emphasized to the neglect of the constructive, historical theology becomes little more than a museum of holy relics in which ideas are logically classified and appropriately arranged for observation by antiquarians.

On the other hand, if the constructive objective receives exclusive attention while the descriptive task is ignored, historical theology tends to degenerate into an echo chamber that merely bounces back our own ideas—although with a more distant and muffled (and therefore more impressive?) sound.

Since this study is part of a collective-constructive task—thinking through and working out an Adventist answer to the question of the role of women in the church—my chief concern is to identify those elements of contemporary theological thought that may assist in accomplishing this objective.

I have chosen, therefore, not to survey the entire spectrum of contemporary theology, but rather to draw on the work of four Protestant theologians whose work is, in my judgment, of particular interest and potential value for our present task. Each has explicitly considered the meaning of womanhood, and tried to be faithful to the biblical revelation and sensitive to human

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<sup>1</sup>Emil Brunner, *Man in Revolt* (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 346.

experience. In chronological order they are Emil Brunner, Karl Brunner,<sup>2</sup> Karl Barth,<sup>3</sup> Helmut Thielicke,<sup>4</sup> and Paul K. Jewett.<sup>5</sup>

My main objective remains constructive and synthetic; rather than descriptive and analytical; so this study gives scant attention to either the intellectual ancestry of the ideas under consideration or to their particular place in the overall thought of each theologian. Yet I intend to give a fair representation of their collective theology of womanhood as I offer a preliminary identification of its principal components.

### Theological Context

Serious theological reflection is by its very nature deliberately comprehensive, and thus concerned with relationships between various aspects of religious belief and experience. So it is hardly surprising that contemporary thought about the meaning of womanhood is part of a series of somewhat larger concerns: the meaning of sexual differentiation as such, the nature of human being, the doctrine of creation as a whole. A theology of womanhood is thus developed as part of a theology of sexuality,<sup>6</sup> which is in turn part of a theological anthropology, which is itself part of a theology of creation. This is true whether the formal context of a particular discussion of womanhood is a theological ethic (Brunner and Thielicke), systematic theology (Brunner and Barth), or topical monograph (Jewett). In any case, “the ‘woman question’ is a ‘man/woman’ question which has its roots, theologically speaking, in the doctrine of the *imago Dei*.”<sup>7</sup>

### Sexuality as a Defining Characteristic of Human Being

To be human being is to be sexual being. “We cannot say man without having to say male or female. . . . Man exists in this differentiation, in this duality.”<sup>8</sup> Therefore “without sexuality there can be no full humanity.”<sup>9</sup> This does not mean that physical sexual relationships and marriage

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<sup>2</sup>The main sources are the section “The Emancipation of Woman, and Relations Between the Sexes Apart From Marriage,” in *The Divine Imperative* (Philadelphia, 1947), pp. 373-83; Brunner, chap. “Man and Woman,” *Man in Revolt*, pp. 345-61; “The Polarity of Sex,” *Dogmatics*, vol. 2; *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, (Philadelphia, 1952), pp. 63-65.

<sup>3</sup>The sources are all in Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3: *The Doctrine of Creation*, 4 pts. (Edinburgh, 1958-61), and include large parts of the sections “Creation as the External Basis of the Covenant,” vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 184-97, and “The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation,” vol., 3, pt. 1, pp. 184-97, and “The Covenant as the Internal Basis of Creation,” vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 285-328; and the whole of the sections “Humanity as Likeness and Hope,” vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 285-324, and “Man and Woman,” vol. 3, pt. 4, pp. 116-240. Together, these discussions constitute the most extensive and creative treatment of human sexuality by a major theologian in the twentieth century.

<sup>4</sup>There are three relevant sections in *The Ethics of Sex* (New York, 1964), which, although published separately, are, in part of a comprehensive system of theological ethics. The sections are, “The duality of Man: Biblical Anthropology of the Sexes,” pp. 3-13; “The Biblical Interpretation of Marriage,” pp. 101-24; and “The Changed Position of Woman in the Family and in Society (The Problem of the Equality of the Sexes),” pp. 145-62.

<sup>5</sup>Although its author is less widely known, perhaps the most useful source of all is *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, 1975). Jewett is professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.

<sup>6</sup>In this section the word “sexuality” is used as a convenient synonym for “sexual differentiation” and therefore does not refer primarily—much less exclusively—to physical sexual activity, relationships, or attitudes. It refers, rather, to the total human experience of what it means to be male or female.

<sup>7</sup>Jewett, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 286.

<sup>9</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 365.



are necessary to the fulfillment of human existence; but it does mean that in one way or another a fully human being is necessarily and distinctively either male or female. Sexuality is thus the basic structural differentiation of human being. Humanity is not neatly divided according to temperament (for example, extroverts and introverts), or according to race (Negroes, Orientals, Caucasians, etc.), or according to intelligence (geniuses and nongeniuses); but humanity is certainly and obviously divided into male and female. This is a basic fact of creation, and it is the Creator's intention that a person "should be genuinely and fully the one or the other."<sup>10</sup>

Sexuality, however, is not merely a differentiation; it is also a polarity. It is not merely a matter of the distinction of male *or* female; it is also a matter of the relationship or male *and* female.<sup>11</sup> In the biblical narrative of creation, "the solitary Adam is not yet 'man'; he is still not the fulfillment of the creation of man."<sup>12</sup> So it is not quite right, to say that God created two *kinds* of human being, as if each had independent existence originally and then subsequently found the other. Rather, they "come to each other from each other."<sup>13</sup> That is, each becomes what it is truly only because of, and in relation to, the other. There is no such thing as a "self-contained, self-sufficient male or female life."<sup>14</sup> It is his relationship to woman that makes the man a man; and it is her relationship to man that makes the woman a woman.<sup>15</sup>

And the polarity of sexuality has also another significance: it is the paradigmatic instance of the fact that God has created us as "dependent upon each other, unable to exist by ourselves, not as autonomous, self-sufficient beings."<sup>16</sup> True humanity is necessarily fellow-humanity, and the creation narrative "speaks of the co-existence of man and woman as the original and proper form of this fellow-humanity."<sup>17</sup> (It is even possible—if one is as theologically imaginative as Barth—to see in the coexistence of man and woman, humanity as fellow-humanity, a symbol of the fact that "Jesus is the man for His fellows."<sup>18</sup> So "the arrogant idea of the self-sufficient individual person is here most effectively eliminated."<sup>19</sup>

So human sexuality, as a fact of creation and not a result of the fall, is to be neither deified nor feared;<sup>20</sup> sexual identity is to be regarded as a gift— "a divinely bestowed treasure" that brings with it "quite specific possibilities of existence and service."<sup>21</sup> Any tendency or aspiration of man and woman "to overcome their sexual and separated mode of existence and transcend it by a humanity which is neither male nor female, but both at once, or neither,"<sup>22</sup> is misguided, however nobly motivated or sublimely expressed. Any effort to escape, or neutralize, human sexuality, even in the name of humanization, is ultimately a movement toward dehumanization, for "there is no being of man above the being of male and female."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 149.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>12</sup>Thielicke, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>14</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 163.

<sup>15</sup>On this basis, Barth concludes that "everything which points in the direction of male or female seclusion or of religious or secular orders or communities, or of male or female segregation—if it is undertaken in principle and not consciously and temporarily as an emergency measure—is obviously disobedience."—Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>16</sup>Brunner, *Main in Revolt*, p. 350.

