

Women in the First Century and Today

To talk about **WOMEN** now, is to talk about **human rights**. "**Feminist theology**" is an increasingly significant feature of **theological reflection today**.

Feminist studies.

The rise of the **women's liberation movement** from the mid-20th century helped to create a **feminine critical consciousness**. That consciousness, **interacting with the Bible** and Christian **traditions**, has called for a **new investigation of past paradigms** *(Adrian D.), and a **new agenda** of study. [No doubt the reason for this particular study].

This **agenda** increasingly focuses on **hermeneutical** (interpretation) **questions**. How do we **interpret** what is seen as the **male orientation** of the Bible?

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### 1.HUMAN RIGHTS - A BRIEF HISTORY.

**Definition:** Human rights regard **individual** persons as **unique** beings. They do not denote those rights which a person has as a member of a **community**.eg. a political vote.- but those the person has over **against** a community.They are **a radical rejection of every form of totalitarianism-** political, industrial, trade-union, **ecclesiastical**, etc. [I think we would have little difficulty in identifying with such rejections, with a possible reservation in the **ecclesiastical** field. We would submit there, I think, if we were sure it was **God's will**. But that's what this study and reflection is about. What **is God's attitude to women** in the ecclesia, in the 1st century and now?]

The doctrine of human rights received its first spiritual impulse from **Renaissance humanism**, in the idea of **the fundamentally free, autonomous and self-determining human person**.

(1) **Locke** and **Kant** translated this into **political** terms, in which the only task of the state is to protect the **freedom** and **rights** of its **individual citizens**.

(2) **Adam Smith** (1723-90) and **David Ricardo** (1772-1823), and in modern times **Milton Friedman** (b.1912), and others, translated this into **economic** terms.

(3) Explicit **Christian thinking** on human rights is of more recent origin. But the issue itself is longstanding. From a **biblical viewpoint**, human rights are founded:

(a) not in the fundamental freedom of humanity, but in

(b) the revealed truths that:

(1) **men and women are the creation of God**

[**Gen.1:26-27**, And God said, Let us make **MAN** in our image, after our likeness: and let **THEM** have dominion over the fish...fowl...cattle...and over all the earth...**27**, So God created **MAN** in his own image, in the image of God created he **him**; **MALE** and **FEMALE** created he **THEM**.]

**confirmed in the person and work of Jesus Christ**

[**Rom.8:29**, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the **IMAGE of his Son**, that he might be the **firstborn among many brethren**.

**Col. 1:15**, (Jesus) is the **IMAGE** of the invisible God, the *firstborn of every creature* **and as the BEARERS of GOD'S IMAGE have a dignity and worth guaranteed by their creator.**

[ **Gen. 9:6**, Whoso sheddeth **MAN'S** blood, by **MAN** shall his blood be shed: for in the **IMAGE OF GOD** made he **MAN**.

**James 3:9**, Tongue...bless we God...curse we men, which are made after the **SIMILITUDE OF GOD**.]

(2) **THEY are called and enabled (by that same word) to be STEWARDS OF GOD'S CREATION.**

[ **Gen. 1:28**, And God blessed **THEM**, and God said unto **THEM**, Be fruitful...multiply...replenish...subdue...have dominion...

(not to the **MALE** only, but to the **MAN** [ie. **MALE** and **FEMALE**] ...He blessed **THEM**, and said unto **THEM**, Be fruitful...Can you imagine how a **MALE** could be fruitful without a **FEMALE**? So, in **Gen. 9:1,2**, And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be **FRUITFUL**, and **MULTIPLY**, and **REPLENISH the earth**. [Can you imagine this without **FEMALES**? The Bible is written in a "**MALE**" oriented language, but we need to accommodate it lest we unnecessarily exclude **FEMALES** from it, when they are clearly implied.]

Even in **Psalms 8:6-9**, which has a distinct Messianic thrust, and therefore a special reason to stress the **MALE** aspect of the **Gen. 1:28** quote, there is no discounting of the **FEMALE** share in the dominion ("thou madest **him** to have dominion"); for the Lord himself in **Matt. 19:4**, in answering the question on divorce, says, "Have ye not read, that he which made **them** at the beginning made them **MALE** and **FEMALE**?"]

(3) **That is why MAN has a responsibility toward himself and others before God.**

[ **Matt. 22:35-40**, "The great commandment? Thou shalt love the Lord thy **God** with all thy heart, soul, mind...and thy **neighbour** as thyself."

**Acts 4:19**, (Impotent man, Peter), "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto **you** [men] more than unto **God**, judge ye." **Acts 5:29**, "We ought to obey **God** rather than **men**"

(4) Sometimes, the **individual's human rights** need to be exercised against the **state**. eg.

(a) **Naboth to Ahab, 1Kings 21:3**, "The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you."

(b) **Paul, Acts 16:37**, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, **being Romans**, and have cast us into prison...let them come themselves and fetch us out."

(5) Sometimes against the **family**:

**Matt. 8:21-22**, (disciple) "...suffer me first to go and bury my **father**" ...(Jesus) "Follow me, and **let the dead bury their dead**."

(6) Sometimes, I suspect we are tempted to limit the **morality** God expects of us to **covenant** relationships. We limit our "**neighbour**" (despite the parable of the good Samaritan). ["It's O.K. to rip off the Gentile"].\*\* **Amos 2:1**, "Thus saith the LORD; for three transgressions of **MOAB**, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he

burned the bones of the king of **EDOM** into lime" ...Yet **EDOM** was an enemy of Israel, was not in covenant relation with God, and, anyway, was already marked down for judgement.cf. **Amos1:11**, had pursued his brother (Israel) with the sword. You might have expected **MOAB** should get a medal. But, no, God expects **proper behaviour from all mankind**. Man is without excuse, covenant or no, **because the invisible things from creation...**

**Human rights**, as defined above, **are established from the beginning**. I think, sometimes, unduly influenced by our **entrenched middle-class values**, we tend to deny some of the basic human rights, pertaining to the **essential integrity of MAN**. And I think this is particularly true in our attitude towards **WOMEN**. Certainly, our celebrated "**AUSSIE HUMOUR**" mirrors this continual onslaught against the **dignity of the weaker sex**. "Mother-in -law" jokes, and "playful jibes" at the "**little woman**", abound. Three recent eggs., you **might** recognize them: (not having a shot; just making a pt.)

1. What's the definition of a "**mixed emotion**"? Answer: Your **mother-in-law** driving over a cliff in your new Ferrari.

2. How can you prove that Adam was in **Paradise**? Answer: (To make the point) He didn't have a **cousin**. No, a **mother-in-law**.

3.What do you call a woman who's lost 90% of her **brain**? Answer: A **widow**.

All good "**fun**", and we don't **really** mean it, do we?

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I sense a measure of **intolerance** in our ranks toward any suggestion of **human rights** issues. At the slightest hint of "**rights**", one tends to hear murmurs of "radical","socialist" "ratbag","commie","bludger"etc., etc. But then what would you **expect** from the "Lucky Country", the children of convicts, kept willingly ignorant of the true situation in the world around them. Whose most intelligent reaction to any problem is the pragmatic, "She'll be right, Sport"? "No worries mate". "Ava go ya Mug". "Gettin' ya share of it?" "Blow you Jack, I'm all right". To the predictable response to any offer of enlightenment, "We **don't want** to know".

Patrick White, one of our greatest writers, recognised abroad, if not at home, a Nobel Prize winner in literature, in his **Australian Letters**, 1958, said, "In all directions stretches the **Great Australian Emptiness**, in which the **mind** is the least of the possessions, in which the **rich** man is the important man and in which the schoolmaster and the journalist rule what intellectual roost there is."

The Cultural Desert or "**Terror Australis**", as the Carlton poet **Garric Hutchinson** calls it. **Jonathan King**, a descendant of Philip Gidley King (Governor of N.S.W. 1800-1806), in his celebrated **Waltzing Materialism**, Harper and Row, 1978, said, "It has been said that the **heads** of many Australians are as **empty** as the interior of their country",p.135. And **John Spooner**, a famous cartoonist, has provided a celebrated illustration, to support this.

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**A Short Review:**

I rather suspect that a lot of the **antipathy to human rights** in our community stems from two sources:

(a) a gross **ignorance of recent and contemporary history**; and

(b) the **in-built conservatism** within our body. Whilst we would claim to be a **non-political group**, pointing to the fact that we **do not vote**, the fact is, from a perusal of our literature, that we have always struck a **strong sympathy with right-wing conservative policies**. The foundation for this, I believe, is to be found in the following 4 areas:

[i] our **doctrines on the nature of man** -these do not inspire us to **expect any help from man** in the alleviation of the world's woes, so we have **no sympathy** with the left's attempts to do so.

[ii] our **convict past** has **conditioned us to respect the right**; and

[iii] **John Thomas's** strong sympathies with the South in the **American Civil War** are well known. Less well known were the reasons for that. John Thomas was a **slave-owner** who made his living from a **tobacco** plantation, run by **slaves**. No wonder his sympathies were strongly with the right.

[iv] **Robert Roberts** made no secret of his **predilections toward the monarchy**. He fully expected **Queen Victoria** to voluntarily and cheerfully give up her crown to Christ when he returned. He wrote to British prime ministers, eg. **Gladstone**, and to the **Tsar of Russia**, hoping to influence them towards **involvement** in the events of Christ's return. He wrote severe **polemics against socialist movements** that sought to improve the lot of man. eg., **England's Ruin**. (For some inexplicable reason, the **Logos** movement in South Australia has ironically decided to re-print that booklet in the past couple of years, as a **"tribute"** to R.R., how-be-it with apologies for his extraordinary bigotry in expressed racism and biased political views.) The intention must be, somehow, as far as possible, to **perpetuate our "established position"**. It is, indeed, a curious publication.

I shudder to think how the public would view us, if someone were to send a copy of that pamphlet to **the anti-discrimination board**. We could be prosecuted for printing it.

**So where does the Christian stand in relation to human rights? Are we for them or against them?**

**Historically**, those individualistic concepts of human freedom and rights of which we have already spoken were **implemented** in various **Western countries in the 19th century**. They were **accepted in theory**, but in practical terms they did not offer substantial freedom to everyone, least of all the **manual labourers**. Instead, the hierarchy imposed **inhuman conditions** on the masses. This is well documented in history, and literature. In consequence, there existed **in the 19th century a basic denial of humanity**. This necessitated **labour legislation by governments** to protect workers and their families against **bad conditions of work** and **inadequate wages**, in order to guarantee **a minimum level of livelihood**. The process **accelerated** rapidly **after World War II**, at least in the highly industrialized countries. **Regulations** were sought, not only to **protect** individuals against unworthy conditions of work but also to **augment** their possibilities for wider development.

The result has been that, next to **classical human rights**, [ie. freedom of religion, conscience, expression of opinion, press, association, and disposal of property, equality before the law, security of the person, etc.]

**new social, economic and cultural human rights** were formulated, a number of which found a place in international documents such as:

- (1) the **United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)** and, with a more positive effect,
- (2) the **European Convention on Human Rights (1953)**, and in
- (3) several **national constitutions**.

These **new rights** include the right to life, food, clothing, housing, integrity of the human body, health insurance, unemployment benefit, old-age pensions, education, participation in culture, democracy in industry, etc.

And if all this has produced a **plurality** and **diversity** of **communities** in the society in which we live (eg., families, industries, trade unions, artistic companies, cultural organizations, schools, the choice of private and public, which I see freely exercised in our community, churches, colleges, universities) - they each have, within the **general cultural mandate** given by God in Eden, their own **specific tasks** and **responsibilities**.

"And the LORD God took the **MAN** (ie. **MALE** and **FEMALE**), and put him into the Garden of Eden, to **dress** it and **keep** it."

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So, when I hear brethren, living in a democratic country, enjoying **all the advantages of human rights** themselves (wrought by the labours of **others**), yet **denigrating** those human rights, with expressions, like, "No one has a right to live; only the **right to starve**." "The sooner the government **gets rid of the trade unions**, and brings in the **army**, the better this country will be." "If I had my way, I'd get rid of the **dole**, and make all these **bludgers** know they were alive." "As for these **WOMEN'S LIBS**. The Germaine Greers and their ilk. I know what I'd like to **do to them**. I'd put them in **their place**, all right."

Then, I thank God that **those Christadelphians don't vote**, but only **talk**. Imagine the state of the country they'd produce, if they ever got to wield **power**? Who would really like to live in Thailand? Or, Cambodia, or the Philippines, or even East Timor? Would you seriously **swap** Australia for one of those **undemocratic military states**?

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So, we come tonight to look at one of those human rights issues, in a series that will deal in some detail, with **WOMEN IN THE FIRST CENTURY AND NOW**. And, of course, our concern will be purely *from the perspective of the Word of God*. That will be **our ONLY AUTHORITY**.  
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The series, by request, will look particularly at the three areas of:

- (1) **TEACHING**;
- (2) **PRAYER**; and
- (3) **AUTHORITY**.

But before we start there is the little matter of a TEST, or exercise, to see how BIBLICAL we really are in these matters. Almost every Christian sect would claim that their views are BIBLICAL and consistent. As a Christian in a cross-cultural setting, I have no doubt that we all think that we have a thoroughly SCRIPTURAL APPROACH to such things as the role of WOMEN IN THE FIRST CENTURY AND NOW. We have long claimed in our literature that our ekklesial organization, based on the **Ecclesial Guide** by Robert Roberts is consistently like the first century model; in fact, we have gone into print many times to falsely claim that Lord Bertrand Russell, in **Power**, said that the Christadelphians are the closest to the first century tradition. He said nothing of the sort. And if he had, he'd have been wide of the mark. Our organization is based on a 19th century democratic model, bearing little resemblance to the ekklesia described in the N.T. [cf. J.B. Norris, **The First Century Ecclesia**, a Study in the Earliest Christian Organization and Development, The Christadelphian, Birmingham, 1951.]

