

Women In 1 Timothy 2: A Process In Bible Interpretation

In this issue, TED RUSSELL considers the block of five verses in **1Timothy 2** that, taken out of context, and without due regard to *cultural relativity*, have provided the licence for men in the Christian Church, over hundreds of years, to assume a *superior* role over women and to claim that this is the eternal and *unalterable* will of God for woman, because of what *she* did (through Eve) in the Garden of Eden.

HOW TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES (22)

Explication in the Broader Context (Continued)

1TIMOTHY 2:11-15.

THE TEXT.

"11. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

13. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. 14. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 15. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."

THE PURPOSE OF BIBLE STUDY.

We have constantly affirmed that the prime task of Bible study is to *hear what God is saying to us today* in his Word. To do that effectively, we need to give close attention to what the text is saying in its original setting, *who* is saying *what* to *whom*, and *why*. And the absolute rule-of-thumb must ***always*** be (for a Christian): "*A Biblical imperative (command, order, instruction) to us today must reflect the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ,*" -and not the spirit of the *scribe* and Pharisee, the hypocrite, who with his *law code* shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: neither going in himself, nor suffering those that are entering to go in. Hypocrites, who omitted the weightier matters of the law, *judgment, mercy, and faith*. Blind guides, which strained at a gnat, and swallowed a camel. Who outwardly appeared righteous unto men, but within were full of *hypocrisy* and *iniquity*. Who could *never* escape the damnation of hell. (**Matt.23:13-33**).

THE GREAT EXPOSITIONAL PROBLEM.

One of the great problems we have in understanding Scripture is not so much "*what* it is saying", but "*what* it is saying *to us, today*." There is such a gap in time and culture between us now, and what was being said then. The question, succinctly stated, is: "Since God spoke his word in historically particular circumstances, *how much* of the *particularity itself* is a part of the *eternal word*?"[1]

OUR INCONSISTENCY.

Last issue, we tested our inconsistency in this matter, by raising a few examples. The exercise was meant to show a feature of our faith that we rarely talk about, if we are even aware of it at all. There are a great many imperatives in the New Testament that we ignore completely so far as literally obeying. We seem to have developed an internal "filter system", without giving much thought or articulation to it. eg. Do we greet one another with a holy *kiss*? Do we *wash* one another's feet at the meeting? Do our women refrain from *braiding* their hair, or

wearing *pearls* or *gold*? Do our men remove their *hats* during prayers at Sunday School picnics, or lift up their hands *always* when they pray? Do we all remain *single*? Do we earnestly seek the gift of *tongues*? Do we appoint *elders* and *deacons* in every ekklesia? Do we *confess our sins* one to another? Do we all put *10% of our gross earnings* into the collection bag each Sunday? Do the women who pray, in the congregation, with a tongue, or prophesy by the Holy Spirit before the full gathering of the ekklesia, always *cover* their heads with a scarf?

How *many* of the above *imperatives* do we insist are binding on us **today**? We all of us make *distinctions* with one matter, or another. But our difficulties arise when *one* vocal member wants to insist on making a favourite of his/her choosing a **behavioural legalism** for the rest of us.

THE ISSUE IN 1TIMOTHY 2:8-15, (not just 11-15).

It is a question of **cultural relativity** [2]:

(1) Is **1Timothy 2:11-12** an **absolute norm** in all cultures at all times (on the grounds of a so-called *creation order*) [3]

(2) or, is it as **culturally relevant** as the *equally imperative*, and *intrinsically related* verses that precede (**vv.9-10**), which prescribe *women's dress*?

And, further, if we adopt the stance indicated in (1) what are we going to do with all the clear references to the *established ministries of women* in the New Testament? [4].

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### **A KNEE-JERK REACTION.**

The knee-jerk reaction of many to the suggestion that there is anything in the Bible that might relate to the local situation only, where it is certainly intended to be binding at that time and place, but is **not** eternal or intended to be **normative** for the ekklesia for all time, until our Lord shall come, is one of shock! How can this be? "The Bible is the Word of God, God's laws and words *must* be eternal, they can *never* change, or pass away. Everything in the Bible is *equal* and eternal. Because God is the author, it can't be other!"

We can sympathise with the anxiety and trauma of one faced with such a crises. But the simple fact is that they are sadly wrong. Because the Bible **is** the Word of God, does not mean, as they have supposed, that everything therein is **equal**. The law of Moses is *not* equal to the law of Christ, as a simple reading of the letter to the Hebrews will clearly show. The unchangeableness of God (and his plan for Jesus) is in stark contrast to the **changeableness of his works**, in **Hebrews 1:10-12**, "...They shall *perish*, but thou remainest: and they all shall *wax old* as doth a garment; And as a vesture shall thou fold them up, and they shall be *changed*: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." Peter saw the past *perishing* of the Noahic world in water, and the imminent *passing away* of the Judaic heavens, with a great noise, where the elements would melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein being burned up. (**2Peter 3:5-10**). Things in the Word of God are not all *equal*, nor because they are there are they necessarily *eternal*. We need to give this matter earnest, prayerful thought.

### **A FREQUENTLY STATED OBJECTION.**

In our experience, the most frequently voiced anxiety about this position arises out of the fear that, once you allow the possibility that there could be a thing called "**cultural relativity**", where

will it end? Admit that it exists, and you open up a veritable "Pandora's Box". Bible interpretation becomes **arbitrary** and haphazard. Who determines what is "culturally relevant", if the text does not specifically say so? Won't we resort to this ploy with every *imperative* that we find distasteful?

"Perhaps past attitudes to **homosexuality** were only culturally relevant, as against the greater *enlightenment* of our times?"... We know better today, we are told.

The reaction is *predictable*, and typical.[5]

It is a conditioned response, and *alarmist*, and ignores the fact that (as we have shown in "OUR INCONSISTENCY",above) we have been, and are doing it all the time, ourselves, without perhaps realising it. When was the last time you *washed* your brother's feet?

### **THE ANSWER.**

We need to establish clear lines of procedure, consistency, and integrity. The search for truth demands it.

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THE INTERPRETATION OF 1TIMOTHY 2:8-15.

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT.

What is the **occasion** and **purpose** of **1Timothy**? One could be forgiven for thinking that Paul's purpose in writing the epistle was to establish the basis for Robert Robert's **Ecclesial Guide**, a view that seems to be reinforced every time we have an ekklesial election. Selected texts are drawn to our attention to focus the prerequisite qualities of the elected serving brethren. This tends to put **Timothy** into the frame of reference of a "**church manual**".

And **Timothy** and **Titus** are commonly referred to by us as the **Pastoral Epistles**, for this reason.

What Paul says. If we let Paul speak for himself, we could be surprised. He says, in **1:3**, that his real reason was "that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith." *Timothy's role in Ephesus was to combat false teachers*, whose asceticism and speculation arising from the law was causing dissention, and causing many to leave the faith.

Who were the false teachers? Paul, in **Acts 20:17-35**, had warned the **elders** of the Ephesian ekklesia (particularly in v.30) that the false teachers would arise from **among their own number**. "Also **of your own selves** shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (He'd warned them day and night for three years about this.)

The epistle shows that, unlike other centres (such as Galatia), the **false teachers of Ephesus** came from *within* the ekklesia. And since the **elders** were the teachers (**3:3**, "bishops, apt to teach"; **5:17**, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine"), it had to be **them** that had gone astray, who were the **false teachers**.

They had much influence over the **women** in the ekklesia. From our problem text (**2:9-15**), this was apparent in the resultant **women's dress**, behaviour, learning, assertion of authority, and the denial of **woman's** (Eve's) **involvement** in the Edenic transgression. There was clear imbalance in the understanding of the **position of widows** in the ekklesia (**5:11-15**). These false

teachers were the sort "which creep into houses, and lead captive silly **women** laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, **ever learning**, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," **2Tim.3:6-7**. The younger **widows** in Ephesus had opened their homes to these false teachers, and had become themselves the propagators of the wrong teaching. Waxed wanton against Christ, they cast off their first faith, **wandering from house to house**, idle tattlers and busybodies, **speaking those things which they ought not**, (**1Tim.5:13**).

How many ekklesias at Ephesus? I wonder have we ever considered that **there may not have been only one ekklesia in Ephesus then**, but, like Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Wollongong etc. today, there were many small ekklesias scattered about the city, and possibly not in halls, but of the nature of **house-ekklesias**? There are some few suggestions of this in the letters, including the above. **If** this was the case, then the picture of the above women "wandering from house to house" changes from that of women going about **gossiping**, to one of women going from ekklesia to ekklesia **formally teaching wrong doctrine**.