<sup>17</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 292.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 318.

<sup>19</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 350.

<sup>20</sup>See the quotation which, together with Gen 1:27, serves as a preface to this study.

<sup>21</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 375.

<sup>22</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 157.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 289.

## Sexuality and the Image of God

Surely one of the most interesting ideas in contemporary theological anthropology is the Barthian notion that the image of God in human being is to be defined in terms of sexuality. That is, the duality of human sexuality is an “anology of relation” to the plurality of the divine essence (which is implied in the plural pronouns in Gen 1:26: “Let *us* make man in *our* image”). Barth’s argument in support of this thesis is twofold. First, he notes that in both Gen 1:27 and 5:1 the declaration that God created human being in his own image and likeness is followed immediately by the declaration that God created human being as male and female.

“It is not astounding that again and again expositors have ignored the definitive explanation given by the text itself, and instead of reflecting on it pursued all kinds of arbitrarily invented interpretations of the *imago Dei*? . . . Could anything be more obvious than to conclude from this clear indication that the image and likeness of the being created by God signifies existence in confrontation, i.e., in this confrontation, in the juxtaposition and conjunction of man and man which is that of male and female, and then go on to ask against this background in what the original and prototype of the divine existence of the Creator consists?”<sup>24</sup>

Second, Barth points to the idea that the relationship of male and female is the fundamental form of the being-in-fellowship that constitutes human being. In all this Barth is of course keenly aware on the one hand that sexual differentiation is not peculiar to human being, and on the other hand that sexuality is not to be attributed to God. But human sexuality is to be understood primarily not in terms of the purely instinctive sex drives of animal being, but rather in terms of fellowship, community, and communion; and it is precisely fellowship and communion that characterizes the being of God. So, Barth insists, there is “a clear and simple correspondence, *analogia relationis*, between this mark of the divine being, namely, it includes an I and a Thou, and the being of man, male and female.”<sup>25</sup>

Because this understanding of the image of God is so problematic, it has not been widely adopted; but neither has it been simply rejected. The negative reaction is typically qualified by appreciation:

“It is going too far to assert that the male and female existence of humanity is identified with the *Imago Dei*. . . . But there is truth to this conception, to this extent, that this sex polarity belongs not only to the nature which has been created by God, but also to the *Imago Dei*. This is not understood so long as the *Imago Dei* is sought in man’s reason and is not understood as relation.”<sup>26</sup>

“It is true that ‘God created man in his own image’ is followed immediately by ‘male and female he created them.’ But this does not necessarily mean that the second clause gives a definition of the first. . . . He is right in pointing to the unique importance of the man-woman relation in creation; but he is wrong in further concluding that this relation is the specific content of the image of God.”<sup>27</sup>

“The theological ontology of human existence must not go so far as to imagine that it can express the idea of *Imago Dei* only by means of this sex differentiation. It is true that this

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 195.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

<sup>26</sup>Brunner, *Dogmatics* 2:63-64.

<sup>27</sup>G. C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids, 1962), p. 73.

differentiation is very important as a medium of our relationship to God and our fellow man. . .  
”<sup>28</sup>

“No one with a sense for theology can read Barth on the question of Man as male and female without admiration for his originality and his provocative insight into a subject too long in need of the grand treatment reserved to dogmatics. Barth has made it difficult for theology henceforth to treat the question of human sexuality as a footnote to the doctrine of Man.”<sup>29</sup>

“. . . So far as Man is concerned, being in the divine image and being male and female, though not synonymous, are yet so closely related that one cannot speak biblically about the one without speaking also about the other, even though, surprisingly, for centuries theologians have sought to do so. Whether one blames this procedure on Greek philosophy or male self-centeredness, or both, a corrective in theological anthropology is long overdue at this point. To the centuries of understatement, then, Barth’s statement, even if it be an overstatement, is a wholesome antidote.”<sup>30</sup>

Thus the consensus of contemporary theology in regard to the relationship of human sexuality to the image of God, while not following Barth in affirming their essential identity, is obviously influenced by him in a direction that may bring it nearer a genuinely biblical understanding of both.

### **Sexuality as a Spiritual Differentiation**

Differentiation of human sexuality is totally pervasive “vertically” as well as “horizontally.” That is, just as all of humanity is divided into male and female, so “this distinction goes down to the very roots of our personal existence, and penetrates into the deepest ‘metaphysical’ grounds of our personality and our destiny.”<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, “woman’s sphere of activity is intended to be definitely different from that of man,”<sup>32</sup> and so “the command of God will always point man to his position and woman to hers. In every situation, in face of every task and in every conversation, their functions and possibilities . . . will be distinctive and diverse.”<sup>33</sup>

When it comes to defining this psycho-spiritual differentiation more specifically and concretely, Brunner goes beyond his contemporaries (perhaps farther than he should) in arguing that “the physical difference—speaking generally—symbolizes the difference in soul and spirit.”<sup>34</sup> This means, for Brunner, that a man is male “in all his thought and feeling,” because “the differentiation of the biological sexual function in the man and the woman has its exact counterpart in the mental and spiritual [i.e., the psychological] nature of both sexes.”<sup>35</sup> From this premise, Brunner proceeds to discuss “the masculine and the feminine nature” and to identify the differences he sees between the two:<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Thielicke, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>Jewett, p. 43.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>31</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 345.

<sup>32</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, p. 375.

<sup>33</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 154.

<sup>34</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 374

<sup>35</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 352.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 352-55, 38-59; id. *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 374-75.

<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
<b>productive</b>	<b>receptive</b>
<b>generative</b>	<b>nurturing</b>
<b>initiating</b>	<b>tending</b>
<b>creative</b>	<b>adaptive</b>
<b>conquering</b>	<b>unifying</b>
<b>building</b>	<b>adorning</b>
<b>inquiring</b>	<b>retentive</b>
<b>outward directed</b>	<b>inward directed</b>
<b>seeking the new</b>	<b>preserving the old</b>
<b>roaming</b>	<b>homemaking</b>
<b>objective</b>	<b>subjective</b>
<b>generalizing</b>	<b>individualizing</b>
<b>abstract</b>	<b>concrete</b>
<b>intellectual</b>	<b>unintellectual</b>
<b>impersonal</b>	<b>personal</b>

This is not to suggest that one sex is more virtuous or less sinful than the other; on the contrary, “man and woman are both sinners, just as both have been created in the image of God.” But even here in their common sinfulness there is a difference. For each sex exaggerates or distorts its typical characteristics: whereas man “sins above all on the side of freedom” and is arbitrary, dominating, and arrogant, woman tends to forget her freedom and so to fail “to rebel against evil.”<sup>37</sup>

Brunner acknowledges that these differences are not absolute and that “such a theory of sex types, of course, like all such theories, is to be accepted with all due reserve.”<sup>38</sup> For one thing, the traditional assignment of roles to one sex or the other has had a profound influence on the way each understands both itself and the other.<sup>39</sup> For another thing, man, “from selfish and short-sighted motives, has artificially riveted woman to her natural destiny [of motherhood], and hindered the free development of her mind and spirit”—with the result that “even at the present day, and to a far greater degree than we usually realize, woman is still the slave of man . . . Hence her real nature cannot yet be clearly discerned.”<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Brunner insists that the fundamental psycho-spiritual differentiation of sexuality cannot be explained entirely by cultural conditioning and male domination: “The same difference of structure which is evident in the physical sphere is also found in the psycho-spiritual nature of woman.”<sup>41</sup>

In a specific reference to this delineation of Brunner’s, Barth objects that it is much better to avoid such generalized pronouncements. Barth does concede that “both physiologically and biblically a certain strength and corresponding precedence are a very general characteristic of man, and a weakness and corresponding subsequence of woman.” But what this actually means

<sup>37</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, pp. 353-54.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 354.