Perhaps our understanding of the situation of WOMEN (ie. SISTERS) in the N.T. will fare better?

This exercise is designed to encourage reflection on what, in the N.T., we consider to be an ESSENTIAL ELEMENT, and what, though equally SCRIPTURAL, is never-the-less not as binding on the believer in the 20th century. Some items, we suggest, are ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL (ie. 1st principal stuff), whereas other items, whilst in the BIBLE, are more or less NEGOTIABLE. We recognize that they're there, but nobody would suggest that they are ESSENTIAL, and must be kept on pain of DISFELLOWSHIP, or would they?

I'm going to read out a number of statements, derived from the BIBLE. There are 20 questions in all. Please write down the numbers, 1-20. As I read out each statement, I am going to ask you to put a tick or a cross beside that number. Put a tick if you think that the statement is an ABSOLUTE ESSENTIAL, something that you are bound to keep if you are a Christian. Put a cross if you think it's an O.K. statement, ie. it's in the BIBLE, but it's not an essential item that you have to ABSOLUTELY OBEY, LITERALLY, or your credibility as a Christian is at stake. A tick if it's ESSENTIAL, a cross if you think it's NEGOTIABLE.

A TICK for those items (commands, practices, customs) ESSENTIAL to the church in every age.

A CROSS for those items (commands, practices, customs) which may not be VALID for the church in all times and places.