What was the heresy? Is it possible that the incipient **Gnostic heresy** begun a few years earlier in **Colossae** [6], had now reached Ephesus, and was being promoted by some of the elders in the various Ephesian ekklesias? Archaeology has, in 1945, discovered Gnostic papyri documents (a cache of eleven Coptic codices) near **Nag Hammadi** in Upper Egypt [7], which among other things teach of the creation of the world that resulted from the fall of **Sophia** (Wisdom), who from the first nine chapters of **Proverbs** is identified as a **woman**, God's companion before the foundation of the world. Gnosticism speaks of systems of intermediate beings who bridged the gap between God and man. Some spoke of **Eve** (Sophia) as the intermediary and bringer of both **light** and life, the mediatrix who brought divine **enlightenment** to mankind. They embellished the **Genesis** accounts and sometimes gave **Eve** a prior existence in which she consorted with the celestial beings.[8].

Is it possible that it was a false teaching of **this** kind that Paul has in mind when exhorting Timothy, at Ephesus, to see that it is stopped? Because it was for some such purpose that he left him at Ephesus, wasn't it? One of the difficulties that we have with **interpretation** of the Epistles is that we have only **one side** of the dialogue. We are left to guess, at best, the other side of the discussion. It's like listening in on one side of a telephone conversation. We fill in from clues the missing bits, but the fact remains that at the end of the day we are bound to admit that we have been listening to God's word through the writing of the Apostle, with our "minds on the stretch".

Why written to Timothy? Whatever, it is abundantly clear that the letter was intended ultimately to be read by the **ekklesia** itself, and not just Timothy. But things were in such a state amongst the **eldership** that he must needs go through Timothy first. And it was important that Paul initially build up Timothy's **confidence** for the task, and then that he provide him with the appropriate **authority** to see it through. He had to furnish the young man with clear, authoritative teaching in the face of the concerted "vain jangling" of the **heretical eldership**, who desired "to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."**(1:6-7)**. "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that **thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine**" ...but..."the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."**(1:3,11)**.

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(to be continued, next issue).

**Next issue** we shall, D.V., consider the real meaning of this highly controversial text (**1Timothy 2:8-15**), firstly looking at *what it meant to the Ephesians* to whom it was written, and *then* deciding *what its message is to believers today*.

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In this issue TED RUSSELL continues an approach to the consideration of the teaching of **1Timothy 2:8-15**, its meaning then and now, with particular focus in this segment on **the meaning the whole epistle had for its immediate recipients**, the Ephesian believers of the first century.

**HOW TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES (23).**

**Explication in the Broader Context (Continued).**

**1TIMOTHY 2:8-15. [PART TWO].**

**THE MEANING OF 1TIMOTHY 2:8-15.**

To properly understand the meaning of this text it is essential to see it **in its original setting**, that is, in its relation to the letter as a **whole**. **[Explication in the Immediate Context].**

The epistle, unlike Paul's customary style, has no standard thanksgiving or concluding greetings.

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## **CHAPTER ONE.**

### **THE FALSE TEACHERS.**

The Epistle goes straight into ***the issue at hand***: it begins with a ***charge to Timothy to confront***, and eradicate, ***the false teaching*** that is in Ephesus (***1:3-7***) consisting in "fables and endless genealogies". Certain false teachers, in ***that*** ekklesia, instead of realising that the end of the gospel must be "***love*** out of a pure heart and a good conscience and ***faith*** unfeigned"(R.V.), had, instead, set out to be ***teachers of the law of Moses***, having no idea what they were talking and dogmatizing about.(***v.7***). There is a place for the law; in fact it is good, if it is used lawfully. ***But that use is not for the righteous***. The ***law*** is made for the ***lawless*** and unruly, for the ***ungodly*** and sinners, the ***unholy*** and profane, murderers, manslayers, fornicators, homosexuals, liars, perjurers, and ***all contrariness***. (***vv.8-11***).

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PAUL'S OWN EXPERIENCE.

Paul puts his own previous experience, as a Judaizer, on the line. (***vv.12-17***). The ***Judaistic approach***, enthusiastically and ***sincerely*** followed, ***will inevitably produce blasphemers***, outrageous ***persecutors***, and gross ***sinners***. There is ***no*** alternative. It cannot ***ever*** be other. It is the ***nature*** of the beast! From this, thank God, ***he*** was saved by the mercy, grace, faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

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### **THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSCIENCE.**

This understanding is so ***critical***, that he repeats the charge that he lays upon Timothy.(***vv.18-20***). "Wage a noble warfare; hold fast your ***faith*** and keep your ***conscience*** clear." He names two of the false teachers (Hymenius and Alexander), who have abandoned their ***consciences***, destroying thereby their ***faith***, and becoming, inevitably, ***blasphemers***. [I wonder how many of us would be courageous enough to assert that a ***Judaizing teacher***, in our midst, ***who performed a questionable deed*** [like lying, or telling a half-truth, "for a good cause", such as "upholding God's honour"(sic!), or "defending the Truth"(capital T), or "establishing the law" (v.7)] ***was a "Satanic blasphemer"***, who had shipwrecked his/her ***faith***? Yet this is ***clearly Paul's idea***. Well may the "devils" (Satanic blasphemers) tremble!]

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THEREFORE... (CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE).

The "***therefore***" that commences ***chapter 2*** serves as the ***link*** that tells Timothy ***how*** to address the "charge" given him in ***chapter 1***. The ***things he has to do*** to "right the wrongs" in Ephesus are spelt out in the next two chapters (***chs. 2, and 3***). They are ***the guidelines for restoring proper behaviour in that ekklesia, at that time***; and concern specifically the conduct of ***those*** particular false teachers.

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## **CHAPTER FOUR.**

### **1. THE PROBLEM AT EPHEBUS.**

(**vv.1-5**), details the **type** of issue that Timothy was up against, at **that** time and place.

[How often have we, in public addresses, used the phrase, "in the latter times",...**4:1**, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that **in the latter times** some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils...", to identify the conditions pertaining to **the times immediately before Jesus' second coming**,...and tried to find examples of that kind of behaviour in the media describing **our** times, so that we can argue that Paul was specifically prophesying about **our** times when he so wrote to Timothy in A.D.62-65? We have already shown that the Spirit had expressly warned of this happening in **Acts 20:28-31, and it is to this that Paul is referring**. And whilst our appropriation of the text for preaching purposes may well be justified as a valid **secondary** application, we need to clearly acknowledge that **the reference is** primarily and unquestionably in relation **to a set of occurrences there and then in those first century times** that Paul requires Timothy to remedy.]

The identification of the origin of the new doctrines with the "devil", or **demons (v.1)**, is consistent with Paul's earlier words, about Hymenaeus and Alexander being delivered to **Satan**, that they may learn not to blaspheme. (**1:20**). "Departing from the **faith**", and "having their **conscience** seared with a hot iron", are the descriptions also of the particular false teachers in **chapter 1**, who twice are said to have turned away from "**faith** and **conscience**", (**v.6; 19**). [Conversely, "a pure heart, a good **conscience**, and **faith** unfeigned", **1:5**; and "holding **faith** and a good **conscience**", **1:19**, are the essential qualities of the true believer.]

The specific errors of the **Ephesian Judaizers** are listed:

- (i) they **teach falsehood** with dissembling words (**v.2**).
- (ii) they **forbid to marry** (**v.3**).
- (iii) they command to **abstain from meats** (**v.3**).

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2. HOW TIMOTHY IS TO GO ABOUT IT. CHAPTERS FOUR AND FIVE.

(4:6-5:2). How Timothy is to remedy that situation. Lots of good **personal** advice, suited to the character and personality of **Timothy**, as Paul so well knew him.

(4:6), "If **thou** put the brethren in mind of these things, **thou** shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, **nourished** in the words of the faith, and of the **good doctrine which thou hast followed until now.**" (**R.V.**) Paul knew of Timothy's upbringing in the faith, by his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice (**2Tim.1:5**) (**7**), "...exercise **thyself** unto godliness...(11), These things **command** and **teach**. (**12**), **Let no man despise thy youth**; but be **thou** an example to them that believe, in word, [*and here it is again!*] in **manner of life**, in **love**, in **faith**, in **purity**. (**13**), **Till I come**, give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching. (**14**), **Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery** ...(**5:1**), Rebuke not an **elder**, but exhort him **as a father**; the **younger men** as **brethren**: (**2**), the **elder women** as **mothers**; the **younger** as **sisters**, in all purity."

So much in this is **applicable to Timothy, alone**. There is so much that **only he could do**. To take such instruction to **ourselves**, by way of exhortation ("**applying it in principle**", as we say), could be **only** in the most **general** way:

- (1) "Let no man despise **thy youth**";

(2) "Till I come...";

(3) "Neglect not **the gift** that is in thee, which was given thee **by prophecy**, with the **laying on of the hands of the presbytery**." are clearly **applicable in a particular sense to Timothy, and Timothy alone**.

Even the opening words of **chapter 5** had special reference to Timothy's tender years. If I were to take them to myself, I'd have to re-phrase them, *at my age*, to: "Rebuke not an **elder**, but exhort him as a **brother**; the **younger men** as **sons**: (2), the **elder women** as **sisters**; the **younger** as **daughters**, in all purity."