<sup>39</sup>Brunner, *The Divine Impeprative*, p. 375.

<sup>40</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 355.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

in concrete fact “is something which is better left unresolved in a general statement.”<sup>42</sup> In another comment on Brunner’s list of psycho-spiritual characteristics, Barth asks, “On what authority are we told that these traits are masculine and these feminine?” Ignoring the fact that Brunner attempts to derive his picture of “the feminine nature” in the biological and physiological particularity of woman, Barth argues that the divine command that requires fidelity to one’s sexuality “permits man and woman continually and particularly to discover their specific sexual nature, and to be faithful to it in this form which is true before God, without being enslaved to any preconceived opinions.”<sup>43</sup> Therefore it is “not to be expected that the conduct which He requires, the obedience consistent with His command, will always and everywhere and for all individuals have the same form and expression.”<sup>44</sup>

Titus in regard to the possibility of determining the psycho-spiritual characteristics of a “masculine” or a “feminine” nature, there is no consensus. Whereas Brunner tries to derive such traits from the biological and physiological differentiation of sexuality, while recognizing that the results are only tentative at best, Barth takes a decidedly dim view of the whole enterprise. Without casting a vote on either side, much less venturing to propose yet another alternative, one can recognize that the question raised here is related to the nature of any potential theological (as distinguished from socia-cultural) comment regarding the role of women in the church. For the extent to which this role can be defined depends logically upon the extent to which it is possible to define “the feminine nature.”

### **Problem of “Order”**

In any theology of sexuality that takes seriously the implications of biblical revelation as well as the lessons of human experience, it is necessary to try to hold together two ideas that do not always fit easily or comfortably with each other: the fundamental equality of man and woman, and the apparent “superordination” or “precedence” or “supremacy” of man. On one hand, the “primal truth” of the matter is that when God created human being in His own image, He created it in the polarity of male and female; and “this truth cuts away the ground from all belief in the inferior value of woman.” The differentiation of sexuality means a “difference in kind” in which “each complements the other.” They are both “called to be persons, to live in love, in the same degree.”<sup>45</sup> They were created to be “partners,”<sup>46</sup> and the idea or partnership can take root only where equals are involved.<sup>47</sup>

However, the differentiation of sexuality is accompanied by “a certain super- and subordination.” Although it is to be understood that this is “a purely functional difference, not a difference in value,”<sup>48</sup> not a matter of “dignity or of honour” and “does not denote a higher humanity of man”<sup>49</sup> so “does not mean any inner inequality,”<sup>50</sup> it remains enough of a difference

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<sup>42</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 287.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 153.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>45</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 358.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. Barth, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 290: “Partner is perhaps the best modern rendering for the term ‘helpmeet.’”

<sup>47</sup>Thielicke, p. 145.

<sup>48</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, p. 359.

<sup>49</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 301.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, p. 170.

to make it possible (perhaps necessary) to speak of “the unequal duality of male and female,”<sup>51</sup> and “the relative supremacy of man,”<sup>52</sup> which makes the husband “the superior, the first, the leader, the bearer of primary responsibility.”<sup>53</sup> The conclusion is that “the relationship is not one of reciprocity and equality, that man was not taken out of woman but woman out of man, that primarily he does not belong to her but she to him.”<sup>54</sup>

The nature of this “order” in the relationship of man and woman, an “ordering” that does not imply any fundamental inequality, is described as a “most delicate” question, in relation to which “every word is dangerous and liable to be misunderstood.”<sup>55</sup> Brunner explains the “superordination” of man as a special role of “leadership in marriage and in the Church,” but notes that this is to be understood in the NT sense—not *dominium* but *ministerium*.<sup>56</sup> Barth, as usual, says a good deal more, and with his customary penchant for paradox, analogy, and symbolism. Although woman was created from man and for man, not vice versa, he was incomplete until her creation. Although she belongs to him, he is the one who turns to her, becoming her follower and adherent, “so that to this extent he is the weaker half.”<sup>57</sup> Although the wife is subject to her husband, it is she and not he who symbolizes the reality of the church’s relationship to its Lord. And although the husband as head of the wife symbolizes Christ as head of the church, he has the particular responsibility of reflecting also Christ’s lowliness and service.<sup>58</sup> Finally Barth offers an alphabetical analogy: “Man and woman are an A and a B.” They are equal in inner dignity and right; they are in a necessary relationship to each other; and they are in an irreversible sequence. “Thus man does not enjoy any privilege or advantage over woman nor is he entitled to any kind of self-glorification” just because he is A and comes first. He can occupy this position only in humility, taking the lead as inspirer and initiator in their common life and action. He “frees himself from sexual self-sufficiency and takes seriously his orientation on woman.” If his precedence is anything other than a primacy of service, it is “not the divine order but a particular form of disorder.”<sup>59</sup>

But the powerful rhetoric of Barth does not pass without dissent; Paul Jewett regards Barth’s position as a restatement of the traditional view of a hierarchical relationship between man and woman. But whereas the classical statement of this view affirmed the subordination of woman on the basis of her inferiority, the contemporary restatement by Barth (and others) affirms the subordination when repudiating the inferiority. The result is that the argument becomes “a *non sequitur* which may be summarized as follows: (a) the woman is in no way inferior to the man. (b) yet she is different from him, (c) therefore she is subordinate to him.”<sup>60</sup> Jewett also believes the argument for super- and sub-ordination is “incompatible with (a) the biblical narratives of man’s creation, (b) the revelation which is given us in the life of Jesus, and (c) Paul’s fundamental statement of Christian liberty in the Epistle to the Galatians.”<sup>61</sup> Recognizing that “Paul, who was an inspired apostle, appears to teach . . . female subordination in certain

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 314.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 301.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, pp. 168-69.

<sup>55</sup>Brunner, *Main in Revolt*, p. 359.

<sup>56</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 1, p. 305

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 314-15.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 4, pp. 169-70.

<sup>60</sup>Jewett, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

passages,” Jewett undertakes a re-examination of Eph 5 in the light of Gal 3:28, and concludes that “Paul the former rabbi” did not fully implement the revolutionary perception of “Paul the apostle” concerning the redemption of human sexuality.