1. Greet one another with a holy kiss.
2. Don't take your brother to court.

3. Women should cover their heads when they pray.
4. We should wash one another's feet at the Meeting
5. A woman's voice heard is a **shame**, says the law.
6. It's O.K. to keep slaves, as long as you're kind to them.
7. Anoint with oil for healing.
8. Women are not to teach men anything.
9. Women are not to wear braided hair, gold, or pearls.
10. Remain single.
11. Seek the gift of tongues.
12. Lift up your hands when you pray.
13. People who don't work don't eat.
14. The female was made in the image of God.
15. Appoint elders and deacons in every ekklesia.
16. Confess sins one to another.
17. Give 10% of your income to God.
18. Be baptized by immersion.
19. Don't divorce your spouse for any reason.
20. No woman should have authority over any man.

~~~~~**Tally up your score. /20?** ~~~~~

**REFLECT:** By what process did you distinguish the "ESSENTIAL" from the "NEGOTIABLE"? What principles governed your decision? Be completely honest with yourself. Your PRINCIPLES should account for every decision.

**REFLECT FURTHER:** (1) Were the "TICKS" so important that you would not fellowship someone who disagreed with you?

(2) Are there some "ESSENTIAL" items a little more "ESSENTIAL" than others?

(3) Are there any items that had NOTHING EXPLICITLY to do with SCRIPTURE at all?

[Adapted from Hiebert, P.G., **Anthropological Insights for Missionaries**, Baker Book House, Michigan, 1991, p.57.]

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Now that we know **ourselves**, perhaps, a little better, we can address the series. I don't propose to deal with **one topic per night**; though I do propose to deal with the three topics within the scope of the three nights. I think I should also **say something**, and perhaps now is the best time to say it. Someone asked me recently whether I had in mind **to change the constitutional**

position of WOMEN in the ekklesia, by electing to speak on the subject at Hurstville for three nights? Let me say:

(1) **I did not seek this appointment**; I was asked to do it last October by your Secretary, who had no idea of **my** position on the subject. Nor did he give me any indication or leads on how he, or any one else, would like to see it treated. Nor was I informed then, or since, of any "official position" that your ekklesia may have adopted. I have once or twice casually enquired if there was an "**official line**", and from the variety of responses I have had, I have concluded that **you do not have one**. Am I right?

(2) My essential task is to endeavour to **explain the BIBLICAL POSITION of WOMEN**, as revealed in Scripture. It is a **hermeneutical** task. No doubt we will **compare** that position with what we see prevailing in the ekklesias **today**. If there is any great **DIVERGENCE**, and **you** feel in any way compelled to **close the gap**, or, maybe, **widen** it, for whatever reason, that is something **you** may subsequently choose to do. But the constitutional thing is something with which **I** desire to have **no** part.

(3) Perhaps I might now, briefly, indicate **my position**. I do not believe the **model** generally adopted by the modern ekklesias, **for the role of the sister**, nearly **approximates** that practised by the **1st century**. In fact, the whole model given us by Robert Roberts, in **The Ecclesial Guide**, properly titled, **A GUIDE to the Formation and Conduct of Christadelphian Ecclesias** (Reprinted 1960), is, and by his own admission, **far removed** from that which prevailed in the 1st century. [see, pp.12-14, particularly. Sectn.14.-Absence of the Spirit's Appointments. 15.-The Necessities of the Present Situation. 16.-Mutual Consent the Basis of Order. 17.-Exercise of Authority out of the Question. Bro. Roberts acknowledges the vast differences, and advances the "reason" for a **19th century Victorian democratic model**, rather than the kind that prevailed in the 1st century. He argues that we **can't have** a 1st century model, but that "in the mixed state of things prevailing at present...the **only practicable basis** of order in the circumstances existing in our dispensation is that of **mutual consent**-speaking **your** mind...As God is silent, there is no alternative but to make the best ...we can amongst ourselves, **aiming in all things to come close to His mind and will, as expressed in the written word.**"

(4) **I** am not convinced that it **is** impossible to have the 1st century model. The 19th century brethren maintained that it **was** impossible, in adopting the **Ecclesial Guide**. They claimed they **would have had** the 1st century model, **if** they could. Because **they believed they couldn't emulate it**, they settled for trying to "come close to **God's mind and will**", in what they formulated. The 20th century brethren, who claim that our established model is in accord with the 1st century model, are either **less honest, or less informed**, than their predecessors of last century

(5) Whilst I think we **could** come a lot closer to the 1st century model, I am not convinced that we **need to**. I'm not sure that that the message I get from my reading of the word of God tells me that what was good for the 1st century cultural times is **necessarily** what is best for every succeeding age. The cultural mileau is so different. I guess that is probably my main point in giving you the little exercise, just now. I find myself in sympathy with the 19th century brethren's desire to follow the "**mind of God**", rather than the **letter** of that word. It is not always possible to literally follow to **the letter the word** of God. Presence of the Holy Spirit, or no.

(6) I therefore find myself, curiously, in conflict with those who maintain that:

[i] we **are** following the 1st century model; when clearly, we are **not**; and

[ii] those who argue that we **should**.

Therefore, I do not come to this discussion proclaiming **what you should**, or shouldn't **do**, about the **woman's role** in the Ekklesia. **Whatever** you determine, should be with a knowledge of the "**mind of God**" on the matter to **guide** you, and then determine your **own house-rules** (for that's what they are) calmly and considerately with the **majority welfare** in mind. I really don't see the argument that says, "We should **all speak** with the **one voice**." That's a formula for "**ONE LOUD MOUTH AND A DUMB CROWD**."

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So, let's see what the Bible has to say on this important subject. What is God's teaching about WOMEN in the Scriptures?

Broadly, there are three major models for approaching this: 1. **The rejectionist model** which sees the Bible as promoting an oppressive **patriarchal structure** and **rejects** it as **not authoritative**. (I have, sadly, met this model in my years as a S.S. teacher). Some reject the whole Judaeo-Christian **tradition** as hopelessly male-oriented.

The **most radical** wings of this approach call for the restoration of the **religion of witchcraft** or are attracted to a **nature mysticism** based exclusively on **women's consciousness**.

[Two outstanding **historical works** on the causes that produced this **reaction** are:

(1) Jules Michelet, **Satanism and Witchcraft**, Tandem, Lon., 1965. -**A Study in Medieval Witchcraft**, Trans. by A.R.Allinson.

"The most important work on medieval superstitions yet written..." **Encyclopaedia Britannica**. "This was the age of fear and superstition, when witchcraft became the great force in people's lives. The age of the Black Mass, the reign of Satan...The age of potions, poisons, incantations and spells, of unbridled sensuality and unendurable squalor...The age of intolerance, the Inquisition, and ordeal by fire and water...This was an age when the darkness of horror hung over Europe."

(2) Peter de Rosa, **Vicars of Christ, The Dark Side of the Papacy**, Corgi Books, 1989.

"In this startling, informative, myth-shattering book, former Jesuit priest **Peter de Rosa** examines two millenia of popes- and reveals a papacy shrouded in scandal, intrigue, murder, and all-too human fallibility. Putting the papacy through the same rigorous scrutiny that the Catholic Church demands of its candidates for sainthood, he plays **devil's advocate** to the holy fathers, from St. Peter to Pope John Paul II, and finds more sinners than saints."]

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2. The **loyalist** (or evangelical) **model** is in many ways the opposite of the reactionist. Refusing to discredit the whole testimony of the Bible, it finds **no radically oppressive sexism** in its message.

But **the model divides** in its approach to the biblical material.

[i] **One form of the model** accepts the traditional argument for order through hierarchy. Woman's place in God's created order is said to be fulfilled in her role of submission and

dependence in church and family. At the same time, it insists that such a divine pattern of leadership as an ordained male prerogative, adhered to with love, does not diminish the true freedom and dignity of women.

[ii] The **other loyalist model** argues that the full biblical data calls for an egalitarianism and mutual submission. It fears the collapse of the hierarchical framework into a form of female subordinationism.

3. The **reformist** (or liberation) **model** shares with the **rejectionist** a deep consciousness of alleged **patriarchal chauvinism** in the Bible and church history, and a desire to overcome it. But its **commitment to** a perception of human **freedom** (liberation) **as the central message of the Bible** keeps it from a wholesale discarding of the traditions.

[i] Some concentrate their work on **exegetical study**, "reading between the lines" of the so-called chauvenist texts **to bring to light the positive role of women** in the biblical sources.

[ii] Others struggle with what they see as "unusable" male bias in the Scripture and **search for a "usable" hermeneutic of liberation in the PROPHETIC tradition**. In texts not dealing specifically with women, they find a call to create a **just society** free from any kind of social, economic or sexist oppression.

[iii] The most **radical** wing of this model calls for a more far-reaching feminist "hermeneutic of suspicion". It begins with an **acknowledgement** that the **Bible** has been **written**, translated, canonized, and interpreted **by males**. Under the control of this hermeneutic, **the canon of the faith itself has become male-centred**. Through thoroughgoing theological and exegetical reconstruction, **women must enter again the centre stage that they occupied in early Christian history**.

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[My position is no.3; Bev's, I think, is no.2]

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PATRIARCHALISM is clearly the orientation of the O.T. By far the **majority of images for God are masculine**, though occasionally feminine imagery is used to describe his attributes.

[i] The Lord is **nursing mother**. ("Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee". **Isa.49:15**.)

[ii] **midwife**. ("But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly. **Psalm 22:9-10**.)

[iii] **wife**. (Moses called his second son, Eliezar, "for the God of my father, said he, was mine HELP" s.w. "helpmate" that Eve was to Adam, **Gen.2:18**, "I will make him a HELP meet (suitable) for him.")

"There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy HELP...", said Moses in **Deut.33:26**.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my HELP. My HELP cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth." **Psalm 121:1-2**, said David.

[iv] One of the most beautiful thoughts I have come upon in Scripture, was the chance discovery I made in June, 1988, and wrote up at length in a **Forum** article, pp.4-27. In looking closely at the blessing of Jacob upon Joseph, in **Genesis 49:26**, the word "progenitors", somewhat to our surprise, we learn from the margin might mean "the ancient mountains". Many modern translations confirm this. Our research, too lengthy to record here, led us to the discovery that the Hebrew word "**harah**" meaning "**conceive**" (swelling like a mountain), by aphoeresis (front-cut) becomes "**har**" meaning "**mountain**". A woman who conceives is swollen like a mountain, cf. **Gen.4:1;16:4**. The imagery is concrete, and it is beautifully appropriated as a suitable aphorism to describe the "**majesty**" of God which gathers to swelling greatness in Scripture such as Psa.21:8; 98:6; 104:1; 111:3; Job 40:10; 39:20; Isa. 30:30; Dan. 10:8.

God's **MAJESTY** is likened to a **PREGNANT WOMAN**.

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(1) The period of **uncleanness** for the birth of a son was seven days, for a daughter fourteen (**Lev.12:1-5**).

(2) A Hebrew **daughter sold into slavery** could not go free "as menservants do" (**Exodus 21:7**).

(3) A man could **divorce** his wife if he found "something indecent about her" (**Deut. 24:1-4**), but nowhere could a woman do so.

(4) A "**bride-price**" [the mohar] was given to the family of the bride to seal the marriage covenant. A "**dowry**". (**Genesis 34:12; 1 Samuel 18:25**) "If a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife. If her **father utterly refuse** to give her unto him, he shall **pay money** according to the dowry of virgins".

(**Exodus 22:17-18**).

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Similarly, **PATRIARCHALISM = transcended in O.T. LEGISLATION**

(1) Both father **and mother** are deserving of honour (**Ex.20:12**), "Honour thy father and thy **mother**: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee." (the 5th commandment; & 1st with promise, **Eph.6:1**).

(2) Woman shares the sabbath rest (**Ex.20:8**). All to remember

(3) Benefits from reading the Law (**Dt.31:9-13**), "...read this law before all Israel in their hearing...people...men, and **women**, and children, and thy stranger...that they may hear...learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:"

(4) Both **adulterer** and adultress to be put to death (**Lv.20:10**), "And the **man** that committeth adultery with another man's wife...the **adulterer** and the adultress **shall surely be put to death**."

(5) Food taboos are mandatory for **both** sexes (**Lv.11**).

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**The O.T. was sensitive to the dangers of abuse of power.**

**Power** in human hands is easily corrupted. It is used by some to **oppress** others.

[i] **Eccles.4:1**, "So I returned, and considered all the **oppressions** that are done under the sun: and behold the tears of such as were **oppressed**, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their **oppressors** there was **power**; but they had no comforter.

[ii] **Ec.8:9**, "...man **lords it over others** to his own hurt."

[iii] **Micah 2:1-2**, "Woe to them that devise iniquity...they practise it...in the **power** of their hand...they covet fields, and take them by violence...so they **oppress** a man.." [iv] **Jas.5:1**, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you.

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The **God-given gifts** to create and bring harmony to the world (**Gen.1:28**, "Be fruitful...and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion...") **are used to exploit** and humiliate others. In the spiritual realm "the **power** of the Spirit" (**Rom.15:13**, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the **power** of the Holy Spirit.") has been **falsely understood as an impersonal force** that can be used to **manipulate** people in ways which **deny their integrity** and **dignity**.

(cf. **Acts 8:18-23**, "And when **Simon** saw that through laying on of the apostle's hands the **Holy Spirit was given**, he **offered** them **money**, Saying, Give me also this **power**, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Thy money **perish** with thee, because thou hast thought that the **gift of God** may be **purchased** with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy **heart is not right** in the sight of God. **Repent** therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity".)

Evil results from the corruption of spiritual things:

(1) ***Politically.***

[a] **Acts 13:27**, "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they **knew him not**, nor yet the **voices of the prophets** which are **read every sabbath day**, they have **fulfilled** them in condemning him."

[b] **1 Cor.2:6,8**, "...we speak **wisdom** ...not the wisdom of this world...which none of the princes of this world knew: for **had they known** it, they would **not have crucified** the Lord of glory."

(2) ***Intellectually.***

Col. 2:8, "Beware lest any man spoil you through **philosophy** and **vain deceit**, after the **tradition of men**, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

(3) ***In Religious Observance.***

[a] **Gal.4:3**, "Even so **we**, when we were children, were in **bondage** under the **elements** of the world." [essentially speaking of the **Jew under the law**.]

[b] **Col.2:20**, " Wherefore if ye be **dead** with Christ **from the rudiments of the world**, **why** as though living in the world, are ye **subject to ordinances**, Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and **doctrines of men**?" [this to **Gentiles**.]

(4) and ***in the struggle to maintain a faithful witness to Christ***

Eph.6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against **powers**, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against **spiritual wickedness in high places.**"

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Much of the **concern for** justice in the law on behalf of the **oppressed**, focusses clearly on the **woman**. God is fully aware of the ***woman as a unique object of chauvinist oppression.***

[a] ***The husband could divorce his wife***, but she was **protected by a letter of repudiation**; its intention was to **guard** her dignity **from an easy abuse** of the permission.

[b] ***Widows.(Ex.22:-24)***, "Ye shall **not afflict any widow**, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they **cry** at all unto me, I will surely hear...and **I will kill you** ...and your wives shall be widows..."

[c] ***Women taken captive in war.(Deut.21:10-14)*** "Seest among the captives a **beautiful woman**, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife; Then thou shalt bring her home to thy house: and she shall **shave her head**...put on the **raiment of her captivity**...**bewail** her father and her mother **a full month**: and **after that** thou shalt be...her husband, and **she shall be thy wife**. And it shall be, if thou have **no delight in her**, then thou shalt **let her go**...thou shalt **not sell her** for money, thou shalt ***not make merchandise of her***, because thou hast **humbled her**."

[d] ***Deut.21:15-17***, "If a man have **two wives**, one **beloved**, and another **hated**, and they have born him **children**...and if the **firstborn** son be **hers that was hated**...he shall **acknowledge** the son of the hated for the firstborn..."

[e] ***Exodus 22:21-27, Virgins*** seduced,- not to vex or oppress a **stranger**,- **orphans** and **widows**,- not to lend to the **poor** of the people with usury,- cannot keep **pledged raiments** after sunset,...are all **samples** of that ***sensitivity for justice and compassion towards those marginalized by a sinful and cruel society.***

For all the **shortfall** in the description of **women in Hebrew society and worship**, we must remember they were **part of the existing cultural mileau**, and judge their conditions against the cultural practices of those times. The **conditions** of the Hebrew women were constantly ***balanced by legislation and history that point forward to a fuller, more liberating place for women in the redemptive plan of God.*** I would hate to think any serious-minded brother would try to argue that the Hebrew woman "had it made" in the terms of the Mosaic Law,.given the items we have considered above.

**Positives:**

Traditional social roles for women are overturned.

eg. (1) ***Children are not the special province of women.***

**Prov.1:8**, "My son, hear the instruction of thy **father**, and forsake not the law of thy mother." cf.**Prov.6:20.**

(2) ***The ideal wife works outside as well as inside the home. Prov.31:10-31***, cf.v. 16, "She considereth a **field**, and **buys it**...she **plants a vineyard**...18,...her **merchandise** is good... 24,

She **makes fine linen**, and **sells it**; and **delivers girdles unto the merchant**." She does all this, as Steve Cook has pointed out to me, while **her husband** (23) "...is known in the gates, when he **sits among the elders** of the land."

(3) Though not usual, **women held every office** in Hebrew society , **except priest**. (Some people argue that, because a woman **could not** be a priest **in the O.T.**, she cannot be in the N.T., or later. That was certainly not what **Peter** thought. cf. **1 Pet.2:5**, where he speaks of the "**holy priesthood**" of believers, **men and women**.)

[a] **Prophetess**, [ n'vee-ah,f.] 5031.

**II Kings 22:14**, "...**Huldah** the prophetess, the wife of Shallum...(now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college)..."

**Neh.6:14**, "...the prophetess **Noadiah**, and the rest of the prophets,

**Ex.15:20**, "**Miriam** the prophetess..."

**Isa.8:3**, "I went unto **the prophetess**;" (ie. Mrs.Isaiah).

**Jud.4:4**, "**Deborah**, a prophetess, (lit. a woman a prophetess)

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[cf. contrasting interpretation in new book published, 1992, by **The Testimony, Man and Woman**, by Michael Lewis. ch.3, Old Testament Foundations: "Prophetesses", pp. 34-38. "There are **three** prophetesses in the **O.T**: Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah."

1."Only **males** can **interpret** and **put into practice the teaching** that is contained in the word of God." Eve was **deceived**, and so all women must be silent. "

2. Prophecy is O.K. It is not **interpreting**. Male **dominance** is still in place.

3. Anyway, **three** women were "**allowed**" to prophesy, only to **shame** the men who **should** have been doing it. It wasn't **really** a woman's role, but was meant to spur the men back to their proper role. cf. **Isa.3:12**, "As for my people, children are their oppressors, and **women** rule over them." This is the **rebuke**.

4. Note that **Miriam was not equal to Moses**. (the fact that Aaron wasn't, either, is ignored). "I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam", **Micah 6:4**, pp.35,36.

5. **Deborah**. "The **main lesson** to be learned from Deborah is that **men** should take the lead (**5:2**), then all goes well with the nation." God raised up Deborah as a **rebuke** and a lesson to the people, reinforced by Deborah telling Barak that the honour of victory would be to **a woman**. (**Judges 4:9**).

Deborah **rejoices** when the men take their **proper place**. She and Jael courageously played their **part within the framework of male leadership** (**5:24-27**). They worked with men in the **way** the Lord originally **intended**. "The stars in their courses." (**v.20**). Only when the **men resumed their God-given role** did triumph ensue." Deborah sent for Barak and through the Spirit instructed **him** to head the nation." [Note, the **author's emphasis**. He puts "**him**" in italics. If I were to read that same sentence with the emphasis rather on "**sent**" and "**instructed**", as, "Deborah **sent** for Barak and **instructed** him to head the nation." What a **difference** there would be in implied argument. Of course, we all have our bias according to the "interpretative box" we

work from. The appeal, or otherwise, of Michael Lewis's "interpretation" will depend upon our established position. It would surprise me not at all if some of you find his "case" compelling, definitive, and final. It depends, largely, on where you are coming from. I can but register, that I find it repelling, "woolly", and totally unconvincing. You are entitled to say, "But that's because you see it all from where **you** are." True. I can but make my own stand, from **where I am**. I find his use of "**supportive**" Scriptural evidence is pathetic, and **distorted**. [eg.His "interpretation" of the curse, p.17, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (**Gen.3:16**), when linked with **Gen.4:7**, which he says is a reference to Cain's struggle for the birthright with Abel, leaves one gasping.] I have little confidence in this type of exegete. He has a pre-conceived plan (which he calls, "***the principles that form the core of this study***", viz. the **headship of the male; only a man can be a teacher, or a leader, or an interpreter** p.34), against which he places **selective** quotes, many of which are **not relevant**, to reinforce and bolster it up.

Lewis concludes his assessment of Deborah:

There was **no question** of vaunting herself; her "**presence**" at the battle was **only** at Barak's request.

(Then comes the final implied verdict) ***Finally, the record in Hebrews lists Barak only amongst the faithful judges (Heb11:32)***. Since the women are excluded (by this touchstone argument of "silence"), are we to conclude that all the male judges of Israel also missed out, as being not up to the mark? There is too much of this kind of suggestive "argument" for my liking in this book.

6. **Male authority is upheld**. "Indeed",he says, "a **true** understanding of the work of the prophetess (by which he means, **his** understanding) **reinforces the principles that form the core of this study.**"p.34. Only too true, sadly. Needless to say, I wouldn't recommend the book.

(Claims, in the Introduction, to have made the attempt to read **all** existing **Christadelphian expositions** of relevant Scriptural passages...but admits that the study is ultimately his **own**, and accepts responsibility for the conclusions presented.) A very **subjective** interpretation.

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[b] **Judge, Jdg.4:4**, "And **Deborah**, a prophetess,...she **judged** Israel at that time."

[c] "***the wise***".

**II Sam.14:2**, "And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a **wise** woman, and said unto her..."

How would you **recognize** a **wise** woman, if she couldn't speak, write, teach, interpret, or communicate in any way to a man? And how could Joab expect her to **teach** David anything?

**II Sam.20:16**, "Then cried a **wise** woman ...unto Joab...I am one of them that are peaceable and **faithful in Israel**: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?...Then the woman went unto all the people **in her wisdom**."

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HOW DO WE RECONCILE WHAT SEEM CONTRADICTORY (or at least discontinuous) TRADITIONS WITHIN THESE BIBLICAL TRADITIONS?

I think the **answer** lies in what we perceive the **purpose** and **function of Scripture** to be. This is the **essence**, and why I have delayed addressing the set topic, until now.

1. I believe the **Bible** is a book of **progressive and special revelation**, that comes from God to man. It is the **only source of knowledge** concerning God and his **purposes** at present extant or available in the earth, that it is **wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers**, and is consequently **without error** in all parts, **except** such as may be due to errors of **transcription or translation**.

(2Tim.3:16; 1Cor.2:13; 14:37; Heb.1:1; 2Pet.1:21; Neh.9:30; John 10:35).

2. That God, in his kindness, conceived a **plan of restoration** which should ultimately rescue mankind from destruction, and people the earth with sinless immortals. The **entire Bible message**, including that about **women, revolves**, not around **(1) patriarchalism**, or

(2) egalitarianism, but

around God's covenant, - his **redemptive dealings** with **humanity and the creation**.

(Rev.21:4; Jn.3:16; 1:29; 2Tim.1:1; 1:10; 1Jn.2:25; Tit.1:2; Rom.3:26).

3. The closest thing to a **Bible definition of who we are, man or woman**, is that **we are created in the "image of God"**. **(Gen.1:27)**. This "definition" holds it all. As we have already shown, it **revolves around the common call** (without discrimination of the sexes) **to each of us** (in unity with one another and creation) **to serve God, and each other**.