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**N.B.** This is called \* **ACCOMMODATION**. But, and **this is critical**: -immediately we allow the possible existence of "**accommodation**" in any part of Scripture, we have to admit the **cultural relevance** of that part of Scripture. When we see any segment of Scripture as having **particular** and, possibly, limited **application** to its immediate context, we admit that **all** Scripture does not have **equal** value in **all** respects for us, in another age; and, further, that **some** things were for a time, and not necessarily of eternity [cf. **Heb.1:10-12**].

\*\* AND THIS IS THE HEART OF THE ISSUE HERE:

**PARTICULARITY versus ETERNALITY.**

(To this we will return, later.)

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3.TARGETTING THE TWO SPECIFIC PROBLEM GROUPS.

Finally, Paul provides Timothy with instructions on how to deal with the two groups that are causing the trouble in Ephesus:

(1) Some silly young widows (5:3-16); who have **doctrinal** problems. (Hasn't Paul already warned Timothy to have nothing to do with certain **profane "old wives' fables"** that exist in Ephesus, which have nothing to do with true religion, **4:7**?)

Young **widows** should learn to practise **true religion** at home (**4**), instead of trifling their time away (**6**). They are **dead**; for, in not **providing** for their own household, they have denied the **faith**, and are worse than **unbelievers**.

[Is the "**provision**" "**food**", or could it be "piety, **faith** and **conscience**"?... cf.(v.4), "let them **learn** first to show **piety** towards their own family, and to **requite** their parents."]

Clearly, it is **faith and good conscience** that is lacking, for, as in **1:19-20**, some of these women, like Hymenaeus and Alexander, have **already** been delivered unto **Satan** (**5:15**).

(2) the straying elders (5:17-25), -the sort **who** creep into (ekklesial?) houses, and **lead captive those silly women**, ...members who are **ever learning**, and never **able** to come to the **knowledge of the truth**. (**2Tim.3:6,7**).

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### **CHAPTER SIX.**

The indictment of these **false teachers** continues in **6:3-10**.

The letter **concludes** with a final appeal to Timothy, encouraging him to fight the good fight (6:11-21).

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THE WHOLE EPISTLE.

So, we contend that the **whole of the first epistle to Timothy** is concerned with:

- (1) the problem of a **particular** set of false teachers and **their** influence in first century Ephesus; and
- (2) the **charge** that the Apostle Paul, consequently, put **upon Timothy** in order to stop to their activities.

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**IN OPPOSITION TO THIS VIEW.**

Hurley, **Man and Woman**, pp.195-97, and those Christadelphian writers who follow him, take a radically different view of

**1 Timothy**. They argue that Paul was **not** writing to Timothy in a closely limited sense, but to **anyone**, at any time, and in a most **general** way. They deny the **particular relevance** of much of the matter and instruction in the epistle as applying to **Timothy** specifically, or to **that** time period. Indeed, they see such references as that to the "later times" (4:1) as having **only** a latter-day fulfilment (thousands of years later), and, therefore, being **entirely irrelevant to Timothy's times**.

Hurley writes,

"The subjects discussed are not **passing** issues. The **opening chapter** discusses Paul's life, the work of Christ and wandering from the faith. The **second** deals with prayers for rulers, personal conduct in church and teaching functions in relation to women. The **third** discusses qualifications for elders and deacons and begins a discussion of the mystery of the faith and its future rejection. **Chapter 4** continues the discussion of 3. The **fifth chapter** regulates relations between various classes of persons within the church. The **final chapter** continues the topic of the fifth and warns against love of money. **ONLY THE LAST SECTION OF THE SIXTH CHAPTER IS POINTEDLY RESTRICTED TO TIMOTHY.** *The topics of the letter are NOT CULTURALLY RELEVANT, although they could be brought to particular application in Timothy's context.*" (p. 197).

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CONSIDER YOUR VERDICT.

We propose to stop here. We are at a critically important point in our consideration of the **meaning and intent** of the letter that Paul wrote, under inspiration from God, to Timothy. We have briefly outlined what **we** believe the matter to have been about that caused Paul to so write to Timothy. But we are conscious that there are **some** who **do not so read the letter to 1 Timothy**. They will say, "Oh yes, it was written to Timothy, in a **sense**. But it was **really** written to **us**, and all believers in every age." (By which their language, and **emphasis**, suggest to the hearer that they really mean, "No **it wasn't written to Timothy** at all, in any **particular** sense. It

was only a **general** letter, written to **us** and all **believers** in every age. Timothy, as a believer, would get as much, no more, no less, from the letter as any believer, in any age.")

Hurley, and his followers, insist that all Paul's instructions to Timothy, based on presumptive evidence, embrace "**creation principles**", which are intended by the Apostle to be **normative** for all ages, eternal and unchanging, going far beyond the immediate situation, if even relevant to it at all.

NEXT ISSUE.

Before we proceed, in the next issue, to attempt an assessment of the meaning and intent of the problem passage, **1 Timothy 2:8-15**, in its **original context**, could we simply ask that you **prayerfully read** once again, at a single sitting, *all aids and prejudice aside*, with your mind on the stretch and a willing suspension of disbelief, **a familiar version of 1 Timothy in its entirety**? The issue is crucial.

BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND STUDY.

In this issue TED RUSSELL continues to commend a Biblical approach towards **contextual** study, and commences to focus upon the teaching of **1 Timothy 2:8-15**,

HOW TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES (24)

Explication in the Broader Context (continued).

1TIMOTHY 2:8-15. (PART THREE).

Introduction.

Having in previous issues looked for the message which the **whole** epistle had for its **immediate recipients** (the Ephesian believers of the first century), our focus now comes closer to the **possible** meaning that the "problem passage" itself might have had for **them** in its **original** context. For we are convinced that only when we get our **original** ("primary") meaning straight will we ever be in a position to get our "secondary" meaning right (i.e., **if** there is one). It is futile to look for "the contemporary relevance to us" of any text, if we have not perceived, first, the **original** purpose of that text: to whom, or about whom, it was written, and the original purpose of its writing.

A Corrective.

As an aside, may we state what should be only too obvious, if you think about it, but which we suspect might be a curious **aberration** that will continually affect one's interpretation? It is something we picked up recently in a conversation with a brother on another subject altogether. The earnest fellow was contending that the N.T. text we were discussing had **no particular cultural relevance to its first century context**, because Paul had clearly said that Scriptural records concerning Abraham were not written in the Scriptures for Abraham's sake, but for **ours'** (cf. **Rom.4:23**). And he therefore applied this "rule" to all Scriptural texts. All things, whether O.T. or N.T, had nothing to do with the **immediate** context, but had **relevance only to us**, "...upon whom the ends of the worlds are come" (**1Cor.10:11**). Now

the exegetical errors in this position are considerable, and too many to deal with here. But there are two we should note for our purposes:

(1) The argument begins with a misquotation of **Rom.4:23**, where Paul did not say, "**the Scripture record was not written for Abraham's sake at all**"; but, "...not for his sake **alone**, ...but for us **also**..." The primary reference in Genesis to Abraham's imputation of righteousness had clearly a secondary application to the imputation of righteousness to all believers.

(2) The "us" referred to in **1Cor.10:11**, is not **primarily** "us" in 1992, but the Corinthian believers to whom Paul was writing his epistle in A.D.54. It was upon **them** (not us) that the essential "ends of the world" came.

In both of the misquoted cases, the references had been to records actually made in Scripture long after the particular events had occurred, in order to illustrate the **eternal contemporaneity** of Scripture. But in no way can such texts be used to mount an argument to eliminate the principle of **primary application**.

The notion that the Scriptures could have been so written is at once arrogant, presumptuous, and impossible. God had long ago promised **Israel** that he would do nothing but that he would first rise early and send warnings through his prophets. What pretense and distortion to claim other.

The Application of this "Logic" to Timothy.

It is **double folly**, we believe, to attempt to apply such kind of tenuous reasoning to a first century **letter**, (which is, need we emphasise, a **letter**) and say, "The **letter** Paul wrote to Timothy in Ephesus in A.D.64 from Rome, was not a **particular** letter to a known young man at all. It was in fact an extraordinary type of **"general"** letter that the Holy Spirit actually wrote to believers (Christadelphians) in the twentieth century; so that Timothy, or any Christian believer who read it at any time, would get no more out of it than would a perceptive twentieth century brother to whom it was written. There was nothing **particular** in it at all; the words (being God's words) were (of necessity) **eternal**, universal, and unchangeable. That is the **nature** of God's word. What it says to one set of circumstances, such as existed at Ephesus in the first century, it says **equally to all**, whenever. The laws of God are, as it were, 'set in concrete' for all time."

The Unifying Perspective of 1Timothy: The False Teachers.

Why was the letter written? What is it about? The answer to these questions will determine the approach taken to the exegesis. It is as simple as that.

(1) We believe, and constant re-reading and prayerful meditation reinforce the belief, that **there are false teachers at the back of the writing**, and **they** provide the answer to the two questions. **Everything** in the letter is governed by this fact.