In rejecting every form of a hierarchial view of sexual differentiation, Jewett argues for one of full partnership:

“Since God created Man male and female, both must acknowledge the call of God to live creatively in a relationship of mutual trust and confidence. . . . This calls for integrity on the part of the man to renounce the prerogatives, privileges, and powers which tradition has given him in the name of male headship. And it calls for courage on the part of the woman to share the burdens and responsibilities of life with the man, that in love and humility they may together fulfill their common destiny as Man.”<sup>62</sup>

In the light of this argument, it is hardly surprising that Jewett should conclude, in regard to the specific question of the ordination of women, that they “have full title to the order of Christian ministry as God shall call them.” And there is a positive reason for this: the complementarity of sexuality. “Because God made Man male and female, in the natural realm men are fathers and brothers, while women are mothers and sisters. So it must be in the spiritual realm. And when it is, then, and only then, will the church be truly the *family* of God.”<sup>63</sup>

### Sexuality and the Ultimate Future

Citing Jesus’ words, “They shall be as the angels in heaven” (Matt 22:30) and the apostle’s declaration that in Christ “there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28), Brunner maintains that sexuality, including its differentiation of existence and function, and consequent super- and subordination of man and woman, “belongs to the sphere of earth, not to that of heaven, to the temporal, not to the eternal.” The reason for this lies in the fact that “the whole of sexuality is related to the process of becoming, but not to that of fulfillment.”<sup>64</sup> For “sexual love indeed is not the love at which the Creator aims, but it foreshadows true love.” It is the means by which true love is discovered and learned. “The love between the sexes, the love of man and woman, is the earthenware vessel in which true love, *agape*, is to be contained; it can therefore be thrown away when the course in the preparatory school has achieved its end.”<sup>65</sup>

Barth has of course read the same biblical materials, but comes to an opposite conclusion. In regard to the words of the apostle, he observes that “the fact that male and female are one in Christ does not mean that they are no longer male and female.”<sup>66</sup> For “the relationship of man and woman established in creation, and the distinctions which it entails, cannot be regarded as transitory and accidental and abolished in Christ, as though Christ were not their meaning and origin.”<sup>67</sup> In regard to the words of Jesus, Barth is sure that “there is no reference here, and cannot be, to an abolition of the sexes or cessation of the being of man as male and female.” According to Barth’s interpretation, “Jesus certainly tells us that there will be not continuation of marriage but not that woman will not be woman in the resurrection.” This exegesis is supported

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>64</sup>Brunner, *Man in Revolt*, pp. 361, 360.

<sup>65</sup>Brunner, *Dogmatics* 2:65.

<sup>66</sup>Barth, vol. 3, pt. 2, p. 295.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

by a theological argument: “Man would not be man if he were no longer male or female. . . . He has lived in no other way in time, and he can live in no other way in eternity.”<sup>68</sup>

Jewett comes in here on the side of Barth, although more cautiously, noting that that saying of Jesus’ includes not only the negative idea that there will not be marriage in heaven, but also the positive idea that human being will then be like angelic being. He adds an argument from silence: “Our slight knowledge of angelic beings would hardly warrant the conclusion that they are in no way involved in a fellowship like that of male and female.”<sup>69</sup> The case is by no means settled, although one can sympathize with Jewett’s concluding observation that “it is surely difficult to see how that reality [of the age to come] can be wholly different from our present male/female reality.”<sup>70</sup>

### Conclusions

The constructive results of this brief descriptive endeavor include some positive insights and some remaining questions. The principal insights are, (1) the importance of a clearly developed theology of sexuality as a context for responding to the question of the role of women in the church; (2) the fundamental character of sexuality of human being as disclosed in the biblical account of creation; (3) the positive view of the distinctiveness of womanhood that derives from the complementarity of sexuality; and (4) the difficulty of maintaining an irreversible functional “subordination” based on sexual differentiation without implying inferiority.

The most important remaining questions are, (1) whether the Pauline statements regarding the subordinate role of woman can be correctly understood to be compatible with a view of true sexual equality and partnership, and what to do if the answer to this question is negative; and (2) to what extent the fundamental structural differentiation of sexuality can be defined in terms of psycho-spiritual characteristics, for there is surely something odd about a theology that cannot give concrete form to an idea it proclaims to be crucial.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>69</sup>Jewett, pp. 41-42.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 43.



## XII A THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION Raoul Dederen

The Christian church is that body of people who have been reconciled to God and their fellow men in Jesus Christ. They are all members of a body of which Christ is the head (Eph 1:22, 23).<sup>1</sup> The Christian life, however, the new life in Christ within the church, is not its own end. Christians care profoundly for what God has done and is doing redemptively for His creation. They understand that reconciliation to God in Christ means reconciliation to God's redemptive purpose as disclosed in Jesus Christ.

Baptized in Christ, they have partaken of His death. They died with Him (Rom 6:2-11), and have been incorporated by Christ into His work of redemption.<sup>2</sup> They no longer belong to themselves but to Christ, into whom they are grafted (Rom 11:17, 23). And since one has died for all, "therefore all have died" (2 Cor 5:14, RSV) and are called to live "no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor 5:15, RSV; cf. Rom 6:13). This is why Christians, wherever they are, find it their vocation to bring that part of God's creation into a reconciling fellowship with God and their fellow men.

### Priesthood of All Believers

This Christian vocation, this life in the fellowship of Christ with a view to the salvation of mankind, cannot—from a biblical viewpoint—be equated with any "clergy" or professional group. It is true, indeed, that, looking back across centuries, one has to admit that the Christian churches have come, in many instances, to distinguish sharply between clergy and laity, between religious and secular vocations.<sup>3</sup> But in the NT there is little sign of such a deep vocational difference. Quite plainly, the NT word *kleros* from which our English word "clergy" is derived is not used to refer to a special group among Christians, but to *all* of them.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the word for "laity" (*laos*) refers not to a recipient part of the Christian congregation, but to *all* Christians again.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See also Eph 5:23-32; Col 1:13, 18; 2:10, 19. Through baptism the believers enter into a union with their Lord (Gal 2:20; Col 3:4) and are consequently members of His body (1 Cor 12:12).

<sup>2</sup>As implied, for instance, in the Lord's commission (Matt 28:18-20).

<sup>3</sup>For a brief study of this development, see for instance, Hendrick Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia, 1958), pp. 48-73; Everett Ferguson "Church Order in the Sub-Apostolic Period: A Survey of Interpretations," *Restoration Quarterly* 11 (1968): 225-48. In the NT community there was no office that corresponded to the Jewish concept of priest. T. W. Manson rightly points out that when priests were converted (Acts 6:7) they no longer performed the function of priest—as priesthood was understood among the Jews—in the Christian community.

<sup>4</sup>Thus in 1 Pet 5:3 we find the apostle exhorting the elders not to view themselves as "domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (*klēros*). The term *klēros* occurs a few times in the NT (Mark 15:24; Acts 1:17, 26; 8:21; 26:18; Col 1:12; 1 Pet 5:2-3). Its basic meaning is "lot," or "allotment." While it is used in 1 Peter with reference to the church as a portion allotted to the elders, it never means a church official as distinct from the body of believers. See Werner Foerster, "*klēros*" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, 1964) 3:758-64.