We are obliged to serve God, and one another. The **call to life in covenant** is **beyond both feminism and patriarchalism**.

(Already we are **beyond patriarchalism**, it remains to shake off the restrictions of **sexual discrimination falsely called "Scriptural"**, to enjoy the **fulness of fellowship** within the covenant fold.)

4. We have already said that the Bible is a **progressive unfolding of God's will** for mankind (ie. **male and female**). **Its message has come in sundry and diverse segments** (bits and pieces, cf. **Heb.1:1**, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..."), but always its ultimate objective has been to restore the creation to what it was intended to be. You can call it **the Kingdom**, the day of the Lord, the restoration of all things spoken of by God in all his holy prophets since the foundation of the earth- it is the same thing: **Eden Restored, Paradise Regained**. It is man and woman's **marriage perfectly consummated**, as it should have been: "bone of bone, flesh of flesh, **they shall be one**." **(Gen.2:21-24)**.

Man's and woman's final covenant partnership will be manifest in God's achievement of his **original intent**, "No Jew, no Greek, no bond, no free, **no male, no female; all one** (in Christ Jesus)."

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\*\*\*\*\*. **WHY PROGRESSIVE?**

**(CLIMAX.) REVELATION IS PROGRESSIVE BECAUSE GOD REVEALS HIS COVENANT (Redemptive Purposes) TO MEN AND WOMEN IN (Divine) ACCOMMODATION TO THE CULTURAL PATTERNS IN EXISTENCE AT THE TIME HE GIVES IT.**

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WHAT IS ACCOMMODATION?

ACCOMMODATION or **condescension** (ie. stooping to a lower level, waiving one's superiority, patronizing, kind to inferiors, concession allowed for a time by a superior person to an inferior; not **compromise**, which is an **agreement** attained by **mutual** concession; a middle or mixed course or view between two opposed ones, reached by **settlement**), is a basic principle underlying all of God's dealings with mankind.

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It means that God speaks to us in a **form** that is suited to the **capacity** of the hearer, like a mother talking to a toddler, "See the choo, choot?(**Accommodation of language by sound association**. The child often learns to identify an object by the sound it makes. So, a "choo, choot" is a train, a "mooo" is a cow, a "woof woof" is a dog, etc.) Don't touch the burnie!"(**Accommodation of language by touch association**. It may be the valuable crystal that the baby is reaching for. Because he has previously touched a hot object and been burnt, he knows by experience what a "burnie" is. So, in the time constraint the mother says, "Don't touch the burnie!")

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The **supreme example of ACCOMMODATION is the INCARNATION**, where God speaks to us in the **most appropriate way possible**,

- in a **person of our race**, who was yet Emmanuel, God with us, God manifest in the flesh- yet was, during his natural life, of like nature nature with mortal man, being made of a woman, of the house and lineage of David.

(X. **Matt.1:23; I Tim.3:16; Heb.2:4; Gal.4:4; Heb.2:17.**)

Again, in the Bible **God's word** comes to us in a **human way**- through **human authors**, using **human language**, addressed to **particular human situations**.

(1) In the **1st century preaching**, and

(2) in the **Memorial Supper**

God speaks to us and communicates himself to us, but in a form that is best suited to our present condition-

(1) through **human agents** (the apostles), and

(2) through **earthly elements**, such as bread and wine.

ACCOMMODATION, rightly understood, means not that God communicates **falsehood** to us but that he communicates **truth** to us **in a manner** which is necessarily **less than perfect**.

Ezekiel recognized the limitations of his vision of God: **Ezekiel 1:** (5), "out of the midst of the fire came the **likeness** of four living creatures, And this was their appearance; they had the **likeness** of a man...and as for the **likeness** of their faces...(13) As for the **likeness** of the living creatures, their appearance was **like** burning coals of fire, and **like** the appearance of lamps. (16) The appearance of the wheels was **like** unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one **likeness** ...as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel...(26) And above the firmament that was over over their heads was the **likeness** of a throne...and upon the **likeness** of the throne

was the **likeness** of the appearance of a man...(27) And I saw **as** the colour of amber, **as** the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw **as it were** the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. (28) **As** the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.

THIS WAS THE APPEARANCE OF THE LIKENESS OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD." Who would say he **understands this picture perfectly?**

Paul acknowledged the **imperfection of all our present knowledge of God**, concluding, in **1Cor.13:9-12**, that "we know in **part**, and we prophesy in **part**. But **when** that which is **perfect is come, then** that which is in **part shall be done away**. **When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. FOR NOW WE SEE THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY; BUT THEN FACE TO FACE: NOW I KNOW IN PART; BUT THEN SHALL I KNOW EVEN AS ALSO I AM KNOWN.**

The Bible message comes to us in **human language** and in **thought forms of particular times**- not because the writers "got it wrong" but because that was the **only way** that God's word could **come to** such as **us**.

In his **condescension** God chooses to **submit his truth** to the **limiting process** of being **reduced to a humanly comprehensible level** rather than keep it to himself, pure, in heaven.

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[The idea of **ACCOMMODATION** was common in the early fathers (eg. **John Chrysostom**, c.344/354- 407) and was revived by **Calvin** and others.]

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GOD WAS ACCOMMODATING HIMSELF TO HUMAN CAPACITY.

The **patterns of culture** that sometimes existed when the word of God came to them were **existing in violation of God's explicit teaching**, eg.

- (1) **polygamous marriages,**
- (2) **flagrant male chauvinism.**

So the LORD allows

- (1) **Polygamy**, even laying down **rules for its regulation.**

Deut.21:15-17, "If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated..."

- (2) **Divorce**, because of the hardness of men's hearts.

Matt.19:8, "Jesus said unto them (the Pharisees), Moses because of the **hardness of your hearts** suffered you to put away your wives: but **from the beginning it was not so.**"

And this in spite of the divine **intent for lasting monogamy.**

Gen.2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his mother and father, and shall cleave unto his wife: and **they shall be one flesh.**"

Mark 10:4-9, "For the hardness of your heart Moses wrote you this precept, But **from the beginning** of the creation God made them male and female...and they twain shall be **one flesh...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.**"

EVEN IN THE N.T., THE PATTERN CONTINUES.

Culturally perceived improprieties prompt Paul to warn:

(1) against **married women** appearing in a worship service with **hair uncovered** (**1 Cor.11:4-7**)

"Every **man** praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every **woman** that **prayeth** or **prophesyeth** with her head **uncovered dishonoureth her head.**"

(2) or "**speaking in church**" (**1 Cor.14:34-35**).

"Let your women keep **silence** in the churches: for it is **not permitted unto them to speak**; but they are **commanded to be under obedience**, as also **saith the law**. And if they will **learn** anything, let them **ask their husbands at home**: for it is **a shame for women to speak in the church.**"

Our **liberty in Christ** must **not be curtailed**, but always it must be **exercised** with a view to **possible cultural misunderstandings by "outsiders"**. (**1 Cor.11:5, 13-14.**)

"Woman, **uncovered, dishonoureth** her head."

"**Judge in yourselves**: is it **comely** that a woman pray unto God **uncovered**? Doth not **nature** itself teach you, that,...if a woman have **long hair**, it is a **glory** to her: for her **hair** is given her for a **covering**."

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**Next Week:** Look specifically at the "**problem**" **texts in the N.T.**, that are said to **define the role of the Sister, then and now.**

**Week 3:** Will look at the **role of the Sister today.**

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**WOMEN IN THE 1ST CENTURY AND NOW.**

**PART 2.**

**Review: ACCOMMODATION.**

Last *week*, we introduced the focus of our study to be upon **ACCOMMODATION**. How God **condescends** to deal with man **as he is**. He reveals his covenant to men and women in divine **ACCOMMODATION to the cultural patterns in existence at the time he gives it**. It is a basic principle underlying all of God's dealings with mankind, and makes a sharp distinction between what we might call:

(1) the **PERMISSIVE WILL of God**; and

(2) the **ABSOLUTE WILL of God.**

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But the fact that God speaks to man when he is in a condition **less** than God would have him ultimately, does not imply that God therefore **approves** of **all** the features of that man's present condition, simply **because they exist at the time of meeting, and God does not** make **comment** upon them. The "**argument of silence**" is a particularly **tenuous** form of argument.

It **means** that God speaks to us in a **form** that is suited to the **capacity** of the hearer. It does **not** mean that God communicates **falsehood** to us, **but** that he communicates **truth** to us in a **manner** which is **necessarily less than perfect**. The **fault** lies with **us**, not God.

**** The concept is important:**

(1) I say, "God does not communicate **perfectly** to us."

(2) You reply, "Then you are saying that the **law** of God is not **perfect**?" [remembering that the Scripture says, "the law of the LORD **is perfect**, converting the soul..." **Psa.19:7**; or that Paul has said, "Wherefore **the law is holy**, and the commandment **holy, and just, and good.**" **Rom.7:12.**]

(3) I reply, "The law **is perfect, we are not**. There is a **shortfall** in the law coming to us, who are **weak**, which puts a **limitation** upon the law. With Paul's quote from **Rom.7:12**, in mind, let's look at what he says, in that **very context**, about the "holy, just, and good law".-It is **powerless, impotent** to save, he says. "For what the law **could not do**, in that it was **weak through the flesh, God (did)**- sending his own Son in the likeness of sin's flesh, and for a sin-offering, condemned sin in the flesh."

The law was **perfect; we were not**. Therefore God had to do what the law **couldn't** do. **What** couldn't the law **do**? Save man.

[Not that God ever suggested that the law was meant to give **eternal life**. Those who have thought that the **law held the promise of life** to those who kept it, just haven't read the Scripture right. eg **H.P.Mansfield** for many years, at least twenty years to my knowledge, in the **LOGOS magazine**, though in the end he may have come to see that he was wrong.]

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**Ezekiel's** vision of the "**appearance of the likeness** of the glory of the LORD" (**Ezek.1:28**), was **less** than perfect, or at least his **description** of that awesome sight was.

\* The **Apostle Paul** acknowledged the **imperfection of all our present knowledge of divine things** (**1Cor.13:9-12**), saying, "We know in **part**...but **when** that which is **perfect** is come, **then** that which is in **part** shall be done away...for **now** we **see through a glass darkly**; but **then** face to face: for **now I know in part**; but **then shall I know** even as also I am known."

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The **cultural patterns, in existence at the time** when God's word came to the recipients, were **often in need of reform** (which **may** well have been the reason that the word came to them at that time, eg. **John the Baptist**, in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, "**Repent** ye..." **Matt.3:1,2**). But at other times, the word came to people who were living in a **cultural pattern in VIOLATION of God's explicit teaching**.eg. **polygamous marriages, flagrant male chauvinism**. That there is **no specific mention of, or judgment on**, the particular moral abuse in **that** context (the reason for **that** communication being other),

can **hardly** be taken as **God's implied approval** of the ignored vice. The abuse will have its **judgment elsewhere** in the **accumulative "mind of God"** expressed in Scripture.

(1) This was certainly the case with **divorce**, where God even **allowed** it, and legislated to **ACCOMMODATE** it, because of the hardness of the cultural hearts of Israel's **men**; and women in Israel suffered the indignity and injustice of men's inhumanity to women for a thousand years, and that in spite of God's intent for **lasting monogamy**. (**Gen.2:18,24; Mk.10:4-9**).

(2) It was also the case with **polygamy**, where God even laid down rules for its **regulation**. (cf. **Deut.21:15-17**). Yet, this, in spite of his divine intent for **lasting monogamy**. (above).

Polygamy, the practice of having more than one wife at a time, occurs where women occupy a **low station** in human society. **Islam** permits a man four wives, but in recent times in some Mohammedan countries, notably in **Turkey**, this practice has been abolished by state law. According to the divine institution, **lawful marriage consists of one man and one woman**. Christ supported **monogamy** as the only rightful form of marriage (**Matt.19:4-6**). This, surely, closes the case.

** While the Bible does not **directly condemn** the plural marriages that occurred in the O.T., it frankly describes the evil effects of polygamy in the families of:

- (1) **Jacob** (**Gen.35:22; 37:18-28**);
- (2) **David** (**11 Sam.13:1-29; 15:1**); and
- (3) espec. **Solomon** (**1 Kings 11:1-12**).

The evils that came from **Abraham's marriage to Hagar** (**Gen.16:1-3**) are clearly depicted (**Gen.16:4-16**), and Paul makes clear the **absolute mind of God on the matter**, though speaking allegorically of the evils of works-righteousness, (**Gal.4:21-31**). v.30, "...what saith the Scripture?

Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall **not be heir** with the son of the free woman."

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(I will **return to the principle of ACCOMMODATION, later**, but first a few house-hold items.)

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JESUS AND WOMEN. (Rosemary's Question, last week.)

(1) 1st a quick look at contemporary **Jewish Attitude Toward Women**. (arising out of a point raised by Bill H.)

Jewish attitude toward women was **extremely discriminatory**. Many quotations can be cited from Jewish writings that manifest a **contemptuous attitude**. At times this may be exaggerated (as eg. the picture I may be tempted to gain of Hurstville Ecclesia's attitude, from putting together a number of recent "Mother-in-law" jokes heard round the traps.) Nevertheless, there is an **attitude** that frequently **demeans women**.

(1) For instance, **rabbis were encouraged not to teach them and not even to speak to them.**

(2) In **Ecclesiasticus 42:9-14**, there is an essay on, "**Women as a Source of Trouble**", which provides a list of ways in which a daughter is a "secret cause of wakefulness to a father: in her youth, when she is married, in her virginity, when she has a husband, etc." It concludes with the **advice**: "Sit not in the midst of women; for ***from garments cometh a moth, and from a woman the iniquities of a man. Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing a good turn.***" **"Better is the wickedness of a man than a pleasant-dealing woman."**

(3) In "**An Essay on Wives**", **Ecclesiasticus,36:21-27**, we read, "A woman will receive any man...He that getteth a wife entereth upon a **possession**...Where no hedge is, the **possession** will be laid waste..."

(4) "**A Sonnet**" in **26:14-15**, says, "A **silent** woman is a gift of the Lord, A **shamefast** woman is grace upon grace; And there is no price worthy of a **continent** (contained, self-restrained) soul." [the source of **1 Cor.14:33-36?**]

(5) "**An Epigram**", **25:13,14**, "Any plague but the plague of the heart; And any wickedness but the **wickedness** of a woman."

(6) **An Essay**, **25:16**, "The wickedness of a woman changeth her look, and **darkeneth her countenance** as a bear doth. Her husband will sit at meat among his neighbours, and when he **heareth** it he sigheth bitterly. **All malice is but little to the malice of a woman**: let the portion of a sinner fall on her! As the going up a sandy way is to the feet of the aged, so is a **wife full of words** to a quiet man... ***From a woman was the beginning of sin, and because of her we all die.*** Give not **water an outlet**, neither to a wicked woman **freedom of speech**. If she go not as thou wouldest have her, **cut her off from thy flesh.**"

(7) There was a **1st century prayer** that every male Jew prayed each day, "I thank you God that you have not made me a **barbarian**, a **slave**, or a **woman**." [Hence Paul's words, "Neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but all one in Christ Jesus." **Gal.3:28.**]

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(8) Women were openly despised in Judaism:

[a] "Happy is he whose children are **males**, and woe to him whose children are **females**" (**bQid**, 82b).

[b] "Ten qab of **empty-headedness** have come upon the world, **nine** having been **received by women** and **one by the rest of the world**" (**bQid**.,49b). [shades of the "widow" joke!]

[c] "Many **women**, much **witchcraft**" (**Hillel**, c.20 B.C.,2,7).

[d] The custom of **women preceding corpses** at funerals finds aetiological [causitive] explanation in their assumed **responsibility for death** (**Slav.En.**30:17; **Vit.Ad.**,1,3 etc.; **jSanh.**,20b, 44) H.L.Strack and P.Billerbeck, **Commentary on the N.T. with Talmud and Midrasch**, 1922, IV, 581.

[e] **Conversation** should not be held with a **woman** (cf.**John 4:9,27**), even though she be **one's own** (**bErub.**,53b; **Ab.**,1,5).

[f] "May the words of the **Torah** be burned, they should not be handed over to **women**" (**jSota**, 10a,8).

[g] The **wife** should neither bear **witness, instruct children,** nor **pray at table;** she is **not even bound to keep the whole Torah.** *Ibid.*,1226, Index.

[h] **Philo** says (*Op.Mund.*,165):"In us the **attitude of man is formed by reason,** of **woman by sensuality**". **Josephus** agrees.

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[i] *** ***The 1st formal prohibition of polygamy in Judaism*** was issued by **R.Gershom ben Jehuda,** in Mainz c.1000 A.D.,and it applied only to the West.[in answer to Harry's question].

cf. S.Krauss, ***Talmudic Archaeology,*** 11 (1911), 26ff.

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Gerhard KITTEL, ***THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE N.T.,*** Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1981, 1,p.782.

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Jesus and Women.

(1) From the beginning of the Gospels, the **birth and infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke** feature a remarkable number of **women.** The interest in **women,** particularly in Luke, goes far beyond what was normal in Jewish culture. [People have attributed **Luke's** concern and observation of women's matters to his training as a doctor. This is no doubt true, but it is **Jesus'** concern for the women that he is recording, primarily.]

(2) **Throughout his ministry, Jesus was willing to:**

[i] **speak to women,** cf.the Samaritan woman, in **John.4.**

[ii] **teach women,** cf. **Martha and Mary,** in **Luke 10:38-42.**

[iii] **admit women as his followers,** **Luke 8:1-3,** "He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, **And certain women,** which had been **healed** of evil spirits and infirmities, **Mary called Magdalene,** out of whom went seven devils, **And Joanna** the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and **Susanna,** and **many others,** which **ministered unto him** of their substance."

(Imagine the **objections** and **suspensions** that would cause.)

(3) **In his teaching, Jesus included women.**

They **feature in his parables:**

[a] the **leaven** (**Matt.13:33,** "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a **woman** took and hid...")

[b] the **importunate widow** (**Luke 18:1-5,** " There was in a city a judge...and there was a **widow**...Avenge me of mine adversary...I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Here, Jesus uses the **eg. of a woman** , to this end to **teach men** always to pray, and not to faint.

[c] the **ten virgins** (**Matt.25:1-13).**

[d] the **lost coin** (**Luke 15:8-10**, "What **woman** having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not...")

[e] He **related women to the Judgment** (**Matt.24:19**, "Woe to **them** that are **with child**...in those days." v.41, "Two **women** shall be grinding at the mill; the **one** shall be taken, and the **other** left.")

[f] He **knew what the widow's two mites were worth** to her (**Luke 21:1-4**, "This **poor widow** hath cast in **more** than they all...for **she of her penury** hath cast in **all the living** that she had".)

(4) His Ministry of Healing Extended to Women.

He had special **compassion to women in distress**.

[a] In **Luke 13:10-17**, he was prepared to incur the anger of the ruler of the synagogue by refusing to delay another day the **healing of a "daughter of Abraham"**, who had waited, crippled, for eighteen years. "Ought not **this woman**, being a **daughter of Abraham**, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, **be loosed** from this bond on the sabbath day?"

[b] In **Luke 8: 43-48**, a **woman**, sick for **twelve years**, touched the hem of his garment. "Who touched me?" he asked. She came trembling, and falling down before him, **declared** unto him before all the people of her "**unmentionable**" **sickness**, for which cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. 48, "And he said unto her, **Daughter, be of good comfort**: thy **faith** hath **made thee whole**; go in **peace**."

[c] In **Matt.15:21**, he responded to the importuning of a **Canaanite woman**, on behalf of her **daughter**, "grievously vexed with a devil". He **ignored** her. His disciples counselled sending her away. She was making a **nuisance** of herself. [Perhaps, here is the model of the "importuning widow"? Certainly showing **the men** what faith is about] "I am not sent but unto **the lost sheep of the house of Israel**." [**Elpis Israel**]. 25, Then came **she** and **worshipped him**, saying, **Lord, help me**. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the **children's bread**, and to cast it to **dogs**. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the **dogs** eat of the crumbs which fall from **their masters' table**. [I've heard this explanation about the "dogs" being really "little, domestic puppies", sort of "part of the family". Fact is, this woman is a **Canaanite**, and **far removed from the "family"**. No, I prefer to see this as an expression of **ELPIS ETHNE**: the hope of the Gentiles, that she is expressing.] 28, Then Jesus answered and said unto her, "**O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt**." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

[d] He raised the **daughter of Jairus** (**Matt.9:18-26**).

[e] The other **two resurrections** recorded relate to **women who are bereaved**:

[i] the **widow of Nain** (**Luke 7:11-17**), and

[ii] **Mary and Martha** (**John 11**).

[f] He is compassionate to a **prostitute**, knowing her sins to be many, but forgiving her for her expression of faith to him. (**Luke 7:36-50**). 44, "She hath washed my feet with **tears**, and **wiped** them with the **hairs of her head**. Since the time I came in she hath not ceased to **kiss my feet**."

[g] He shows compassion to the **woman taken in the very act of adultery (John 8:1-11)**. "He that is without sin among you, let him **first cast a stone** at her." 10, "**Woman, where are those thine accusers?** hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.**"

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(5) Jesus safeguarded the **rights of women** in a remarkable way in his laws on **MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE. (Matt.5:27-32; 19:3-9)**

**5:32**, "Whosoever shall **put away his wife...causeth her to commit adultery:** and whosoever shall **marry her** that is divorced **committeth adultery.**"

**19:4-6**, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the **beginning** made them **male and female**, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and **they twain shall be one flesh?** Wherefore they are **no more twain**, but **one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.**"

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(6) Under the law, **women could not be witnesses**, nor were they permitted to **speak in public**, at this time. After the **RESURRECTION** the Lord **appeared first to women**, made them the **initial bearers of the good news** , as **witnesses** to the apostles.(**Matt.28:8-10**; cf. **John 20:14-16**).

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(7) That **the Lord only appointed men to be his apostles**, is probably **ACCOMMODATION**, rather than **discriminatory**. The ministry of the apostles needed to be received and for that purpose the **attitude** of some of those to whom it would be **addressed** would need to be considered.

It is quite **possible** there was **a woman apostle** in the next generation. "**JUNIA**" is a woman's **name**. And Paul says of her in **Romans 16:7**, "Salute Andronicus and **JUNIA**, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note **AMONG THE APOSTLES**, who also were in Christ before me."

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On the whole, therefore, **Jesus' attitude and teaching about women was REVOLUTIONARY**, though I think it would be **wrong** to say the **primary point of his ministry** was to promote a **social revolution** in this area. "**My kingdom is not of this world**", he said to Pilate, "else **would** my servants fight."

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## **WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH.**

### **THE TOUCHSTONE CRITERIA.**

**The foundations of the Christian view** are to be found in the **two** factors:

(1) that it is **an order of creation** that man and woman . should become **one in inviolable monogamous marriage**, and

(2) that **the lordship of Jesus** radically removes **all the . differences** which separate them.

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THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE.

THE HISTORIC POSITION.

On the other hand, primitive Christianity, **in practice**, did **not** seem, to me, to deduce from these two factors an **absolutely new** and **predominantly spiritual ideal of woman and marriage**, nor did it seem to **champion any such view** with **revolutionary vigour**.

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#### **THE ENIGMA: The "Push-me", "Pull-me" Effect.**

In practice, it showed itself to be: **[OUTWARDLY]**

(1) **conservative**, and even, perhaps, **reactionary** from the standpoint of Hellenistic culture.

To this degree, it offered **a corrective to the desire of antiquity** for complete **emancipation**. (\*\*feminist frustration)

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On the other hand, for all its **reserve**, Christianity showed itself to be: **[INWARDLY]**

(2) **most adaptable**, and capable of **transforming inwardly** both:

[i] the **old** which it had inherited, [it surged **forward**] and

[ii] the **new** which it added to it. [it pulled **back**].

[it's as if it's in **top gear**, with the **brake** on!]