(2) Most commentaries acknowledge that there was a problem of sorts in the Ephesian ekklesia due to the presence of some **false teachers**, but they do not give them the **centrality** and due weight of importance that their presence demands. Having noted their existence, they are promptly passed over for what most seem to think Paul was really concerned about- the need **to provide the ekklesias for all ages to come with a church manual**, a sort of **Ecclesial Guide**, against which they could organize and shape themselves properly until the Lord comes.

There is no doubt that there is much in chapters 2, 3, and 5 that **seems** to support such a notion. But, then, there is **much** that needs to be **overlooked**, too, if one is to sustain such a view.

A Final Question.

In the end we have to ask ourselves **one** more question: Why will we not let **Paul** answer the questions for us? After all, it is **his** letter.

Why can't we take **1:3** absolutely seriously? "I besought thee (Timothy) to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest **charge some that they teach no other doctrine...**" **That is Paul's stated reason for the letter**, that Timothy had to stop the false teachers at Ephesus.

Weakness of the "Church-Manual" Thesis.

As we read through the letter in its entirety we find that at **every** point there is a **direct connection** with that purpose stated in 1:3 (not just a connection here and there, as in the case of the "church-manual" thesis), until we have become absolutely **convinced** of the correctness of our approach and point of view. This makes the best sense of it **all**, and is the **key** to understanding the epistle. It is, in fact, **crucial**. Had his purpose been, as is supposed, to write a "church-manual" why would you suppose Paul had **three** goes at it (**1** and **2Timothy**, and **Titus**)? Why write Titus **and** 1Timothy, and each from such different perspectives and historical contexts? And why write 2Timothy at all, since it fails so badly to fit the "thesis" at any point?

(After all, Robert Roberts only had **one** go at the "church-manual". Why would Paul need **three**?)

Exegesis of 1Timothy 2:8-15; Proper Demeanour in Prayer. Keeping the text in **context**, we are bound to make the following observations:

(1) **1Timothy 2:8-15** is the second paragraph in the section on **conduct in the ekklesial worship**. The first paragraph, **2:1-7**, is concerned with the **proper objects of prayer** for **all people**. Clearly a corrective against the "new doctrines" which seem to be setting the women apart in some way.

(2) Next, **vv. 8-15** follow on with the **proper demeanour in prayer**. The **men** are to pray (v.8) without getting caught up in the **arguing and bickering** that the false teaching was causing. **Likewise**, the women. They, **too**, had to deport themselves in a godly manner.

But it needs noticing, that what Paul has to say to the **women** occupies a much larger space than what he says to the **men!** And he also has a lot more to say to the **women** in the same vein, later, in **5:3-16** and **17-25**. Further, his **solution** in both contexts is **similar**. The **solution** to the "women's problem" in our "difficult text" (**1Timothy 2:8-15**; viz. **9-12**) is so clearly **like** that given for the young widows in **5:11-15**, as to require special parallel consideration.

The "Difficult" Paragraph (vv.9-5) Is In Four Parts.

(Each part is closely **interrelated** to what has gone before.)

(1) **vv.9-10** are concerned with **dress**;

(2) **vv.11-12** demand a **quiet and submissive spirit**; and while the woman is **forbidden to teach and domineer a man**, **two** things are clear from the whole paragraph-

(a) this is only **part** of the problem,- and not necessarily the most significant part; and
(b) the **greater** concern is for her to take her proper and **standard place** in the ekklesia with dignity and honour.

(3) **vv.13-14** support the **modest dress** and **quiet demeanour** by illustrations from **Genesis 2 and 3**; while

(4) **v.15** sums up the whole by asserting that women's **salvation** lies in their accepting the **role of mother**; provided, of course, that they are truly women of **faith, love and holiness**.

Two Sides of One Coin. (vv.9-10, and 11-12).

In over 40year's sufference of "strong" brethren who forcefully assert their "God-given" superiority over women in the ekklesia("I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence..."), we have yet to hear a clear connection made between vv.11-12 and vv.9-10!

A Flight of Imagination.

Try to **imagine** a dominating brother, a tyrant and dictator, whose word on everything, to the most trivial degree, is absolute and final, whose favourite boast is that he believes in "**keeping women in their rightful place!**"

The brother's **wife**, prominently on view at every Memorial Meeting (for she attends no other) in the most extravagant, immodest and fashionable attire,- with all the trimmings of **braided hair, gold, pearls, and costly array**,- dutifully obeys her husband's expectations: if there are **good works, shamefacedness, or sobriety**, we will never see it; if there is any learning "in silence with all subjection" that, too, is hidden from us. All we can testify is that she never, to our knowledge, ever teaches anyone anything spiritual, inside or outside the ekklesia, including her children, and being always **silent on godly matters** (though extremely knowledgeable and vocal outside the ekklesia in secular matters) -she certainly **never tries to teach or usurp authority over a brother in the ekklesia!**

Then try to imagine her proud husband's approving words, "... will certainly be in the Kingdom. She has fulfilled her **female role**: she will be saved in **childbearing**...she has borne me **three** children. And she never **once** raised her voice in the ekklesia!")

The Correspondence Between 2:8-15 and 5:11-15.

It is hardly credible that in **chapter 2, vv.9-10** is ever dislocated from **vv.11-12**, yet this is often all too sadly the case, and by exegetes who claim strict adherence to "the Word". The two sets are, as we have observed, but two sides of one coin.

The False Teachers are the Key to the Men's Instruction.

(**v.8**) Paul's instruction to the **men** is an obvious response to their **controversies and strife**. We are constantly bemused at the "so-called" **reason for denying women** an active role in ekklesial worship; "they are so emotional, and unstable. Allowed to speak, **they** inevitably cause **confusion, strife, and dispute**. Therefore, **they** must ` be in **silence**."

Ironically, **these** qualities have historically been the ones that **men** manifest. Should not, then, all **men** (by this "logic") be put under "**silence**" forever?

In this context, (v.2-3, because "...a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty...is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour...v.8, I will **therefore** [Gk.conjunction "**oun**"] that **men pray** everywhere, lifting up holy hands, **without wrath and doubting**"), **men** are called on to give themselves to **pray**, instead of their usual practice of **anger** and **dispute**.

N.B. The instruction is neither that men **should** pray nor that **only** men should pray nor that they should do so with uplifted hands, but that **when** at prayer they should do so **without their usual controversies**.

The imagery of "hands uplifted" is that of ritual purity, hands cleansed before praying, and here refers to their not being "soiled" by **anger or disputing**, the particular sins of the false teachers.

False Teachers the Key to the Women's Instruction,too.

The word to the women is in response to the same atmosphere of **conflict** that the **false teachers** have created. It is clear from **2Timothy 3:5-9** that the false teachers are finding their chief support among some "weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth." From **1 Timothy 5**, we learn that there were among these women some **younger widows** who "live for pleasure" (v.6), who have become "gossips and busybodies, **saying things they ought not**"(v.13),and by so doing are bringing the gospel into disrepute (v.14). Some have "already turned away to follow **Satan**" (v.15; cf.2:14 and 4:2).

He offers the same advice. They should **marry** (cf.4:3), have **children** (cf.2:15), and look after their **homes** (5:14).

Within the overriding problem created by the influence of the **false teachers** upon some of the women in the Ephesian ekklesia, both the instructions-

(1) on **modest dress**; and

(2) on not trying to "lord it over the men" by **teaching** and **having authority over them**, as well as the illustration of **Eve**, who too, was **deceived by "Satan"**, as well as the final word on **having children**;

- **all** can be seen to make **unified common sense**.

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### **Next Issue: Dressing Up and Usurping Authority.**

#### **BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND STUDY (7th Jan.,1993)**

In this issue TED RUSSELL considers some of the specifics in that situation of conflict where Paul had required Timothy to deal with a particular group of sisters at Ephesus, in A.D.63, who were "dressing up" and "lording it" over the men. We will be encouraged here to look more closely (than we sometimes do) to the whole counsel of the Apostle on **that** matter. Only then might we be in a position to draw out possible lessons that could apply for ourselves, today.

#### **HOW TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES (25)**

#### **Explication in the Broader Context (continued).**

#### **1TIMOTHY 2:8-15 (PART FOUR)**

## **No Dressing Up.**

**1Tim.2:9-10:** "In like manner also, that **women** adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

In addressing himself to **women** (without the definite article), Paul seems to imply a broader context than merely wives. And clearly his concern has to do first of all with their dress and demeanour.

## **What is his Chief Concern? Seduction or Insubordination?**

It has been argued that Paul's greater concern was with the women acting in **insubordination (vv.11-12)**, rather than acting as women bent on **seduction (vv.9-10)**. [Hence the sad anecdote relayed in the last issue, **A Flight of Imagination**, p.11]. But this, we believe, is an unwarranted deduction based on the **order** of dealing with the two matters; rather than regarding them as **one** issue, or as two (related) sides of the one coin. The **seductive behaviour** is thus seen as a separate issue, of lesser importance to that of insubordination to the men; or, at most, a preliminary (but subsidiary) attitude leading to the more "serious" sin of **insubordination to men**. When we enter the arena of arguing "degrees of sin", what is to stop us equally (and as erroneously) contending that, since it was treated **first, seductive behaviour** must be the greater sin in Paul's eyes?