<sup>5</sup>The word "lay" goes back to the Greek word *laikos*, which in its latinized form *laicus* entered a number of Western languages. As used in the Scriptures, it originally meant, belonging to the *laos* that is, to the chosen people of God. In this light all members of the church are *laikoi*. It is significant that as early as the end of the first century A.D. the significance of *laos* and *laikos* is getting a turn different from its basic significance in the NT. Increasingly, "lay" will mean unqualified to speak or to judge, an ignorant or uneducated person. This ecclesiastical development coincides with the emergence of an organized and duly ordained "clergy" as a close "status" over against the *laos*,

Although it seems strange, both words denote the same people, not different people.<sup>6</sup> All are called to one service, and all alike are God's people. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people," states Peter, "that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9).<sup>7</sup>

The Christian life, then, is by definition a priesthood, a ministry performed in response to God's call<sup>8</sup> addressed to all sinners. This means not only that every believer has free and direct access to God without the necessity of a priest or mediator;<sup>9</sup> it also denotes that Christians have sacrifices to offer—"spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet 2:5). That is, they are to present their "bodies as a living sacrifice" (Rom 12:1, RSV) to be instruments of redemption as they "declare the wonderful deeds of him who called" them "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pet 2:9, RSV). They are by definition ministers; and, as members of Christ's body, they have special functions to fulfill, necessary to the health of the whole organism, the church, and to the realization of its mission in the world.<sup>10</sup> There is little that a Christian does that he should not regard as the exercise of his priesthood or ministry.

The ministry, therefore, is not an order of men religiously different from those who are supposedly mere "laymen." It is not even a special group of persons. The ministry is a function of the whole church, distributed among its members according to the various gifts and capacities,<sup>11</sup> and corresponding calls that God has given to each one. It is not a group of church officers. Rather, the ministry of the church is its obligation under God to minister, as His servant, in reconciling the world to God. The ministry of the church is its God-given function, its mission, its vocation.

### Call to Particular Ministries

But to minister thus, the church by divine appointment also delegates to various of its members specific aspects of its functions. In a real sense each Christian is a minister, a *klētos*, called to faith, discipleship, and service. But at the same time the NT makes much of calling to particular ministries within the church. Or, looking at it from the other side, God personally calls certain members of the church to take upon themselves one of the ministries that the church has recognized to be necessary to its existence and its work. This means that the call to the ministry is only partly a call from the church. It is also, and first of all, an inward call, an inner assurance

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the people, the ordinary congregation. Compare H. Strahtmann, "Laos," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 4:29-57, especially p. 56.

<sup>6</sup>Thus in 2 Cor 6:16 we read, "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people [*laos*]" (RSV).

<sup>7</sup>We have come to call that biblical insight the "priesthood of all believers."

<sup>8</sup>This emphasis on the ministry of all believers, of the *laos* of God, can be found throughout the whole NT. Paul's letters were addressed to the churches, to all members, not just to the apostles. He reminds them of their "high calling" (Phil 3:14), and their "ministry" (2 Cor 5:18; Eph 4:12). The NT is replete with expressions referring to this "calling" (Rom 11:29; 1 Cor 1:26; Eph 1:11, 18; 4:4; etc.), being called or "to be called" (Rom 1:1, 6; 8:28; 1 Cor 1:24; etc.); and they always refer to *all* Christians, not to what we style "ministers." All Christians are "called" (*klētoi*) persons—called to faith, discipleship, and service.

<sup>9</sup>A doctrine strongly underlined by the Reformers.

<sup>10</sup>The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers implies that the primary ministry of the people of God is to be performed in the world (Matt 18:19-20). It is in the world that the ministry of the Christian can best be expressed. It is also in the world that the witness for God is most needed.

<sup>11</sup>"There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12:4-7, RSV).

on the part of the individual that it is God's will that he should make himself useful in the role to which the church has summoned him. Such ministry is bestowed and sanctioned by ordination<sup>12</sup> or consecration.

Behind the notion of a "special call" to ministry lie these three considerations: (1) the basic calling of God to all men effected by Jesus Christ (Eph 1:1-14); (2) the special divine calling of some of the body of Christ to perform a particular ministry (Gal 1:15-16; Eph 4:11-16); (3) the recognition by the people of God that some have received a special calling, and the commissioning or these to their task (Acts 6:2-6; 13:1-3). This act of commissioning we refer to as ordination, the laying on of hands. And while it is true that there is no formal description of an ordination service given in the NT, there is ample warrant for the setting apart or those who have proved themselves to be called of God into the Christian ministry.<sup>13</sup>

The background to the NT practice of the laying on of hands is to be found in the OT,<sup>14</sup> where the concept of God's selectivity already clearly emerges. God calls particular people for particular tasks and sets them apart to serve Him. Israel's history, the selection of prophets, priests, and kings—usually accompanied by an anointing ceremony—the very decision regarding the Incarnation itself, witness to selectivity and election. God commonly called and employed individuals and groups of people to serve Him in a unique fashion.

The appointing of the twelve apostles continued this tradition (Mark 3:14). In Jesus' own words, they "did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you" (John 15:16, RSV).<sup>15</sup> Paul used this word of himself as having been "appointed a preacher" (1 Tim 2:7, RSV). Paul's call to the ministry was a calling and an appointment by the Lord Jesus Christ, an appointment and a "[setting] apart for the gospel of God" (Rom 1:1, RSV), sanctioned by the laying on of hands which took place in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3).

From our considerations thus far we can speak of ordination as the church's setting apart a person whom it believes God has called. The church cannot call the minister into being, but it is the authority that can confirm the fact that he has been called, and give official recognition to the gifts God has bestowed upon him. This setting apart is not to a superior status, above the rest of the church, but rather to service *within* the church. Ordination is not intended to create categories of Christians or levels of discipleship. The call to membership in Christ's body is not based in

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<sup>12</sup>The words used for ordination, or setting apart, in the NT specified only a simple laying on of hands. One common form of expression for this was the word *katastasis*, *kathistanein* usually translated "appoint." This verb is used, for example, in Acts 6:3 of the seven, Titus 1:5 of elders, and Heb 5:1; 7:28; 8:3 of the Jewish high priest. *Cheirotonein* is found in Acts 14:23. As such, the laying on of hands could be employed as a simple blessing (Matt 19:13) as in the OT. This practice was doubtless closely related to prayer, or to the act of healing (Mark 6:5), a practice also employed in the early church (Acts 9:12). Hands were even laid upon the recipients of baptism (Acts 9:17-19). While little is said in the NT about ordination, there are four passages in which the laying on of hands is referred to in a context directly relevant to this issue (Acts 6:6; 13: 3; 1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6).

<sup>13</sup>On the one hand the world shuns and sets God's people aside (Luke 6:22); on the other God invites His children to separate themselves from this world's goals (2 Cor 6:17; cf. Lev 20:26).

<sup>14</sup>The question of Jewish antecedents to Christian ordination has been diversely argued by Christian theologians. E. Lohse in his *Die Ordination im Spätjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Göttingen, 1951) holds that Christian ordination was modeled after the pattern of a Jewish rabbi, while Arnold Ehrhart is inclined to believe that it comes directly out of the OT and not through later Judaism. See his "Jewish and Christian Ordination," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 5 (1954): 129ff., reprinted in *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Univ. of Manchester Press, 1963), pp. 132-50. For Ehrhart, Christian ordination has more in common with the use of hands in blessing, or in prayer for praise to God who provides strength and life. For a more recent and well-documented study, see Everett Ferguson, "Laying on of Hands: Its Significance in Ordination," in *Journal of Theological Studies* 26 (1975): 1-12.

<sup>15</sup>Other versions translate "ordained." The Greek is from a verb meaning "to put," "to place."

any way on merit; it is simply an undeserved gift of God's grace. So it is also with the can to serve or to minister. The ministry conferred upon ministers is *diakonia* (service),<sup>16</sup> not privilege or right as such.<sup>17</sup> Arising and functioning within the corporate priesthood of all believers, it reveals the same cruciform pattern as Christ's own ministry in which it is rooted.