~~~~~\*~WILL~RETURN~TO~THIS~LATER.~~~~~

### **THE EARLY CHURCH PICTURE.**

The **broadening** brought about by the **attitude of Jesus** is reflected at many levels in the early church.

#### **(1) WIDOWS HONOURED.**

**Widows**, who had previously had a hard time of it in society, were **now supported (Acts 6)**, indeed they almost assumed a **special office (1Tim.5:3-16)**, "**Honour widows...she that is a widow...is desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. And these things give in charge that they may be blameless...Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.**"

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(2) MANY WOMEN MINISTERS WITH PAUL.

The apostle **Paul** was **surrounded by women co-workers**. In **Romans 16**, ten out of the twenty-nine persons mentioned are **women**. And it is **the way he characterizes the women** that he lists here that is interesting, for a number of them are spoken of and presented in the same terms as the foremost of his male collaborators- Timothy, Apollos, Epaphras, Titus. The verb "**work very hard**" (**16:6, 12**)[**A.V.** "**in labour**"] is used of **ministerial** service.

(**A.V.**) v.6, "Greet Mary, who **bestowed much labour** on us."

cf. (**N.I.V.**) "Mary,...**worked very hard** for you."

v.12, "Salute Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who **labour** in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which **laboured much** in the Lord." [The **A.V.** obscures the fact that these are **women**.]

Understandable in a **16th century English translation**. It's not that the translators were **unaware** of the fact. They wouldn't have thought it **important enough** to notice. You could be forgiven for thinking "they **laboured** long over a hot stove, barefoot".-Their **labour** was of **domestic duties**. But cf. the (**N.I.V.**), "Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, **those women who work very hard in the Lord**. Greet my dear friend Persis, **another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord**." * These were **women who worked hard in the Lord, preaching and ministering** the gospel, as did the men.

Why denigrate them? Paul didn't.

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### (3) **PHOEBE IS A DEACON.**

**Phoebe (16:1)** is a **deacon**, ie. one who **presides**. This fact is also **obscured** in the **A.V.**, which reads, "I commend unto you **Phoebe** our sister, which is a **servant** of the church which is at Cenchreae...assist her in whatsoever **business** she hath need of you."

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(4) **PRISCILLA PREACHES THE GOSPEL.**

Priscilla is associated with her husband, **Aquila**, in **preaching the gospel**. Mentioned here as well as in the **Acts**.

(**Acts 18:18-19, 26**). Paul left Corinth, taking **Priscilla and Aquila** with him. He left **them** in Ephesus. Why? Clearly, **to preach**. What happened? v.29, "(a certain Jew named **Apollos**, born at Alexandria, **an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures**) began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when **Aquila and Priscilla** had heard, **they** took him unto them, and **expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly**."

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### (5) **CHRISTIANS (both MEN and WOMEN) ARE PRIESTS.**

In **1 Peter 2**, Christians of **both sexes** are called "living stones-built into a spiritual house to be a holy **priesthood**"; and in **Rev.1:6; 5:10**, believing **men and women** are said to be "a kingdom and **priests**."

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(6) **WOMEN RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT, and the LICENCE TO SPEAK.**

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is **named** as being with the **women** and the disciples (120 in all), in the upper room when **the Holy Spirit came upon them all**, and they **all** received the promised gift. (**Acts 1:13-15; 2:1-3.**)

Acts 2:4, "And they were **all** filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to **speak with other tongues**, as **the Spirit gave them utterance**...14, Peter standing up with the eleven, said,...16, "**this is that** which was spoken by the prophet **Joel**;...17, I will pour out of my Spirit upon **all** flesh: and your sons and your **daughters** shall **prophesy**...18, And on my servants and on my **handmaidens** I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall **prophesy**:"

NB. (2:4), **WOMEN** "were **filled with the Holy Spirit**" and **spoke** with tongues. It was **the Spirit** that gave them **utterance**.

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### **(7) WOMEN ARE BAPTISED.**

**Baptism**-the **sign and seal of the covenant** of grace-is now administered to **women** as well as men.

(1) **Acts 8:12**, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, **they** were baptised, both men and **women**."

(2) See also, **Lydia** in **Acts 16:15**, "And when **she** was baptized, and her household, **she** besought us, saying, If ye have judged **me** to be faithful to the Lord, come into **my** house, and abide there."

\*\*\* So? What is so **special** about that?

(1) Under the old covenant, **men only** received the **sign and seal of the covenant (circumcision)**.

(2) **Women** had **no** sign of the covenant in their flesh.

(3) **Now**, in the **new** dispensation, men and **women alike** received **the sign in BAPTISM**.

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(8) WOMEN CAN PROPHECY: BUT WHAT IS PROPHECYING?

Women could now prophesy. This was a ministry **given them** by the **Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:18)**. It was a **God-given ministry**.

cf.(1) **Acts 21:9**, "Philip had **four daughters**, virgins, **which did prophesy**."