But we believe the distinction is arbitrary, and are disinclined to rationalise "degrees of sin." Surely, they are **equally** of grave concern, as the context suggests, and must equally be discouraged?

Whether bent on seduction (**vv.9-10**), or usurping authority over the men (**vv.11-12**), those women were in conflict with the cultural norms of society, and were "out of order" in the ekklesia, -which is exactly what Paul said of the younger widows in **5:11-15**. It is important to keep Paul's advice to the **women** of **2:9-12** within the larger context of his advice to the **same** women in the **whole** letter. Too often, texts dislocated from their context become **pretexts for a proof-text** in an altogether other context.

## **Paul's Concern Over the Younger Widows in 1Tim.5:11-15.**

As in **1Tim.2:9-15**, Paul leaves us in no doubt of his concerns, when he addresses the problems of the **younger widows** in Ephesus, in **5:11-15**.

Rather than manifesting the "good works" of the older widows, which includes the proper bringing up of children (**5:10**), they:

- (1) have "given themselves to pleasure" (**v.6**),
- (2) have grown wanton against Christ in their desire to remarry (**v.12**)...apparently outside the faith; though some suggest: a breach of a **First Century deacon's "Covenant"**, made by **women deacons** (as well as men deacons), vowing to remain single after the decease of a spouse in order to serve Christ fully.[1]

[Here is a field for further thought, -see footnote!]

- (3) have become "**busybodies**", going about from house to house (ekklesia to ekklesia?) **tattling**, that is, talking **foolishness** and saying things they shouldn't (**v.13**).

We suggest that **this** was the false teaching of **1:6-7**, "From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be **teachers of the law**; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm", that had been taught them by the false teachers. The **A.V.** translation is somewhat inadequate in giving us the words "**tattlers**" and "**busybodies**", words of very slanted and limited meaning to twentieth century readers. For, invariably, these are seen as characteristics of **women** who are **gossips**.

### **Closer Consideration of the Words "Tattlers" & "Busybodies".**

#### **(a) Tattlers.**

The Greek word, "**phluaros**", ("**tattlers**"), as brother Nicholls observes, is a "oncer"[2]. It occurs once only in the **Greek N.T.**; though there is a verbal form of the word in **3 John:10** where Diotrophes, who loved to have the preeminence in the church, "**prated**" against John and the faithful brethren with malicious words, and cast them out of the church. Fee notes, "There is no known instance in Greek where the word **phylaroi** means `gossips'. In fact it means to **talk foolishness** and is often used in contemporary philosophical texts to refer to `foolishness' that is contrary to `truth'"[3].

#### **(b) Busybodies.**

Alfred Nicholls, curiously, [4] points out that the particular form of vice, called in the Scriptures "**busybodies**" ("taking needless trouble" over other people's affairs), "is by no means confined to ...women...but is one to which **all** can fall victim", and it is possible that something more sinister is intended, particularly in Ephesus, for he says:

"**Periergoi** as a noun is found nowhere else, either in the Old or New Greek Testaments, except in its neuter form in **Acts 19:19**, where it refers to the **magic arts** put away in such dramatic form by the believers in Ephesus. Could Paul be referring to the **charms, magical spells** or other **formulae** to which the irresponsible young widow might resort when dealing with the sick? If so, then `saying things which they ought not' refers, **not** to the mischief-making of the gossip or the slanderer, but to the **spells** which they used. The same expression in **Titus 1:10,11** could be a similar allusion to the practices of the `deceivers...who subvert whole houses'. The fact that they of Crete were `of the circumcision', he concludes, accords well with what is known of the `strolling **Jews, exorcists**' who turned up also at Ephesus (**Acts 19:13, R.V.**)" [5].

### **The Conditions and their Cures are of a Piece.**

We strongly believe that the **key** to the problems at Ephesus lay in the **Judaizing syncretistic gnosticism** that was taught to that group of women by the false teachers. Their subsequent "dressing up", and usurpation of power in "lording it over" the brethren (implying that there was something in their line of "teaching" that was peculiarly "anti-male", hence "**forbidding to marry**", **1Tim.4:3**; which otherwise seems curiously out of "sync." with their "wantonness against Christ" **in marrying, 5:11**), -and the pushing of such views in the ekklesias, from "house to house"- was the specific task of Timothy to rebut.

### **The Concern and Solution in 2:9-15.**

The women in **2:9-10**, instead of living for **pleasure** (as he explains later, they **had been doing** up till now in speech, attitude and behaviour, becoming wanton against Christ, "having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith", **5:12**, and "are **already** turned aside after

Satan", **5:15**), - should **now** dress modestly and do good works like the older widows. Instead of being busy-bodies and going about from house to house speaking foolishness and talking about matters outside their jurisdiction, **as they have been doing**, they are **now forbidden to teach any more**, but rather they are to hang their heads for shame, and **be prepared to learn the correct doctrine** in all **quietness** and meekness of spirit.

### **Cultural Relativity.**

For those who still have difficulty with this notion, we commend the helpful comments by Alfred Nicholls on this subject, and on this particular issue (though he doesn't use the term) under the heading, "Principle and Practice". It is the question of: "how **absolute is a N.T. qualification** when applied to the modern ecclesial situation?" He wisely says,

"The answer must lie in the seeking of the **principle** involved and setting it against the background of the **circumstance**, an approach which would surely be acceptable to the Apostle who could be generous to another man's conscience in matters of detail when things were done `as unto the Lord!'"[6]

He argues the **absolute necessity** of keeping the precise terms of the precept in its original form (at the time of its giving), but allows that the "**principle**" is what needs to be applied in **our** times. He cites the case (as he sees it) of the bishop or deacon being "the husband of one wife", - then and now. Then, he had absolutely no alternative in the cultural climate of the times but to strictly obey the injunction. Today, he thinks, we can be more generous in matters of detail, allowing the guidance of conscience.

Similarly, he suggests that the Apostle's "principle", about sisters in the ekklesia wearing a **veil**, can be met now by the Christadelphian sisters wearing a **hat**. We may not agree with the solution offered in the two cases cited, but it is salutary to realize (at a time when it is becoming increasingly fashionable to speak of our "Christadelphian traditions") to note that a previous editor of **The Christadelphian** uses the strategy (if not the term) of "cultural relativity" to solve scriptural difficulties.[7].

### **The Cultural Relativity of Those Sisters "Dressing Up".**

There is a large body of evidence, both Hellenistic and Jewish, which equates "dressing up" on the part of **women** with both sexual wantonness and wifely insubordination.[8]. It is appropriate, therefore, that Paul links "wanton behaviour" (**vv.9-10**) and the need "to learn with all submissiveness" (**v.11, R.S.V.**). Clearly he sees the actions of this group of women at Ephesus from within the general cultural framework of the time.

He really lets fly in **2Tim.3:6-7**, and says scathingly of them, and the religious **charlatans** who have led them astray with their "form of godliness" without "its power", "For of this **sort** are they which creep into houses, and lead captive **silly women laden with sins**, led away with **divers lusts**, Ever learning, and **never able to come to the knowledge of the truth**".

### **Is this Typical of Today's Sisters, or of Woman in Eternity?**

There is plenty of evidence that religious quackery had an especially fruitful field among women **at that time**. Both their less-than-satisfying social position in Greco-Roman society and their religious hunger, typical of the era, made **women** easy prey. It is against this **cultural background** that we must read **1Tim.2:9-15; 3:11; 4:7; 5:3-16**.

### **A Silly Argument.**

But who would be foolish enough to suggest that this is an accurate picture of **all** women, in **all** ages?

Even then, and in **that** ekklesia, it was only **some** "weak-willed women" led "captive" by **some** evil men. To suggest that **all women of all ages** who "dress up and teach" are of necessity, inevitably, of this order, and therefore **must Scripturally be treated as these foolish women**, - is as silly as to suggest that **all men of all ages who "teach"** are of necessity, inevitably, of **this** order of false teachers, and that **all men therefore must Scripturally be treated the same way as these wicked men**, eternally.

### **Male Chauvinism Alive and Well in the Twentieth Century.**

Yet there are still, in the twentieth century, men who believe that **God so constituted women from the Fall, because of what Eve did in the transgression**, that **every woman**, now, is nothing if not:

- (1) a silly weak-willed creature,
- (2) loaded down with sins,
- (3) swayed by every kind of evil desire,
- (4) always learning but **never able to come to a knowledge of the truth**; which all adds up to
- (5) a **Satanic being whose damnation is assured**.