### **Ecclesiastical Organization and the Ordained Ministry**

In studying the essence of the church it soon becomes plain that the church has an order, or an organization, as we are used to calling it. This is not due to the fact that the church lives in this everyday world and of necessity must adopt something of the forms of the world's social life. Not at all. The order of the church is implicit in the service it is called upon to fulfill. Both as a local church and as a totality it is built from the functions which fall upon it as a responsibility. Ordering is the necessary response of the church as it determines, equips, and sustains the special services or ministries necessary to its mission in the world. It approaches its task in a systematic, orderly way. Here again, the life of the church is ordered from above, from Christ, who acts through His Spirit and His gifts.

But what are the marks of such an order? As Seventh-day Adventists we have referred to Scriptures and have declared that we must adhere to its precepts. On this basis we have recognized several offices. To some—"pastors," (Eph 4:11)—is given by the church the task of preaching and teaching, administering the ordinances, and pastoral care of souls. To others—local church "elders,"<sup>18</sup>—is given the task of discipline and overseeing. To others—"deacons,"<sup>19</sup>—is given the care of the poor and the benevolent work of the congregation. These officers, recognized as leaders by the congregations, govern through governing bodies called into existence by the church, organized over each congregation and over larger areas of the church as need may determine.<sup>20</sup>

These ordained ministries have been given by the Lord to the church so that it may be conformed to Christ and ordered by the Gospel. All members of the church, to be sure, are called to contribute to this conformation. Yet upon the ordained pastoral ministry is laid the central responsibility to serve the church in word and ordinance,<sup>21</sup> so that the church may be constantly recalled to its scriptural foundations, exposed to the soon-coming Lord, and set under the cross and the resurrection.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>See T. W. Manson, *The Church's Ministry* (Philadelphia, 1948), pp. 21-27; Hermann W. Beyer, "*diakoneo, diakonia, diakonos*," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 2:81-93.

<sup>17</sup>In the NT being set apart does not imply governance. The NT avoids using the common Greek words for office, such as *arche, time, telos*, because they could be understood in terms of the exercise of power rather than service.

<sup>18</sup>See Acts 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22-23; 20:17. It seems quite clear that the function of ruling, of oversight, is a major one for the elders of a congregation. It should be noted however that it is a function which is shared jointly by all elders of a particular congregation who exercised their *episkopē*, their oversight. Preaching and teaching was also part of their function as Titus 1:9 and 1 Tim 3:2 indicate, along with the "care of God's church" (1 Tim 3:5, RSV).

<sup>19</sup>Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim 3:8-13. The Greek word translated "deacon" signifies "servant," and is so translated in Matt 23:11; Mark 10:43; John 12:26; 1 Cor 3:5; 1 Thess 3:2.

<sup>20</sup>The opening chapters of Acts seem to indicate that the Christian church in Jerusalem patterns itself after the Jewish synagogue. Cf. B. W. Powers, "Patterns of New Testament Ministry—I. Elders," *Churchman* 87 (1973): 166-81; A. Lemaire, "The Ministries in the New Testament: Recent Research," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 3 (1973): 146-47.

<sup>21</sup>Reformation theology prefers to speak of "word and sacrament."

<sup>22</sup>Unless the minister leads, the church cannot become a true congregation, the people of God," remarks Langdon Gilkey, *How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself* (New York, 1964), p. 103.

## Diverse and Complementary Gifts

The mode of government in the church has thus been delivered to us in the Scriptures. Yet while it is true that the NT has much to say about the ministry which is normative for all times, it seems just as obvious that in matters of ordering God had little intention of telling us what must be done in each specific instance. Along with the pastors, elders, and deacons to which we just referred, we also read in the NT of apostles, prophets, evangelists, healers, administrators, speakers in various tongues, and a few more as well.<sup>23</sup> Paul describes the task of the recipients of these gifts as being “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph 4:12).<sup>24</sup> Clearly the proclamation of the gospel, the Christian service to the world, and the edification of the community required a variety of activities, both permanent and provisional, spontaneous and institutional.

For this purpose the Holy Spirit gave diverse and complementary gifts to the early church. Among these was the ordained ministry, which could not be faithfully exercised without a close relationship with the other charismata. But I don’t think these functions are reported to us as permanent, inflexible “orders” or offices. They are rather displayed to us as the ways by which the early church deployed *its* forces in the light of the particular campaign on which it was embarked in its own historical situation. I recognize from Scriptures that the functions of pastors, elders, and deacons must be permanently fulfilled if the church is to expand and be preserved.<sup>25</sup> These are the basic elements of an organization that “was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every . . . place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel.”<sup>26</sup> That is what I mean by saying that the model of government in God’s church has been put forth for us in Scripture. Yet I believe we have received in Scripture general patterns of order and organization; in matters of organization and order it was not God’s will to prescribe in detail. This, rather, is an integral and contextual part of our response to God’s call. Organization, as we have understood and experienced it in Adventist history, is intrinsic to our obligation of theological reflection as we stand here and now, under God’s Word, vis-a-vis the task given to us, the work of ministry.

## Additional Ministries

of the Spirit, we as a church have come to recognize and to institute other ministries, that is, ministries beyond those of pastor, elder, and deacon. Progressively, we have come to recognize such functions as ministers of administration, treasurers, auditors, not to mention the medical ministry.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand new needs did appear; and on the other; men and women did hear

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<sup>23</sup>See Eph 4:1-16; 1 Cor 12:3-11; Rom 12:6-8. For a comparative list of all 18 “charismata” mentioned in these passages, see. G. E. Ladd, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1974), p. 534.

<sup>24</sup>It has been suggested that the comma after “saints” should not be there since there were no commas in NT Greek. In this case the ministers’ chief function is “to equip the saints for the work of ministry” (RSV). See, for instance, William Robinson, *Completing the Reformation* (Lexington, 1955), pp. 19-20; F. B. Edge, “Priesthood of Believers,” *Review and Expositor* 60 (1963): 12.

<sup>25</sup>Some, like E. Kasemann, consider that all NT statements concerning the church have their particular historical setting; and therefore are subject to constant change. All the NT is supposed to offer us is “certain basic ecclesiological types.” E. Kasemann, “Unity and Diversity in New Testament Ecclesiology,” *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963); 290-97.

<sup>26</sup>AA 91.

<sup>27</sup>Other churches, more particularly in North America, have recognized a much wider range of specialized ministries, providing chaplains not only for the military services, but also for state and federal institutions, social

the call of God to dedicate their lives to the service of the church in order to exercise a ministry different from, but complementary to, for instance, the strictly pastoral ministry. These, I believe, are founded on a divine calling and on the remnant church's recognition of this calling. In our eyes they require, as does the pastoral ministry, the full effort and time of those who undertake them.<sup>28</sup> Like the pastoral ministry, they have as a prerequisite an appropriate preparation. And although in a different and occasionally more limited form, they participate in the ministry of the word, in the teaching, and in the care of souls. The major difference between these ministries and the pastoral ministry is to be found in the type of responsibilities entrusted and the competence attributed to them.