(2) **1Cor. 11:5**, "Every woman praying or **prophesying** with her head uncovered..."

[Never mind the "**head-covering**", we'll get back to that later.] For **now**, I want you to **notice** that **women prophesied** in the early, full, **FORMAL church meetings**.

Prophecy was a God-given gift of the Spirit, and Paul goes to great lengths in **1Cor.14:1-33**, to explain **why the gift of prophecy is so much more important than the gift of tongues**. No one can understand a man speaking in **tongues** (except God, ie.). But a person **prophesying**, that was different.v.3, "He that **prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification**, and **exhortation**, and **comfort**." v.5, " for greater is he that **prophesieth** than he which speaketh with tongues, except he (the tongue-speaker) interpret, **that the church may receive edifying**." v.23, "If

therefore the **whole church be come together** into one place...v.24, and **all prophesy**, and there come in one that believeth not, or one **unlearned**, he is **convinced of all**, he is judged of all...v.25, **he will** worship God, and **report that God is in you of a truth.**" v.29, "**Let the prophets speak two or three**, and let the other judge." v.30, "If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace." v.31, "**For ye may all prophesy one by one**, that **all** may learn, and **all** may be comforted." v.32, "And the **spirits of the prophets** are **subject to the prophets.**" v.33, "For **God** is not the **author** of confusion, but **of peace**, As in all churches of the saints."

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**OUR FIRST "DIFFICULT PASSAGE".**

So, there it is. The discourse has brought us right up to this "**difficult passage**", **1Cor.14:34-35.**

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BUT, FIRST, A RECAP. [Must consider our "verse" in **context.**]

- (1) Paul **established the Corinthian ecclesia** during his 2nd missionary journey (see **Acts 18:1-11; 1Cor.2:1,2**).
- (2) Three years later, in Ephesus, **he receives news** that things are not going too well, from members of the house of Chloe (**1Cor.1:11**, "For **it hath been declared unto me of you**, my brethren, by them which are of the **house of Chloe**, that there are **contentions** among you." A letter/s?); and from other friends (**1Cor.16:17**, "I am glad of the coming of Stephanus, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus..." So, he had last minute news of the problems at Corinth from them,too).
- (3) He has already received at least **one letter** from them, asking for his ruling on difficult issues.(**1Cor.7:1**, "Now concerning **the things whereof ye wrote unto me...**).
- (4) He has **already written them a previous letter** (now lost), before he wrote them this letter that we are considering, now.(He says, in **1Cor.5:9**, "I wrote unto you in an **epistle** not to company with fornicators.")
- (5) So, **1Corinthians** is a letter written in response to many reports, communications, and **letters** that Paul has received from Corinth. It is clear from **1 Cor.7:1**, that **he is answering their correspondence to him.** "**Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote me...**" cf.**7:25**, "**Now concerning virgins...**I give my judgment,..."; **8:1**, "**Now as touching things offered unto idols**, we know..."; **9:3**, "**Mine answer to them that do examine me is this...**"; **12:1**, "**Now concerning spiritual gifts**, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."
- (6) Our "**difficult passage**" (**1Cor. 14:34,35**) belongs to the section of **1 Corinthians** which is in **reply to** the report he has received of **disorderly conduct** in the formal assemblies for worship, in particular in relation to the **exercise of the gifts of the Spirit**. The great **disadvantage** we have in the whole of the epistle is that we **have Paul's answers**. We **don't have the questions**. We can only **guess**, from the answer, **what the question might have been.**

~~~~~  
**THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM.**

Now I know that there are **some** people who are very **confident** about their **skills** in this department. Given the **answers**, they can **always** be **certain of the questions**, without having

seen them. Maybe, you've never thought about this kind of thing, much. And you **wonder how you might go?** Perhaps, we could attempt another **little exercise**, and find out?

~~~~~  
A BRAIN-TEASER.

Try this one for size:

"Now concerning **the matter whereof you have asked me**, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. **You know that there are diversity of gifts**, and there are **differences of administrations**, and there are **diversities of operations**. But **whatever** is manifested to us **is given** to every man to **profit withal**. To **one** is **given** the word of **wisdom**; to **another** the word of **knowledge**. To **some** the **working of miracles**. So, **whatever** it is we **have**, we should **use it to the best advantage**, each man severally as he will"

~~~~~  
**THE PROBLEM.**

O.K. Here's the 60 dollar **query**:

I have read you **the answer**. **It is the answer to a question** that I have here, written on my paper. The **question** consists of **40 words**. Can you **guess the question?**

~~~~~  
THE ANSWER. (HERE IS THE QUESTION:)

"A **typist** can type **200 words per minute**. I have a very smart **pet octopus, named Cyril**. I also have an **electric type-writer**. Do you think it **possible** that **I could ever teach Cyril to type 800 words per minute?**"

~~~~~  
**HOW CLOSE WERE YOU?** /How **certain** can you be that, having the **answer** you can always be **certain of the question?**

\* Now, I wonder how many of you **recognized where the words** constituting the answer **came from?** Yes, it was **1Cor.12**, the very **answer** of Paul to **an unknown question** posed to him by his correspondent, **whoever** he/she is. **AND** it is **that answer** that **contains 1Cor.14:34,35**, which is **our "difficult passage"**.

~~~~~  
THAT WAS A BIT HARD, WASN'T IT?

Let me give you **one** more. This should be **easier**.

This time we are going to listen to **a man speaking on a telephone**. We can **hear his side** of the conversation. But we can **only guess** what the other fellow is saying. Of course, it is always **much easier when/if** the other fellows' **words are repeated** for us:

~~~~~  
(1) (QUIET, MEASURED DISCOURSE) "G'day, Yeah,I believe in **kids** getting plenty of **play**. They need **lots** of healthy, **outdoor exercise**. But **I think when they play in the sun**, they

should **wear a hat** and sun-glasses, **to avoid radiation burns**. You can't be too careful these days."

~~~~~(2) (REPEATING)

Shouldn't **go outside**. Wouldn't **let them play**. Stay **inside, do as they're told**; learn **obedience**. Want **something to do, ask mother for a job. Disgrace** the way kids waste time, **playing**.

~~~~~

(3) (ANGRY) **Rubbish!** Nonsense! Are **you** the **source** of all knowledge? Or the **repository** of all wisdom? If you knew **anything** about the subject at all, you'd **listen to what I am saying. All the authorities** agree with me.

~~~~~

(4) So, you don't reckon I've got a clue? You wouldn't go along with that? Well, why should I care a rush about you, then?

~~~~~

(5) Righto, then, just let me say this, and then we'll drop it. It's good that kids have this strong **urge to play**. It's something they should want to do. And I **don't think** people like **you should try to stop them**. Of course, I don't think it should be "Rafferties' Rules". I'm talking about **organized play**. Everything should be done **in a decent and orderly manner**. (See you!)

~~~~~

QUESTION: WOULD YOU SAY (at the end of the conversation):

- (1) Our Man has **CHANGED HIS MIND** about kids playing, or
- (2) He was **PERSUADED BY THE SECOND MAN'S ARGUMENT?**
- (3) There is **ANY RECONCILIATION POSSIBLE** in the two views?
- (4) ANY man could **ESPOUSE BOTH VIEWS** at the same time?

~~~~~

**WHAT'S ALL THIS GOT TO DO WITH 1 COR.14:33-36?**

**LET'S TURN IT UP.**

(1) In **1Cor.11:3-16**, Paul has, amongst other things, acknowledged that **WOMEN have a God-given licence (in the assembly) to exercise the gift of PROHESY**, which they have **received by the Holy Spirit**.

**v.5, "Every woman that prays or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head..."**

~~~~~

ch.11, is an **explanation** of **why women**, taking

(1) a **solo (14:31**, "For **ye may all prophesy one by one**, that all may learn, and all may be comforted"),

(2) **vocal** (**14:1,3**, "desire that ye may **prophecy**, for...he that prophesieth **speaketh unto men...**"),

(3) **leading part** (**14:29-33**, "Let the prophet **speak**" by himself, and if another begin, then the first prophet holds his peace. **The prophet speaks by himself. All may prophecy, one by one.** For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.)

- in the ekklesial worship, should **wear a head-covering**.

~~~~~  
**THE PURPOSE OF PROPHECY:**

**Prophecy is a gift**, which can **only** be **exercised in the gathered assembly** of brethren and sisters (**14:4,23,24**). It is for the **purpose of edification** (teaching, building up, particularly in morals), and it is for **exhortation** (**14:3**).

~~~~~  
CAN a SISTER SPEAK, TEACH, or EXHORT in the EKKLESIA?

So, **there is the answer** to whether God **permits a woman** (a sister) to **speak**, or **teach** in the ekklesia. If he hadn't meant them to, in the 1st century ekklesia, then **why** would he **give them a Holy Spirit gift of prophecy**, which was a gift of **utterance** to be **exercised only** in the **meetings** of assembly?

~~~~~  
**1 CORINTHIANS 14:34,35.**

Within **half-an-hour** of penning the regulations by which the **woman is to exercise** her God-given role of **prophesying to the assembly** for their **edification** (**learning**), and **exhortation**, the apostle **Paul** inexplicably and violently **withdraws it**. Or, does he?

~~~~~  
v.34, "Let your **women** keep **silence** in the churches: for it is **not permitted** unto them to **speak**; but they are **commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law**."

35, "And if they will **learn anything**, let them **ask their husbands** at home; for it is a **shame for women to speak** in the church."

~~~~~  
**DID PAUL CHANGE HIS MIND?**

Wouldn't you think, that if he **suddenly changed his mind**, (or because **something suddenly came up** out of the blue that **caused** him to completely **change his mind**), he'd **go back** and **erase the liberty** he'd just given the **women**? Would he leave **two** totally **irreconcilable**, and confusing, **statements** to bedevil and **confound two thousand years** of earnest **searching for the mind of God**?

~~~~~  
Was Paul some kind of "**Indian-giver**", **giving** the **women** something with the right hand, while, at the same time, **taking it away** from them with his left? I remember **John Carter**, out here in

Australia in 1958, asking a similar sort of question, and replying immediately, "**God does not so mock his people. He is a just God, and a saviour. We don't worship a God that would do a thing like that.**" (He was actually talking about the **law of Moses**; and asked: "Would God give Israel a law, and promise them that if they kept it he would give them **eternal life**, knowing all the time that it was absolutely impossible for them to ever keep it?" Of course, not. God does not so **mock** his people.)

~~~~~  
**Ask:** Would God, because of what happened in Eden, **put half the human race**, I mean **WOMEN** (not "wives"), in eternal bondage and **subjection to MEN**, and then,

**(1) after c.4,000 years liberate them** wonderfully to a **oneness** before him alongside MAN, in Christ,

**(2) allow them to receive the sign of the new covenant** in **BAPTISM**,

**(3) seal the assurance** to them by giving them, **too**, the gift of the Holy Spirit to **PROPHECY**,

(4) allow them to **exercise that gift** in the assembly of the church **for about 25 YEARS** (assuming Paul wrote **1 Corinthians c.A.D. 54**) -

**(5) reinforce that God-given right** to WOMEN in the inspired **regulation** of its exercise in a letter Paul is writing to them,-

**and then, SUDDENLY:**

**(1) without warning, reason or explanation,**

**(2) within the space of HALF AN HOUR,**

**(3) take it away from them FOREVER**, or at least for the next 2,000 YEARS,

(4) on the strength of **two lines of text**, which says, in **vv.34,35**, of **1Cor.14**,

"Let the women keep **SILENCE** in the churches: for it is not **PERMITTED** unto them **TO SPEAK**; but let them be in **SUBJECTION, as also saith the LAW**. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their **OWN HUSBANDS** at home: for it is **SHAMEFUL FOR A WOMAN TO SPEAK IN THE CHURCH.**"

~~~~~  
An ASIDE:

[And, staying within the context, may I add, piling salt into the wound, **MEN have the gall to insist** that their WOMEN, who may no longer exercise the right to "**pray, or PROPHECY**", on the strength of **vv.34,35**, **MUST** yet, at **EVERY** meeting of the ekklesia, and even at S.S. picnics, wear their "**BADGE OF HUMILITY**" (a hat, not a veil), to **OPENLY** show **AND DECLARE** their willing and "**humble**" acceptance of the divine decree that they are **INFERIOR creatures to MEN? May I add another wry comment:** I never cease to be impressed, when hearing a brother advocate this specious, extremely **CHAUVENISTIC line of "reason"**, that is supposedly promoted in Scripture, that he does **one of two** things:

(1) He either RAISES his voice, to demonstrate, I presume, his God-given male-superiority, and thereby to give a suitably impressive, **FORCEFUL argument**; or, more likely,

(2) **He adopts a more-becoming HUMILITY**, not wishing to "speak-down" to his **INFERIOR** sisters, and assumes **a special form of pleading**, designed to persuade and calm.