They are unshakeable in their creed, "Nothing personal, it's **just** the way **God** made them". Some, as strongly, believe the world is flat, that there are literally many mansions in heaven reserved for the saints, and that **women** are simply incapable of thinking spiritually like **men**! cf. **Isa.40:22**; **John 14:2**; and **Eccles.7:28**. [That Solomon's harrowing claim (given his marital record): "I have never found "one woman among a thousand", - **might be a reflection on himself**, rather than upon **every woman that God ever made**, just doesn't seem to occur to some students of the Word.]

### **Usurping Authority.**

**2:12**, "I suffer not a woman to...**usurp authority** over the man..." [ie., **authenteo, 831**, to of themselves **dominate**, or usurp authority over.] To those who **infer** from this that Paul is implying that "somewhere" God has given every **man** authority over every **woman**, an authority that a woman must not "**usurp**", we ask: Where is the evidence in Scripture for this God-given authority of **man** over **woman** (as distinct from **husband** over **wife**, as we have indicated earlier)?

The knee-jerk reaction, all too often, is to refer to the **Edenic sentence on the woman**, found in **Gen.3:16**, "...thy desire shall be to thy husband, and **he shall rule over thee**."

### **Explication in the Broader Context.**

It is now time to go beyond the immediate context of **1Timothy**, and examine the problem texts (**1Tim.2:9-15**) in the broader context of the Scriptures at large. In the next issue we shall, D.V., commence by looking, more closely than perhaps we have in the past, at the supposed "**authority**" **given man over woman by God at the Fall**, (**Genesis 3:16**). There may be surprises for some in considering the real meaning of this "sentence on the woman"; but it is

imperative that we do review it, because it seems to form part of Paul's directive to Timothy for solving the problem at Ephesus.

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**REFERENCES.**

1. Alfred Nicholls, **Letters to Timothy and Titus**, The Christadelphian, Birmingham, 1991, pp.110,157.

**The English View:**

Bro. Nicholls believes that such a compact with the heavenly Bridegroom is the only possible view that can explain Paul's very strong words, "wax wanton against Christ". We prefer the suggestion that it is marrying out of the faith to which he is alluding. Many of the English brethren believe that a brother, a widower, who marries is automatically precluded from the office of A.B. or elder, because he cannot give singular devotion to Christ from the married state. They interpret 1Tim.3:2, "the husband of one wife", to mean "the husband of one wife EVER". But we would argue that if this "Augustinian" view of women and marriage were the meaning, then the Catholics are right in forbidding marriage in the first case to an elder or bishop. For surely the first wife would be as great a "distraction" from whole-hearted devotion as the second?

2. **ibid.**, p.158.

3. Gordon Fee, **Issues in N.T. Hermeneutics**, Hendrickson, Mass., 1991, p.58.

4. Curious, because he has previously said, **op. cit.**, p.157, "the condemnation of the younger widows...would not be because they `cast off their first faith' by becoming apostate..." We believe this indeed is **exactly** what he meant!

5. **ibid.**, p.158,9.

6. **ibid.**, p. 111. (if not the term).

7. In fact, the method has been a feature of our exegesis from the start, as anyone would realise who was familiar with Robert Robert's explanation of difficult texts in the early magazines, such as Jesus' casting out of demons, or such parables as that of Lazarus and Dives. see also Ron Abel, **Wrested Scriptures**, Geddes Press, Cal., 1970; and **The Christadelphian Shield**, Birmingham, n.d.

8.(a) Juvenal, **Satire 6**, "There is nothing that a woman will not permit herself to do, nothing that she deems shameful, when she encircles her neck with green emeralds and fastens huge pearls to her elongated ears...So important is the business of beautification; so numerous are the tiers and storeys piled one upon another on her head!...Meantime she pays no attention to her husband". (cited, **The Loeb Classical Library series**, pp.121.)

(b) **Sentences of Sextus**, 513: "A wife who likes adornment is not faithful".

(c) See also **1Enoch 8:1-2**; Seneca, **To Helvia, 16:3-4**; Plutarch, **26.30-32**, etc.

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## **BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND STUDY.** (26th Jan.,1993)

In previous issues, TED RUSSELL has carefully worked through the whole text of 1Timothy to set the immediate environment for a close consideration of the "problem" text of 2:8-15. Then he has meticulously analysed, verse by verse, the problem verses themselves, until he has come to v.13.

Before proceeding it is essential that the broader context for vv.13-15 (viz. Gen.3:16b) be closely looked at. Without this, we cannot really grasp the relevance of Paul's point to Timothy, of the woman's part in the transgression.

### **HOW TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES (26)**

#### **Explication in the Broader Context (continued).**

#### **1TIMOTHY 2:8-15 (PART FIVE)**

#### **He Shall Rule Over Thee...The Meaning of Gen.3:16.**

**Gen.3:16**, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; **and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.**"

#### **A Consequence of Sin.**

The first thing to notice about the "**sentence**" of God upon the woman (Eve) for her transgression in Eden, is that it came as a **direct consequence of that sin**. Previously, she and her husband (Adam) had lived in covenant-mutuality and solidarity before God. Together, in joint-partnership they rebelled against God and, as a direct emanation, they inevitably **damaged the harmony**, the mutuality, the solidarity, that they had previously shared. Things between them would never again be the same.

(1) Adam blamed his wife and God. **Gen.3:12**, "The woman **whom thou gavest** to be with me **she** gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

(2) Eve blamed the serpent. **Gen.3:13**, "The **serpent** beguiled me, and I did eat."

**Both** were guilty, but neither was prepared to admit personal responsibility. They looked for a "scapegoat".

#### **Sin is its Own Punishment.**

Before we too quickly look to God for any "**implantation**" penalty,- an external punishment, a "judgment from without" put upon the pair, we should listen to the divine commentary on **the consequence of sin** from Paul in **Rom.1:24**. "Wherefore God gave them up to **uncleanness**, through the **lusts of their own hearts**, to **dishonour their own bodies between themselves** ...v.26,...gave them up unto **vile affections**...v.28, And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a **reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.**"

If this is the way sin works, and our experience (as well as the Word of God) tells us that it is so, surely we should look for something happening **within** the primordial pair- an "**uncleanness**" manifested through the "lusts of their **own** hearts, with vile affection dishonouring their **own** bodies, and **doing inconvenient things**".

### **Limitations in the Traditional View.**

But how does the "traditional" interpretation of **Gen.3:16b**, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" stand up to this? The first thing to note is that there is something wrong with an interpretation that says, "Because you **two** (Eve and Adam) **have done this**, I will put into you, Eve, the desire to **love** your husband in dutiful subservience; whilst I will give to him, from now on, the **right to be your unquestioned ruler.**" ie. Because of what you **two** progenitors have done, I will (for the duration of the human race) put under submission to the rule of man every woman who ever lives.

The assertion that there is something wrong with such an interpretation has nothing to do with **God's prerogative** to impose **whatever** penalty he chooses to impose; it has to do with "squaring" the terms of the "sentence" with what Paul says is the divine arrangement in these matters.

### **Love a Virtue; Not an Unclean, Vile, Reprobate Lust.**

How can the "sentence" read, "Because you have done this, Eve, I will make you **love** your husband..."? Love is something pure. But when we sin, Paul says, God gives us up to something **unclean**. He allows unclean things to happen within us; we are given over to vile affections, to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. In contrast, "love your husband" is surely something noble, something good, something pure? What sort of an "unclean" consequence is that?

### **A Curious Inequity Resulting from a Misreading.**

The record shows that the **effect** of what she had **done** had put **enmity** in Eve's heart toward the serpent (**v.15**, "I will put **enmity** between thee [the serpent] and the woman.") Why would the same deed put **love** (rather than **enmity**) in her heart toward the other party to the crime (viz. Adam)?

For too long we have misread this text. We have seen **Gen.3:16** as the divine charter for man's authority to rule over submissive woman. A one-sided, put-down "sentence" on the woman; against a nonexpected, and totally undeserved **elevation** for the equally-guilty man. And male-oriented exegetes have ever since invented all sorts of specious theories and ingenious bits of equivocation to bolster and justify this strange inequity. (eg."The woman was obviously the prime mover and therefore the more guilty member in the transgression"; despite what Paul says about that in other places. And, "If there hadn't been a woman, there wouldn't have been a transgression! What we learn from 'the very basis of God's order in Eden' is that if you ever let a woman try to tell a man anything she'll pull him down"; Abigail might well turn in her grave!)- Anything to flatter their own position and self-esteem, whilst cruelly pushing women out of participation in any serious spiritual role or reckoning. For such sophists don't listen, they start and end with a recitation of themselves.

### **What Gen.3:16b is Really Saying.**

God is actually saying that the **solidarity** which had previously been their experience would now (as a consequence of what they had done) give over to struggle, tyranny, and the desire for domination by one partner over the other. The "Battle of the Sexes" had begun: the woman desiring to better, to control the husband, and the man desiring to master, to rule over the wife. Unclean, vile affections, far from the divine intention at creation, would now spring from reprobate minds:

"Because you have done this your **mutuality** shall turn into a bitter **conflict** with your husband. I will greatly multiply your sorrow. You will strive to get the better of one another. **You** to rule him, **he** to rule you."