It may be helpful at this point to state why the Adventist Church restricts the administration of the ordinances—called sacraments by others—to the church elders and the pastors,<sup>29</sup> as ordained ministers, for it is this fact more than any other that makes acceptable to so many people the erroneous idea that the pastorate, for instance, carries a sort of sacramental or sacerdotal status. This restriction is a matter of order, not a sacramental matter. It is in order that it will be clear that there occurs in the administration of the ordinances an act of the church—that no one may perform it without the church's mandate.

### What Then Is Ordination?

But what then is ordination? I mean, what is ordination for the Seventh-day Adventist Church? We are probably aware of the fact that we have no elaborate doctrine of the ordination to the ministry. While Roman Catholics have formulated in a clear and coherent doctrine the sense and import of their church's ordinations,<sup>30</sup> we have nothing similar in our official documents. Yet we are more fortunate than quite a few major Protestant bodies who in their confessions of faith or their liturgies prescribe the act, but usually say nothing at all as to what the act signifies and effects.

Chapter two of the Seventh-day Adventist *Manual for Ministers*,<sup>31</sup> for instance, deals with ordination to the ministry. Although some 90 percent of its content is devoted to matters of procedure, the examination of candidates for ordination, and the ordination service itself (the charge and the address of welcome), this chapter defines ordination as “the setting apart of the man to a sacred calling, not for one local field, but for the entire church.”<sup>32</sup>

In the absence of a more elaborate statement, let us read some remarks by Ellen G. White on the meaning and implications of the ordination to the pastoral ministry.

It is important, in the first instance, to remind ourselves that Ellen White held the ordained ministry in the highest regard. While she professed that “it is a fatal mistake to suppose that the work of saving souls depends alone on the ordained minister,”<sup>33</sup> and that “all are bound to devote

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service agencies, college and university campuses, whether related to the churches or not. More recently there have been calls from industry for chaplains, whose ministry has been utilized in a variety of ways.

<sup>28</sup>Although it cannot be said whether or not a *paid* or a *full-time* ministry is mandatory and of the essence of the gospel.

<sup>29</sup>*Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, (Washington, DC, 1967 ed.), pp. 82-84, 121.

<sup>30</sup>See for instance Piet Fransen, “Order and Ordination,” *Encyclopedia of Theology, the Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York, 1975), pp. 1122-48; John A. Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism* (Garden City, NY, 1975), pp. 523-28; John L. McKenzie, *The Roman Catholic Church* (New York, 1969), pp. 164-70.

<sup>31</sup>*Manual for Ministers*, (Washington, DC, 1964), pp. 16-33.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>33</sup>DA 822.

themselves actively and unreservedly to God's service,"<sup>34</sup> she also regarded the ordained ministry as "a sacred and exalted office,"<sup>35</sup> "divinely appointed,"<sup>36</sup> and in comparison to which there is on earth "no work more blessed of God."<sup>37</sup> As for the hands of ordination, these were to be laid on those "who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God,"<sup>38</sup> as the apostles had done when the early church was sending out its appointed preachers.<sup>39</sup>

Mrs. White wrote about this in 1853. In mentioning Paul and Barbanas' dedication to God by prayer and the laying on of hands, as recorded at the beginning of Acts 13, she notes, "Thus they were authorized by the church, not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism and to organize churches, being invested with full ecclesiastical authority,"<sup>40</sup> Their ordination was "a public recognition of their divine appointment to bear to the Gentiles the glad tidings of the gospel."<sup>41</sup>

In later centuries ordination came to be "gratly abused"; and "unwarrantable importance" became attached to the rite "as [though] a power came . . . upon those who received such ordination, which immediately qualified them for any and all ministerial work."<sup>42</sup>

Mrs. White saw the danger of false teachers and urged the Adventist pioneers, by the laying on of hands, ministers to go as messengers with "the sanction of the church" to "carry the most solemn message ever given to men."<sup>43</sup> While false teachers threatened the very foundations of the gospel message, men of faith, commissioned by God, were to be set apart "to secure the peace, harmony, and union of the flock."<sup>44</sup> Thus Adventist ministers were ordained to "devote themselves entirely to His [God's] work."<sup>45</sup> The Adventist pioneers considered this practice very much in harmony with "the order of the gospel."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Letter 10, 1897, as found in 4BC 1159.

<sup>35</sup>2T 615.

<sup>36</sup>TM 52.

<sup>37</sup>6T 411.

<sup>38</sup>EW 101.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 100-101.

<sup>40</sup>AA 161, GW 441.

<sup>41</sup>AA 161.

<sup>42</sup>AA 162.

<sup>43</sup>EW 101.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>It is most interesting in this setting to trace the context and history of what seems to have been in 1853 the first ordinations of Adventist ministers. *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* of November 15, 1853, specifies that it took place at New Haven, Vermont. The feeling prevailed that "there were those present that should be ordained to the work of the Gospel ministry." Thus James White and Joseph Bates laid hands on J. N. Andrews, A. S. Hutchins, and C. W. Sperry. These were "set apart to the work of the ministry," specifically "that they might feel free to administer the ordinances of the church of God." A few weeks later James White took time to underline that this setting apart to the work of the ministry was intended to "produce and secure union in the church," to protect it against "the influence of false teachers," and let those who teach the word to the world know "that they have the approbation and sympathy of ministering brethren and of the church" (ibid., December 20, 1853). See also Robert George Hunt, *A Study of the Qualifications to the Gospel Ministry During the Years 1853-61 and 1902-03*, unpublished typewritten Seminary research paper, Andrews University, 1972 (Heritage Room), pp. 3ff.

## What Does Ordination Confer?

What, then, does ordination confer? The NT gives no indication of an ordination which provides spiritual or official gifts that are otherwise unobtainable.<sup>47</sup> We find there no evidence that ordination confers some indelible character, accompanied by special powers to administer valid ordinances. Nor does it, all at once, confer the Holy Spirit, to somehow guarantee the formulation of right doctrine.

Thus, for instance, the ordination of Paul and Barnabas as recorded in Acts 13:1-3 did not provide them with new gifts, nor did it set them apart to a new ministry, different in *kind* from that in which they had previously been engaged. Both men excelled in doctrine and in other graces *before* they were ordained to the ministry.<sup>48</sup> The laying on of hands “added no new grace or virtual qualification” to their ministry, comments Ellen White.<sup>49</sup>

But there is no objection to saying that when God wished to avail Himself of their services, and called them, He continued to mold them and fill them with His graces.<sup>50</sup> “Having received their commission from God, and having the approbation of the church, they went forth baptizing . . . and administering the ordinances of the Lord’s house, . . . to keep fresh in the memory of God’s beloved children His [the Saviour’s] sufferings and death.”<sup>51</sup>

It seems to me that the Seventh-day Adventist concept of ordination can be summarized as follows: Adventists believe in a personal, divine call to the Christian ministry and have historically insisted on an ordination procedure for those thus called.

By this act the church confirms the call by publicly recognizing its validity. This official action is also a token of the fact that the individual thus set apart to the new ministry is a representative of the church.<sup>52</sup> As part of the act of ordination, the church engages in intercessory prayer for the continuation of the gift of the Holy Spirit upon those fulfilling the ministry committed to the church. But it is understood that the act itself carries with it no sacramental or sacerdotal meaning or authority whatever.<sup>53</sup>

## A Diversity of Ministries

On the basis of the NT there exist in the church several ordained ministries: in the pastors, the “doctors” (teachers),<sup>54</sup> the elders (or church disciplinarians), and the deacons, who were to

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<sup>47</sup>One should be aware of the inappropriateness of the word “ordination” (from the Latin *ordo*) for the act which sets apart an individual to a special ministry in the church. There can be no real *ordo* that places the minister on a higher level of being than the rest of the faithful.