(Should there be the slightest **resistance**, though, however manifested, he invariably and **IMMEDIATELY, reverts** back to his more natural and comfortable role, and **DEMONSTRATES his MASCULINITY**. It is a technique which I was **taught at Mutual**, back in **Newcastle**, 40 years ago, "**When the FORCE OF ARGUMENT fails, use the ARGUMENT OF FORCE**".)

~~~~~  
**SO then, DID PAUL WITHDRAW the RIGHT GIVEN to WOMEN?**

**HOW do we SOLVE the ENIGMA?**

There are only **two reasonable answers** to this problem.

(1) Has it, that if we take **vv.34,35**, in **isolation**, ie. apart from its immediate context, there is a very **reasonable** explanation.

**Paul** has been advised that the "**wives**", not the "**women**", in the Corinthian ekklesia have been **creating a problem**. Since it had long been a **tradition** in Jewish synagogues to **segregate** the men from the women in the congregation, that just might have been what had been happening at Corinth. The **wives**, sitting **on one side of the room**, and the men on the other. During the process of the meeting, they had been getting into the habit of **calling out across the room to their husbands**, asking them questions, sending them messages, etc. Causing quite a **disturbance**. Since Paul is on about having everything done **decently and in order** in the assemblies, in these chapters, what more natural than that he would come down on this **problem?**

~~~~~  
It is specially important to note that the **Greek word** translated here as "**WOMEN**" ("Let the **women** keep silence..."), is the word "**gune**"[goo-nay.1135] which means "a woman; but **esp. a wife**". And from the **context**, it is clearly **WIVES** he is referring to, for he says, "Let them ask **their OWN husbands at home**." Many a poor spinster-sister has been "put down" with the "Scriptural" prescription, "**Ask you own husband at home...**" When she correctly replies, "But I have **no** husband at home," she is immediately told:

(1) [unkindly] "That's your fault, **you should have**;" or

(2) "Then **get a surrogate one**. Ask your **father**."

(A S.R. sister told that last year, replied, "My father is **not a believer**." She was given the "smart" reply, "Then **borrow** someone else's husband.")

* It seems the **only thing that is important** to some people, is that **WOMEN must be publicly silenced** in all cases, and at all costs.

~~~~~  
So, he says, **WIVES refrain from DISORDERLY speaking (N.I.V. Study Bible)** And there's **no problem with WIVES being in subjection to their husbands, as saith the law**.

~~~~~  
* I do have a **problem**, though, with chauvenist brethren who think that God has put **the whole human race of WOMEN** in subjection to **them**.

[Not long ago, a brother said to me, "Would you speak to your WIFE, and tell her that she is **in subjection to me**?" To my shame (perhaps a comment on my own male shortcomings) I replied, "My WIFE is married to **me**; if she is in subjection to any man, she is in **subjection to me**, and to **no other mortal man**, and if you want to insist, perhaps we'd better go outside." He was astounded, and very **puzzled**. I wonder how many others fail to make any distinction in Scripture between **WIVES and WOMEN**? (Many of the "**problem-verses**" disappear with this awareness.)]

~~~~~  
So, there is a **reasonable attempt at reconciling** the text of **14:34,35**, with, say, **11:5**.

If it was a particular, **localized problem of unruly WIVES** that Paul was addressing, and remedying, then there would be **no threat** to his **concurrence with God's licence to WOMEN to exercise their divinely given gift of PROPHECY**. The **new creation** in Christ remained unimpaired, and **WOMEN remained free**. There is **NO CONFLICT IN THE CORINTHIAN VERSES**.

~~~~~  
BUT, SADLY, and much as I am **attracted to this explanation**, there are **problems** with it. **IT DOESN'T FIT THE CONTEXT**.

For, **immediately after** he has penned **these two verses**, **Paul strongly reacts: "RUBBISH, NONSENSE!** (for that is the meaning of the word,"**WHAT?**") Clearly, what he has just written is **not agreeable** to him. Yet, if it meant what has just been suggested, where is the problem? I have already indicated that one of the **great difficulties** we experience with this, and other letters of Paul's, is that **we don't always know for certain where he is coming from**. We do not have access to the **previous correspondence** that he is replying to. We can, therefore, **at best, GUESS**. [and I have tried to indicate to you in the **1st exercise**, that we're **not** always **as good** at this, **as** we might have **expected** to be.]

~~~~~  
**Whatever** he has said, in the **previous two verses**, is clearly **not acceptable to Paul**. He goes on to **question the base of his reader's AUTHORITY**:

(1) "**ARE YOU THE ORIGINATER OF GOD'S WORD?**" he sarcastically asks. "**ARE YOU THE ONLY ONE WHO EVER RECEIVED IT?**"

(2) And then he says, "**IF YOU DID HAVE GOD'S SPIRIT, YOU'D KNOW THAT WHAT I HAVE SAID IS FROM THE LORD, AND THAT HE HAS COMMANDED IT.!**"

(3) "But, if you **won't listen to the Lord**, **why** should I **WASTE TIME** with you?"

(4) **HERE'S THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER, GO FOR PROPHECY, AND DON'T STOP ANYONE FROM USING IT**, (and to clinch his complete agreement with what he has just written, within the HOUR, in the 11th chapter), but **see to it that everything is done in a seemly and orderly manner**."

~~~~~

Clearly, the **CONTEXT** will **not allow the "problem-verses" (34,35)** to be a question of **how WIVES are to behave** in the ekklesia at Corinth. **IT IS OBVIOUSLY SOMETHING MORE SINISTER.** Perhaps, the **WRITER** (whoever he/she is), has meant by "*gune*" to mean, **not WIVES, but WOMEN** (as it is translated). And wants Paul to **WITHDRAW FROM WOMEN ANY RIGHT TO SPEAK IN THE CHURCH FOR ANY REASON AT ALL** (or, for no other reason, really, than that they are **WOMEN**. Here is your 1st century **MALE CHAUVENIST**, "horns (whoops, slip), **warts and all.**") Like all **Judaizers**, they appear Scripturally literate. "**WOMEN are not PERMITTED TO SPEAK. THEY SHOULD BE IN SUBJECTION, AS THE LAW INSISTS.**" Oh yeah, and **WHERE DOES THE LAW, SO SAY?** (Remember, we are talking about **WOMEN**, not **WIVES**.) There is not a single verse anywhere in the law of Moses that says **WOMEN ARE NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK, BUT MUST BE IN SUBJECTION.** (It is very interesting that such a quote can be produced in the **JEWISH ORAL LAW**). And, **WHY** is it **SHAMEFUL for A WOMAN TO SPEAK IN CHURCH?** It certainly wasn't **HALF-AN-HOUR AGO!** *Why has it SUDDENLY so become?*

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**THE ONLY SOLUTION I CAN COME TO AT THIS STAGE**, is that **vv34,35, of 1Cor.14, are not the words of Paul at all**, but that he is **quoting them from the letter in front of him** from his correspondent/s from **Ephesus**. They would certainly know the context of the words, and from his violent reaction would be in no doubt, whatever, **WHAT PAUL THOUGHT OF THEIR IDEA.** And yet, they do service to this day for the cause of **WOMEN-OPPRESSORS**, in the face of the clear expression of the word of God.

How can **1 Cor.14:34,35, WHATEVER IT MEANS**, ever conceivably be used to **nullify** the clear intent of **1 Cor.11:5, "But every WOMAN PRAYING OR PROPHECYING..." ???**

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NEXT WEEK: Conclude this series, returning to the central theme- **THE DIVINE ACCOMMODATION.**

1.The accompanying eschatological polemic against culture.

(With a look at, what I consider to be, the only other really "difficult" **N.T.** passage, **1 Tim.2:9-15.**)

2. God's covenant intention for WOMAN.

3. The effect of sin upon covenant mutuality.

(A Scriptural look at **Gen.3:16b**, "Thy **DESIRE** shall be to thy husband, and he shall **RULE** over thee.")

4. What all this means for our present walk.

5.The restoration of covenant mutuality in Christ.

=====

WOMEN IN THE 1ST. CENTURY AND NOW.

PART THREE.

The Question of AUTHORITY.

We have considered Women as in Prayer and as Teachers in the 1st century ekklesia, and have considered on the basis of **1Cor.11:5**, and other texts, that there is no prohibition for women's exercise of these functions as a leadership role in the ekklesia. We have but to examine the third area of investigation in our charter: that of the question of **AUTHORITY**:

- (1) Should a woman exercise **AUTHORITY over a man**?
- (2) Should a man exercise **AUTHORITY over a woman**?

Only then can we draw our conclusions, about the role of

WOMEN IN THE 1ST CENTURY AND NOW.

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### DIVINE ACCOMMODATION AND ESCHATOLOGICAL INTRUSION.

We have spoken, for two weeks now, on the **DIVINE ACCOMMODATION**, whereby God speaks to men and women in divine accommodation to the **CULTURAL PATTERNS** in existence at the time when he gives his word. We have cited as egs. **patterns** that sometimes existed in the O.T. **in violation of God's explicit teaching**, such as **polygamous marriages, divorce, and flagrant male chauvenism**.

We have seen the pattern continue in the N.T., where **CULTURALLY PERCEIVED IMPROPRIETIES** prompt Paul to warn:

(1) against **women appearing in a leadership role**, performing prophetic ministrations for the edification, exhortation and comfort of the whole assembled gathering, with **HAIR UNCOVERED** (**1 Cor.11:13**, "Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God **UNCOVERED**? **14**, "Doth not even **nature** itself **teach** you, that, if a **man have LONG HAIR...**" cf. **1Cor.14:23**, "If therefore the whole church be come together into one place...and there come in there those that are **UNLEARNED**, or **UNBELIEVERS**, will they not **SAY...**" **24**, "But if **ALL** prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, **HE IS CONVINCED OF ALL**, he is judged of **ALL...25**,...and will report that God is in you of a truth...**40**, Let all things be done decently and in order."

(2) against the impropriety of "**married women babbling** to their husbands in church", if that is what **1Cor.14:34, 35**, is all about.

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You know the reasons, though, why **I do not accept that interpretation**, preferring to see the two verses, within the context, as a **more sinister** attempt, by the Judaizing element to take away **ALL privileges of speech** from women established in Christ, eg. to deny them the right to exercise their God-given gift to **PROPHECY** in the whole church, a license given them by the Holy Spirit, and one that they had practised unhindered now for twenty five years, exhorting, comforting and edifying men and women, alike. Henceforth, they would have them, "**SILENT, NOT PERMITTED TO SPEAK, COMMANDED TO BE UNDER OBEDIENCE, AS ALSO SAITH THE**

LAW, FOR IT IS A SHAME FOR WOMEN TO SPEAK IN THE CHURCH." (If that is **not** what it meant, **then**; I am at a loss to know **why it means that, now?**

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**If** it just meant a growing practice, by some women of a kind of disruptive enquiry, a questioning and talking that often developed into extended or random **disputation** in the meeting, then surely we could **all** agree that the practise should **stop**? I think we would also agree that **men** should be discouraged from such behaviour, if **they** were to do such a thing. I have never had the unpleasant experience of being on the receiving end of this kind of behaviour from **women**, in the meeting. But if I did, I am sure we would **all** agree that the **women** had to stop it for MATTERS OF PROPRIETY and good order. But I wouldn't see it as a reason for taking from **women**, for all time, the **right to speak in the church at all**. Or of legislating forever some **limited speaking activities** open to sisters **under certain rules**.

That, I would see as an **unjust** and unnecessary infringement of the rights of a "daughter of ABRAHAM, a sister of JESUS," born of grace into the unity of the covenant faith, one for whom Christ died.

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But, sadly, that is the very kind of **disruptive behaviour** I have **experienced** in the meetings, all my ekklesial life, **from the brethren**. It is called "earnestly contending for the faith", where the virtue is espoused, "cry aloud and spare not".

(1) I well remember the bitter experience, at 21 years, of "foolishly" (howbeit, in complete innocence) differing with bro. **John Thomas's interpretation of Rev.12**. at an M.I.C. in Newcastle. The behaviour of the brethren was disgraceful.

(2) Bev. will recall a similar disturbing experience I had, **reading at Regent Hall M.I.C.**, a few years later.

(3) Then there was the traumatic five hour ordeal I received for an **exhortation at Yagoona**. I could go on, up to the-

(4) present, for nothing much has changed in 40 years "in the truth".

Could we **justly** say, that for **ONE** such incident by **brethren**, "then **MEN** should not speak in the church at all", **FOR EVER?**

WHY, THEN, DO WE SO SAY, FOR WOMEN, TODAY?

[cf. Ron Abel, **The Hats of Christadelphian Sisters**,(n.d.); Michael Lewis, **Man and Woman**, The Testimony, 1992; **et. al.**]

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I don't mind you preferring to think that **1Cor.14:34,35**, is a reference to some local disruption by women in the church at Corinth in A.D.54, if that's how you like to see it. But I am most **concerned** if you then go on to use the situation for an **ETERNAL "PUT DOWN" FOR ALL WOMEN IN CHRIST IN ALL CHURCHES AT ALL TIMES FOR EVER AFTER**. I think I'd be more kindly disposed to my Judaizers, who wanted to put all sisters in Christ down on the mistaken belief that God thought that **women** were **naturally inferior to men**, and therefore at all costs should be kept **SILENT, at all times**.

Such ideas will receive the verdict of Paul, "**Rubbish! Nonsense!**"

But I have a sneaking idea, that **both** applications are founded on an erroneous interpretation of **Gen.3:15**, which we shall look at specifically tonight.

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(3) God had **ACCOMMODATED** the ignorance of the Gentiles in time past by "**winking** at the times of this ignorance", **Acts 17:30**, ie. he had not acted in **judgement** against them, but now, with the coming of Christ, he "commanded all men everywhere to **repent**: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will **judge** the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

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(4) But a clear eg. of **ACCOMMODATION in the N.T.** is found in the epistle to **Philemon**, where Paul exhorts the runaway slave, **Onesimus**, to return to his owner, Philemon. Now slavery is clearly an evil, and is not in accord with God's **ABSOLUTE WILL**, which declares that "there is neither bond nor free...but ye are all **one** in Christ." The advice to Onesimus was erroneously used by English, Protestant slave-traders as a God-given sanction on their evil practice during the 17th and 18th centuries. Instead, it was a divine **ACCOMMODATION OF THE EXISTING SITUATION (Slavery)**.