### **The Sad Facts of History.**

Throughout the struggle, history has graphically (with few exceptions) recorded the unevenness in the combatant sexes. The pristine mutuality all too readily transmuted to polarised superiority and inferiority; for man has, until the twentieth century, had all the advantages of physical and economic strength. But those advantages, in the developed countries, have been whittled away by the industrial and post-industrial revolutions, - so that the conflict is now, for the first time, more evenly engaged. But the curse of sin is still there; and the attendant hostility continues, as the daily media so constantly reminds us.

### **A Pretty Theory: But Can it be Exegetically Substantiated?**

Yes, it can. The word translated "desire" in **Gen.3:16b** ("teshuwqah", No.8669, in Strong's, with the sense of "overflowing; stretching out after; a longing; desire") only occurs three times in the O.T., and the other two occasions show why the "traditional" bias associated with the "basic divine order of Eden", interpreting "desire" as a pure, feminine, submissive emotion, needs review.

(1) That the "desire" is the **feminine** virtue of "**submission**" is dismissed in Cant.7:10, where the bride says that the **king's** desire is toward her.

(2) But the most damaging case against the "traditional" view lies in the very next chapter of **Genesis (4:7b)**, where not only do we find the same word but it is embedded in basically the same ambiguous set of Hebrew words as in Gen.3:16b:

### **The Story of Cain and Abel.**

In the brief account of their bringing their offerings unto the Lord, we learn that God "had not respect" for Cain's offering, which makes Cain very wroth.

v.6, "And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?"

v.7, If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door: and ***unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.***"

It is incredible that that this verse should be placed in such close proximity to the "sentence" of Gen.3:16b. More, that its focus is also on the effects of sin.

To review the intent of each text:

(1) Eve did not do well: the result was that she entered into a conflict situation with her husband, each striving for the mastery.

(2) Cain did not do well: the result was that he entered into a conflict situation with sin (personified), each striving for the mastery. [Paul outlines a similar engagement that **he** had with King Sin (personified) in Romans 7, with the "spirit" and "flesh" in conflict.]

### **A Gen.3:16b Interpretation of Gen.4:7b Would Be a Nonsense.**

To interpret Gen.4:7b in the same manner as 3:16b would not only produce a nonsense, but **wrong doctrine!**

"If thou doest not well, Cain, then Sin (personified as a hungry lion) lieth at the door. **He shall love thee** with a pure love, desiring to serve thee with a genuine, God-ordained, feminine subservience; and **I will give thee the dominion** over him."

This is quite contrary to the clear teaching of Paul in **Romans 6:16**, where the opposite obtains:

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves to obey, **his servants ye are to whom ye obey**; whether of **sin** unto death, or of **obedience** unto righteousness". If you sin, then are you Sin's servant. It cannot be that **he** is your servant. Nor can it be said that **you** have the dominion over Sin. It is the very **opposite!** Jesus obtained dominion over Sin (and Death) by **not** sinning.

It is impossible that one could sin, and as a consequence have the dominion over Sin.

### **A Statement of Consequence.**

When the people of Israel rejected God in desiring a king, God did not "sentence" or curse them. Rather, in 1Sam.8:11-17, he told them the **natural consequences** that would flow, "...this will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself...and he will take your daughters to be confectionaries...And he will take your fields...the tenth of your seed...your menservants, and your maidservants...your sheep: and you shall be his servants".

Similarly, when Eve sinned, God did not "sentence" or curse her, as he did the serpent; but told her the natural consequences that would accrue.

The "**sentence on the woman**", therefore, was a set of words expressing a statement of consequence, and was not a declaration of punishment to be inflicted on the condemned person. "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you", means that, in our sinful human condition, man and woman in the **marriage bond** (for it is to the marriage arena that the "sentence" relates), whenever **enmity** raises its head, will engage in a **struggle for supremacy**. Because unclean, vile, reprobate affections have come between them, as a result of their mutual complicity in sin, they will intermittently engage in a conflict of selfish interest

### **Man's "Rule" Is A Symptom of His Fallen Nature.**

**F.F.Bruce** somewhere stated that a man's exploitation of the woman's weaker state to dominate and subjugate her, is no more the exercise of a God-given **right**, than his equally presumptuous treatment of the slave. It is, in fact, **a clear symptom of his fallen nature**. Far from being the will of God, it is in reality, **contrary to his absolute will** for the covenant-mutuality of husband and wife in his eternal kingdom, and his intention in creation. The ultimate covenant-mutuality in Christ, toward which creation groans, is beautifully prefigured by the Apostle when speaking of Christ and the church as "one flesh".

### **The Ruling Husband Is Not a Christian.**

Let there be no misunderstanding about this. If the work of Christ involves the breaking of the entail of the Fall, then the implication of his work for the liberation of women is plain. A "Christian" husband who dominates and "rules over" his wife, is a Christian who **denies** his Lord. Read **Ephesians 5:21-33**.

Too often the relationship of men and women in the ekklesia is confused with the relationship of a man and woman in marriage. Having misread the role of man and woman in marriage, the matter is then carried across into the universal sphere of the relationship of all men to all

women, with incredible pontifications being authoritatively uttered. We know of no verse in Scripture that gives man rule over woman.

### **Next Issue:**

We would like to return to the **immediate context of 1 Timothy 2:8-15** in the next issue. For, having anticipated vv.13-15 in the broader context of the "Sentence on the Woman" in Gen.3:16b (in this issue) we are now equipped to consider **the relevance of the Apostle's use of that reference in these next three verses**. We are not unaware of the relevance of other texts in the broader context, such as 1Cor.11:7; and 14:34,35, but they must needs wait another occasion. The restrictions on space require that this study be drawn towards an acceptable conclusion. To this end we propose to work.

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BIBLE INTERPRETATION AND STUDY. Forum article, 18.5.1993.

HOW TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES (27)

Explication in the Broader Context (concluded).

1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15. (PART SIX)

Ted Russell.

In the last issue we anticipated **vv.13-15** by looking at the Genesis account of the woman's part in the transgression, and on the consequential "sentence" she received from God as a result of that transgression. We are now equipped to look at the use Paul makes of the two items in his letter to Timothy; and to finally decide on its meaning for us, today.

2:13-14 / Paul turns to Scripture to support what he has said in **verses 9-12** (not simply **vv.11-12**). However, contrary to his usual practice, he does not quote the words of the Scriptural text, but makes **reference** to what it says. There are three facts in the narrative accounts of **chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis**, to which he wishes to make reference:

- (1) Adam was formed first, then Eve.
- (2) Adam was not deceived, but the woman was.
- (3) The woman, being deceived, was in the transgression.

Need for Careful Reading.

The first thing we should notice is that the first point, that "Adam was formed first, then Eve", drawn from **Genesis 2**, is not elaborated. Paul merely states it. Therefore its application, at best, can only be **inferred**.

(At this point we should comment on some of those historic "meanings" that have been offered in the past, by way of illustration. The test is: **is it relevant?**)

Some Assorted Meanings from the Past.

1. Some writers speak of the "**order of creation**" preceding the Fall as being "eternally" binding. But neither Paul nor Moses so speak. Such surmise is not relevant here, for it is clearly **not** Paul's concern in this context. He makes **no** inference at all, as he is concerned with Eve's subsequent deception and fall into sin.

2. The "**deception of Eve**" has a long history of speculative interpretation in Judaism: (1)

(a) seen sometimes as **sexual seduction** on the part of the serpent. [John Thomas(2), also, was of this persuasion.]

(b) and at other times as the result of her being **the weaker sex**. (3)

But even if Paul knew these traditions, it cannot be demonstrated that he is here alluding to them. He is only concerned with the **fact** of her deception, for the current application. He uses the same **fact** (the Serpent's beguiling of Eve) in another context, **2 Corinthians 11:3**, for a **different** application, viz. the preaching of the gospel.

We must be careful, therefore, to apply the relevant facts to the case in hand, and avoid importing irrelevant facts and conclusions.

Improbabilities in the "Traditional" Explanations.

The "traditional" explanations do not stand up to the test, chiefly for two reasons:

(a) they are **not** taught in the **Genesis** account (4).

(b) they are **not** relevant to this context; they contribute no sense to what Paul is saying to Timothy about the Ephesian problem at hand.

Paul here neither explains nor elaborates; he simply states the facts of the order of creation.

The Basic Reason for the Genesis Appeal.

He does, however, elaborate on his second and third points, based on Eve's statement in **Genesis 3:13** that she **was deceived** by the serpent. Since the concluding sentence in **verse 15** follows directly from her deception and fall into sin, **this** appears to be the basic reason for his appeal to the **Genesis** account.

Eve, as the "Representative" Woman Became a Sinner.

As Adam has served elsewhere as the representative man, through whose sin all mankind came into sinfulness (**Rom.5:12, 19**), so here Eve serves as the "representative" woman, who through her deception by the serpent **became a sinner** (lit., "came to be in transgression").