<sup>48</sup>In Acts 13:1 Barnabas is listed among the prophets and teachers; and by that time Paul had already been engaged in an extensive ministry in the are of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21; cr. Acts 11:24 ff).

<sup>49</sup>AA 161-62.

<sup>50</sup>“By that action,” specifies Ellen White, those who laid hands on Paul and Barnabas “asked God to bestow His blessing upon the chosen apostles.”

<sup>51</sup>EW 101.

<sup>52</sup>This relationship of representativeness exercises itself not *vis-a-vis* but *within* the church. The person so specially commissioned represents by life, word, and activity God’s act of reconciliation in Christ as understood in the confessional communion that ordains him to this new responsibility. Here ordination confers the authority to publicly proclaim the gospel and administer the ordinances on behalf of those who recognized in him the divine call to do so.

<sup>53</sup>Ordination gives the minister *in his person* no authority. It does not make him a repository of sacral or supernatural power. The authority and power lie in the word he is called to proclaim.

<sup>54</sup>Many prefer to speak of “pastors” and “doctors” (Eph 4:11) as of the same office.



exercise a ministry of mercy and stewardship of good. All receive their calling from God; and, in addition, they receive from the church a recognition of their authority by the laying on of hands.

But the modern ministry is increasingly considered a profession as well as a calling. It generally requires specialized knowledge and often long training, for it is first of all an equipping ministry (cf. Eph 4:12), designed to help Christians perform their various individual types of ministry. This professional role of the minister includes various functions. While preaching still remains the most general means of communicating the gospel, today's minister is also expected to be a teacher, a leader in worship, a shepherd and also an expert in the art of pastoral care.

The multiple staff in the local church is in keeping with the NT understanding of the ministry as well as with our age of specialization. And specialization is not incompatible with the Christian calling to the pastoral ministry, so long as it serves its primary vocation—the proclamation of Jesus Christ and the communication of the gospel. Even so, all are ministers in the true sense of the word. Thus we may speak of ministers of music, of religious education, of youth, of social work, of pastoral care, and counseling; and all should be duly and properly recognized by ordination to the Christian ministry. (Or should we rather speak in terms of *ministries*?)

The contemporary minister is also part of a healing team. The members of this healing team include the medical doctor, the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the educator, who show concern for the needs of the whole person.

But where shall we draw the line between the ordained ministry and lay ministries? It is not without interest for us, as Seventh-day Adventists to notice that Ellen White considers that “medical missionaries who labor in evangelistic lines are doing a work of as high an order as are their ministerial fellow [workers].”<sup>55</sup> Both are “engaged in the same work. . . . a largely spiritual work.”<sup>56</sup> This vocation, she underlines, calls for “prayer and the laying on of hands; he . . . should be as sacredly set apart for his work as is the minister of the gospel. Those who are selected to act the part of missionary physicians, are to be set apart as such.”<sup>57</sup> Here are clearly two ministries, recognized by the congregation as God-given talents, and at the church's request devoted to the reconciliation of the world to God.

Might God have been trying to help us recognize by implication, a plurality, a diversity of ministries of all those who in response to God's calling wish to dedicate their lives to the advancement of the gospel message?

It is at this point that a good deal of our concern is focused. If it be agreed that the twentieth century world calls for a plurality of ministries, how are these to be related to the ordained ministry? Are they to be seen as falling within the scope of the pastoral ministry, or as fresh facets of lay ministry? The debate is no mere haggles over terminology. It forces the church to do some hard thinking about the meaning of ordination by focusing attention, as it does, upon a sensitive area that cannot be bypassed.

If the ordained ministry, as indicated, is given for the ordering of the church by the gospel, and if it ministers in word and ordinance, how far can its bounds be properly extended? When does the relationship to word and ordinance become so strained and indirect that it loses its reality?

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<sup>55</sup>Ev 546.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

## **Conclusion**

The call is still for a church shaped in obedience to the gospel and to God's revealed will, and responsive to the needs of the world. We should ask how far existing forms of the ordained ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are adequate and in harmony with God's plan, and what new forms might be required.

A closer look at our theology of ordination may mean hard work and reciprocal understanding; for beneath the scriptural data we often deal with prejudice and self-interest—from all sides—as well as established patterns and deep-rooted habits. Yet the theology of ordination and its implications, briefly evoked in these pages, is without doubt one that our church must address itself to sooner or later. The task is indispensable. As a theologian, I would hope that a great many will participate in this study, making their individual contribution, so that God's people as a whole will find a sound solution to pressing problems of our time.

## APPENDIX Ministry of Women

It is possible that a closer look at our theology of ordination might help to resolve other delicate problems, among which is the issue of the ministry of women. Neglected for so long, this problem is at present a preoccupation of churches around the world. Each church, of course, will answer it in the light of its own understanding of the gospel, on the basis of its own assumptions. Still it cannot be said that a full solution has yet been proposed, even within such bodies as the World Council of Churches.<sup>1</sup>

There is no question that the early church did not ordain women. Some maintain that deaconesses and widows had more than a mere commissioning (cf. 1 Tim 5:1-16), but it is generally held that ordination was ordinarily reserved for males. One must, however, inquire why women were not ordained. Is it to be explained by the sociological and cultural situation of the early church, or was it a binding practice for all centuries?<sup>2</sup>

The insights of Paul on the equality of the sexes and on the nature and status of womanhood have played a decisive part in the emerging role of women in the world.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of the biblical concept of the priesthood of all believers, and on the basis of an exegetical study of the relevant scriptural data on the subject<sup>4</sup> (which takes into full consideration the entire biblical tendencies regarding the man-woman relationship, and the role of women in the church), I have been led to conclude that there is no conclusive theological argument to deny the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. At the same time, however, since ordination is not only an answer to God's call, but an acknowledged form of designation by the church to an appointed office, I wonder if it is wise to pass over too quickly the question as to whether the time is ripe for such an action. Would such a change be desirable while the church, as a whole, sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has not recognized God's leading in that direction?

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<sup>1</sup>See for instance, *Report on Women in the Ministry* (mimeographed; Geneva, May, 1958); *Concerning the Ordination of Women* (Geneva, 1964); *What Is Ordination Coming To?* (Geneva, 1971).

<sup>2</sup>For a brief and well-documented study of the various factors that exercise an influence on early Christianity in that area, see John Reumann, "What in Scripture Speaks to the Ordination of Women," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 44 (1973): 5-30.

<sup>3</sup>See, for instance, "The Spiritual Revolution: Women's Liberation as Theological Re-education," *Andover-Newton Quarterly* 12 (March 1972): 165-75; Sarah B. Doely, ed., *Women's Liberation and the Church* (New York, 1970); Margaret S. Ermarth, *Adam's Fractured Rib* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970); Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women* (Philadelphia, 1966); Margaret E. Thrall, *The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood: A Study of the Biblical Evidence* (London, 1958).

<sup>4</sup>See the studies prepared on individual scriptural passages and incorporated as chapters in this volume.