Likewise, here in Ephesus, a group of women have succumbed to the deceptions of some false teachers of demonic persuasion (**4:1**), so that Paul can say of those women, "they have already turned away to follow Satan" (**5:15**).

Stupidity Twice Confounded.

To attempt to argue from **1 Timothy 2:13-15** that somehow Paul thinks that in some way Adam was **innocent** of transgression in Eden, or that "Eve, because of inherent weakness, was **more** guilty", in the face of **Romans 5:12**, etc., is totally unacceptable! To say that **Adam was not the one deceived** simply means that he was not deceived by the serpent. [Similarly, one must resist the temptation, equally irrelevant, of apportioning the **larger share of the blame** on the one who was **not** deceived, but who wilfully sinned with his eyes open!!] What Paul says is, that **Adam was not deceived by the serpent, but Eve was**, and that led to her downfall.

The Connection With 5:15.

That is exactly the point of **5:15** - as with Eve in Eden, so here again in Ephesus a group of women [note, it is only "**some**"] have been deceived by "Satan", and have fallen into transgression. But, Paul says in **2:15**, there is still hope. She (the woman) can be saved, provided she gives priority from here on in to **faith, love, and holiness**. [The same prerequisites for a man's salvation, cf. **1:5**].

The Point of the Whole Exercise, then.

From the total reading of the context of **1 Timothy**, it is clear that there are a number of problems in Ephesus that Paul wants Timothy to address. One of them is that there is a group of women there who have been "deceived" by false teachers. There are clues as to the nature of the false teaching. It is Judaistic (cf. **1:3-11**), and would seem to be of the first-century incipient Gnostic type that was recently discovered at Nag Hammadi (1945) containing an embellished account of the Genesis fall, (5) giving Eve prior existence to Adam, and exemption from the transgression in Eden. As the "Mother of all Light", Eve and her daughters have a licence to teach and exercise authority over men.

An Answer that Fits.

Paul's words could well fit such a group of women, teaching wrong doctrine, even forbidding marriage (**1 Tim.4:3**). In opposing them, Paul reminds the whole Church, not just women, of the **sole mediatorship of Christ (1 Tim.2:5-8)**. Adam, he continues, was created first rather than Eve; and Eve, far from being an instrument of light, was deluded (**1 Tim.2:13-14**). No-one, he argues, has a privileged position with God on the basis of gender.

This proposition at least fits Paul's response, - his purpose is to rescue these women and the Ephesian ekklesia from the clutches of the false teachers. That rescue includes proper demeanor in dress, proper demeanor in the ekklesia (including learning in all quietness), and getting married and bearing children (one of the good works urged in **v.10**, seen in the light of **5:9-10**).

Application and Historical Particularity

in 1 Timothy 2:8-15.

Given the ad hoc nature of **1 and 2 Timothy**, with their own specific historical particulars, how do the instructions given by Paul to **that** historical situation function as an eternal word for **all** believers in **all** ages?

The Difficulties of Our Own Inconsistencies.

We give so much time and attention to the pros and cons of the imperatives of **verses 11-12**, as to whether women may teach, preach, read, or pray; but dismiss as being unworthy of serious thought the equally imperative commands of **vv.8, and 9, in the same context**, regarding men lifting up their hands in prayer, and women having gold, pearls or costly array. When did you last hear a discussion in the ekklesia from 5:3-16, advocating the care of widows over sixty? Do you force your younger widows to marry with the same rigid intensity that you insist on your women keeping silence?

You Be the Judge.

For once, we're not going to give a definitive answer. Rather, we will spread out on the table, as it were, a number of important texts for you to consider, by way of guiding you to a balanced view.

In the end, the judgement will be yours; but it will be based, partly, on what we call "authorial intentionality". ie. what you think Paul himself intended by these instructions. Do you consider all of these verses applicable to all believers at all times?

(1) **2 Timothy 4:13**, Paul asks Timothy to bring him a cloak that he had left in Troas with a man named Carpus. How much of that should/can you obey?

(2) **2 Timothy 2:3**, Paul tells Timothy to take his share of suffering as a good soldier of Christ. Applicable to us?

(3) **1 Timothy 2:11-12**, women are to learn with a quiet demeanor; they are not to teach or domineer a man. Please look at this text in conjunction with its companion texts, **vv.9-10 and 15**, which equally enjoin that women are not to dress expensively, to plait their hair, or wear pearls, and that their salvation lies in bearing children. Bring into the answer the companion texts in **5:3-16** that widows over sixty, who are known for good works, who have no family, and who have not remarried, are to be supported by the ekklesia, while the younger widows are required to remarry, bear children, and keep house.

(4) Where did Paul say that sin originated; was it with Eve or Adam? (cf. **1 Timothy 2:13-14** with **Romans 5:12**).

(5) Do you obey **1 Timothy 6:1-2**, about slaves and masters, exactly as believers in the first century did? Perhaps the answer lies in the area of our obedience to the ultimate concern of the text, even if at times the particulars are not carried over to the "letter". Perhaps that's how we would see ourselves obeying **5:13-16**? Why not, then, with **1 Timothy 2:11-12**, since that's what we *all* do with the preceding **vv.9-10**?

(6) From **1 Corinthians 12: 28**, which office do you think is more *authoritative* over men - prophesying or teaching? (N.B. *second* prophets; *third* teachers). Would you allow women to prophesy (**1Cor.11:5**), but prohibit them to teach?

(7) If you insist that *this* one text, **1 Timothy 2:11-12**, prohibits women teaching in the ekklesia; is it:

(a) only in the Ephesian ekklesia, at that time? or

(b) in every ekklesia, in every age?

(8) If you hold (b), then you believe that this solitary verse is belatedly put in **1 Timothy** to *correct and revoke* the numerous N.T. texts that grant female Spirit-gift license ?

(9) Do we live under **law**, or in the freedom and redemption of the gospel?

(10) If the atoning work of Christ overturned for the believers one of the effects of the fall, which was the enmity between man and woman due to their complicity in crime (**Ephesians 2:11-22**), how can the continued denial of one half to minister to the other bring glory to the gospel?

(11) God clearly gave N.T. women the gifts of the Spirit to exercise in ministering and teaching from the day of Pentecost in A.D.30, until **1 Timothy** was written in about A.D.65.; this can be demonstrated. To insist that "women under constraint to be *silent*" is an "**eternal order of creation**", re-established by this *solitary* verse, - surely says something about **God's license for women to do otherwise for 35 years? Which was the mistake:**

(a) the **thirty years license by God?** or

(b) **your** interpretation of that **single** verse?

In Conclusion.

We cannot imagine that anyone will agree with *all* that we have said in this lengthy treatment. We commend the thoughts as a *small contribution* to the growth and welfare of the body of Christ; if we cannot agree, pray God we shall continue to fervently love one another.

(concluded).

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**REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES.**

(1) 2 Enoch 31:6; 4 Macc.18:6-8; Yebamoth 103b; Rabbah Genesis 18.6.

(2) **Elpis Israel**, pp.80-95. He suggests that the Serpent might have learnt of sexual matters by eavesdropping, in the garden of Eden, upon the "discourse" of the Elohim ("who knew what good and evil were **experimentally**"). So persuaded was he that the transgression was **sexual** (a "solacing with loves"), that he describes in graphic detail the fall of Adam and Eve in the words of the **Strange Woman Sonnet** of **Proverbs 5** (p.84); and then ultimately distorts the words of **Gen.3:6** by "conjoining" (sic) them with the words of **Gen.4:1**, to say, "And Eve gave unto her husband and **he did eat with her**. And Adam knew his wife; and she conceived. And the eyes of them were both opened, and they knew that they were naked." Against this, we observe:

**1. Gen. 3:6** clearly states that Eve **ate**, and then gave of the fruit to her husband, who **ate after her in point of time** (and not **with her as a sexual act**, as p. 93-4 postulates). **2.** The "eyes of them both were opened" as a result of the "eating" (v.7); whereas the sexual conceiving of Cain happened later, in **chapter 4**.

It is one thing to compare Scripture with Scripture, but it is **inadmissible to reconstruct the text within inverted commas**, to support a Judaistic, Augustinian *hypothesis* (that sex is a "state of animal excitation" introduced into the world by woman), and then **put that arrangement forth as the Word of God**, and the "reason" for keeping women in subjection. [Yet, by this device we witness the birth of one of our most tenacious Christadelphian traditions, a tradition that undermines the integrity and dignity of woman, and that mitigates an unbiased reading of wholesome Scripture such as **The Song of Solomon**, for example.]

(3) Philo, **Questions on Genesis**, 1.33, 46; Pirke Rabbi Eliezer 15a.

(4) see **Forum**, No.32, April, 1993, pp 20-24.

(5) J.M.Robinson (ed.), **The Nag Hammadi Library in English**, New York, 1983; B. Layton (ed.), **The Rediscovery of Gnosticism**, 2 vols., Leiden, 1980-81.