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**** BUT THE ACCOMMODATION IS ALWAYS ACCOMPANIED BY A DIVINE ESCHATOLOGICAL ARGUMENT AGAINST THE CULTURE.**

THE POLEMIC points to Christ as the REDEEMER, the transformer of the social scene.

A. So, when God calls on us **NOT TO COVET OUR NEIGHBOUR'S:**

(1) **ox**, or

(2) **ass**, or

(3) **WIFE. (Ex.20:17)**,

it is not to be seen as an affirmation of **WOMEN as an object of MALE PROPERTY** in a **CHAUVENISTIC CULTURE**; it is to provide a **DEFENCE OF HER INTEGRITY AND WORTH** within **SUCH** a culture.

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Even within the **OLD ORDER**, there is an "**INTRUSION ETHIC**", an intrusion into the **PRESENT**, of the **FINAL ORDER** to be brought in by Christ.

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B. DIVORCE, though permitted in the **OLD ORDER**, is **ABOLISHED BY CHRIST** in the new age of the kingdom of God (**Matt.5:32; 19:9**).

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C. In the new age of the Spirit, **DAUGHTERS** as well as sons, servants both **WOMEN** and men, will be filled with the Spirit and be **PARTICIPANTS** in the **PROPHETHOOD** of **ALL BELIEVERS**. (**Acts 2:16-18**).

D. Over against those **forms of JUDAISTIC CHAUVENISM** of the **1st century**, which we looked at last week, that prohibited **WOMEN** from being:

(i) **legal witnesses in law courts**, or

(ii) **studying the law of God**,

**WOMEN** will

(i) testify before **MEN** of the resurrection of Christ (**Luke 24:1-10**), and

(ii) be exhorted by Paul to "learn in quietness" (**1Tim.2:11**)

(iii) **Mary** will be commended for **staying out of the kitchen** (a culturally defined **ROLE RESPONSIBILITY**) and "**hearing his word**" (**Luke 10:38-42**).

(1) **WOMEN'S LIBERTY IN CHRIST MUST ALWAYS KEEP FAR ENOUGH AHEAD OF A PARTICULAR TIME AND CULTURE** to continue being called "**LIBERATION**", and yet

(2) **NOT SO FAR AHEAD THAT it does not CONTINUE TO TOUCH AND ALTER that CONTEXT** in the light of the **CONSUMMATION DESIGN**.

**FAILURE of the CHRISTADELPHIAN BODY to MAINTAIN the TENSION.**

I believe that the Christadelphian body has *failed to keep ahead of late 20th century time and culture*. In fact, I have often heard brethren **boast** in the claim that we have **lagged behind the community** in our surge toward "freedom", and that this is our *strength*. **Sadly, it is the measure of our decadence**, that this is the case. **It wasn't always so**. When the Christadelphian movement got underway, a hundred years ago, there **was an energy and vitality** in the body that was **fresh and promising**.\*\*\* The Christadelphian movement gave the **vote** to its **sisters in ekklesial elections many decades before the suffragette movement** in the larger community was forced to give the vote to women in political elections. And this is as it should be. Who, but the brethren of Christ, who have the divine eschatological vision before them, who know where the "liberation" of women is tending, can therefore unerringly chart their "destiny", so as **to keep just far enough AHEAD of our time and culture to continue being called "liberation"**, and yet **not so far ahead as to lose touch with the reality, and therefore be unable to keep on altering our context in the direction of the kingdom, as we go**. Instead, as the **Andrew R. Wilson** thesis, **The History of the Christadelphians, 1864-1885: The Emergence Of A Denomination**, all too sadly shows, we **lost our way**. We preferred to **split over "unworthy themes"**. We closed doors and **bickered over personality differences**. Who was to **rule** over us. How we were to **define our beliefs**. **Block disfellowship** became king. And as the Denomination slowly emerged in the U.K., within a couple of years, the figures show that **60%**, of the enrolled Christadelphians at the beginning of the division, were now **no longer in existence**. The 40% of previous

Christadelphians who were left claiming the name were thereafter **split**, for the next 70 years, into **Central and Suffolk Street fellowships**. We **lost** forever (or at least, to date), the **up-front stance** we had managed to maintain up to 1885. Since then we have become **increasingly reactionary**, and **proud** of it.

~~~~~  
WILSON'S CONCLUSIONS: (p.292).

What is to explain the success of Christadelphianism to 1885?

...The original **openness** of the Christadelphian community and the **accessability of its credal formulae to change** based on empirical data derived from the Bible commended itself to men from a wide spectrum of orthodox persuasions whose Christianity was of an **open-minded, individualist and fundamentalist** stamp. These converts proved to include a number of individuals who, once convinced, were **able, determined, loyal and hard-working**. Many of them, such as Roberts, Norrie, Hadley, Mowatt, Stoddart, Thirtle, and Mackley, were professional **journalists** who used their communicating skills to effect. The **openness** of Christadelphianism in its early days permitted brethren, once converted, to stay nominally within their churches of origin, causing a wider spread of the new views amongst those with some sympathy for them than would have occurred under tighter restrictions regulating communion...

(According to Wilson, Christadelphians up to 1885, were **open, energetic and progressive, promoting a wild, but prolific growth rate**.p.293.)

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**What caused the relative demise of Christadelphianism after 1885?**

...The early idea, accepted amongst Baptised Believers, of **continual reimmersions** after the discovery of new truths, was gradually replaced by the **requirement of credal exactitude prior to a unique immersion**. Hand in hand with this change went the **removal of Thomas's spirit of discovery** and its replacement by **a faith which was creed-based** such that the creed was regarded as **virtually immutable**. Although Roberts became **de facto** leader of Christadelphianism (in 1864, and, more particularly, after Thomas's death in 1871) it is worth noting in his exculpation (clearing from blame) that Thomas's legacy was not an easy one to inherit: a decision had to be made and then implemented- **was he to**

- (1) organise Thomas's ideology and its concomitant (co-existent) following, and contain it, or**
- (2) merely prolong its wild but prolific growth-rate, casting the cares of ecclesiastical polity to the winds?**

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In answering the question as he did, and in **seeking to organise the movement**, much of the post-1885 declension can be explained.

...However, there is no gainsaying the significance of the **principal factor**- namely the **offence and rupture caused by the schism of 1885**.

[The "**Clean Flesh**" schism of 1873 had illustrated the drag of **schism** on spiritual momentum. By 1885's standards, the 1873 schism was mere dust in the balances.]

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- (1) **After 1885**, many of the **better speakers departed**;
- (2) **intellectuals were discredited** for many years within the Central fellowship, which became **in consequence introverted**;
- (3) **issues of personal distaste** (some raked up from the past),
- (4) **theological distinctions**, and
- (5) **polemics over ecclesiastical polity**, were jumbled inextricably into **chaos**.

~~~~~

Certain that Roberts was right, the Central fellowship could **not deny** that the **means** he had selected to combat Ashcroft **had been political**, not **expositional**- and *unspoken doubts* about his **conduct** *lingered behind assured statements of support*.

Injustices were done, and known to have been done, to brethren, **who**, whilst as assured as Roberts about the inspiration of the Bible, **found his political methods distasteful**. These **injustices** were **not admitted**, openly.

Thus, many **issues were left clouded** in the hope that, when the clouds drifted away with time, the **injustices too would have vanished**.

All this **complexity and sordidness** in what only 20 years previously **under Thomas** had been **earnest, unsullied and confident**, does much to explain the **difference in ethos** (spirit, tone, character) within Christadelphianism **before and after 1885...**

- (1) the **world and other religious groups were regarded with suspicion**;
- (2) a **low expectation of conversions** existed, and
- (3) the movement had adopted a **stance towards society** which showed itself **austere and withdrawn...**
- (4) an **ever-increasing sector of its membership** was **drawn from the families of first-generation converts**;
- (5) **prosperity was being produced** from an ascetic **attitude to endeavour**; and
- (6) certain **plaudits** had been accorded to the movement, resulting in **increased respectability**.
- (7) Indeed, **an almost church-like approach** had been developed by **1885** in terms of **attitude to hierarchy and formal dogma...**

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### **THE PHENOMENON OF CULTURAL RELATIVITY.**

**Cultural relativity, with the adaptations it imposes, is repeatedly illustrated in the Bible itself.**

(1) **Israelite nomads** move from the **wilderness** into the settled **Agricultural Life of Canaan**.

(2) a **Peasant Economy** gives place, under the monarchy, to an **Urbanized Mercantile Economy** (with the attendant *abuses* against which the great prophets of Israel inveighed);

(3) the **Post-exilic Period** adjusts to life as a unit of a great, **Well-Organized Empire-**

[i] **Persian**, then

[ii] **Hellenistic**, then

[iv] **Roman**.

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(4) Even within the *limited confines* of the **N.T.**, we see the **Gospel Transplanted** from its:

[i] **Jewish and Palestinian Matrix** [womb, mould, medium] in which it develops into

[ii] the **Gentile Environment of the Mediterranean world**.

[In this last respect, we could pay special attention to the way in which **John**, while preserving the **authentic gospel** of Christ, brings out its **abiding and universal validity** in **a new idiom** for an **audience very different** from that to which it was **first proclaimed**.]

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#### **HOW THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES TACKLED CULTURAL RELATIVITY.**

**The major concern of the Scribes and Pharisees of the 1st century was to apply to their contemporaries A CODE OF LAWS, originally given in quite another way of life.**

**The Sabbath Law**, eg., was formulated in relation to a simple Pastoral or Agrarian Economy, in which "**WORK**" was a clearly understood term.

But what **kinds of activity** came within the prohibition of "**WORK**" in the more complex situation at the dawn of the Christian era?

The Scribes saw that **detailed definition was necessary** if people were to have clear **guidance** in this matter: in one of their schools **39 categories of "WORK"** were specified, all of which were banned on the sabbath.

That's **ONE** way to tackle the problem of **CULTURAL RELATIVITY!**

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***** THE WAY OF JESUS WAS DIFFERENT.**

He preferred to go back to FIRST PRINCIPALS:

(1) Any kind of ACTION which PROMOTED the ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE COMMANDMENT, FULFILLED IT;

(2) Any kind of ACTION which HINDERED that ORIGINAL PURPOSE, VIOLATED IT.

But it was for the **people** to **decide for themselves WHICH ACTIONS PROMOTED the ORIGINAL PURPOSE**, and which actions **HINDERED IT: he would not lay down PRECISE REGULATIONS.**

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**THE GOSPELS EXHIBIT THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SCRIBAL (JUDAISTIC) WAY, AND THE WAY OF JESUS, IN THE HANDLING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.**

Subsequent **Church History**, down to and including that of the **Christadelphian movement** of our own generation, exhibits the **same CONTRAST** in the handling of the **N.T.**, and the varying attempts to apply its **principles** to changing situations. **If it were not so**, we would not be here, tonight, trying to work out the **laws by which we should govern the role of the sisters in the ekklesia in 1992!!!**

**CANON LAW**, whether it is explicitly so called or not, exemplifies the **SCRIBAL WAY- the TRADITION OF THE ELDERS.**

(It is that which **Michael Ashton** would determine for us, if we would let him, in his "official" pamphlet, **WOMEN PRIESTS-The Bible Answer to the Current Debate**, Christadelphian Publishing Office, Birmingham, n.d.; and in other "**dictates**" in the "**official**" magazine, from time to time.) Such "**pontifications**" of Robert Roberts, which began as no more than the "**opinions**" of one other brother, like mine tonight, because they were recorded in a monthly magazine called **The Christadelphian**, an *independant* magazine, owned and controlled by him, and responsible to no one; the very fact of them being **recorded**, gave them a kind of "**authority**" which in time assumed the status of "**tradition**". When someone wanted to know what "**the Christadelphians**" thought about **this**, or **that**, people looked around for something **written by a Christadelphian** on the subject. In time Robert Roberts had a **pamphlet upon almost any subject you wanted**. He began with an attempt to have **John Thomas's** name on, or associated with everything he uttered. There were **two good reasons** for this:

(1) **John Thomas** had **founded the movement**, and Robert Roberts, on his own admission, had **little to add to the words of the "doctor"**, as he called Thomas. Dr. Thomas had "**discovered all the truth**", he constantly repeated. There was **nothing more to discover**; it but remained for lesser ones, like himself, to **disseminate** that truth to the rank and file. *That*, he saw as **his life's work**. And that is **why**, from Roberts's time, we have called *our* system of beliefs, "**the Truth**" (capital "**T**").

(2) The other "good" reason for sticking so close to Thomas, in his opinions on everything was that it **established an identification of the two men, as one**, in the minds of the readers of his magazine. His adulation of the "doctor" **after his death in 1871**, was nothing short of extreme veneration, verging on the **morbid**. (We are witnessing exactly the same pattern in **The Logos** magazine, after the death of **H.P. Mansfield**. That magazine is currently **full of articles** written by John Thomas, Robert Roberts, and, particularly, H.P.M. It's called "**going back to the PIONEERS, STICKING TO THE OLD PATHS, HANGING ONTO OUR TRADITIONS.**")

Once the **connection** is established in the minds of the brotherhood, the writer is "**established**", and can **proceed** in his own "write", assured of a **committed following**. Unfortunately, for those who cannot separate the "minds" of these very different men, **Roberts had almost 30 more years to "speak the mind of Thomas on his behalf"**, and on issues that Thomas had **never** considered. Hence the mess the ekklesial situation got itself into in the **1890's**, from which it has never really emerged. [eg., the Atonement.]

**The last decade of Roberts's life** (the 90's) was spent *hopelessly trying to convince the intelligent leaders that remained* after the great *demise* following the **schism of 1885**, that he "had not *changed his mind* on the **atonement**" (a subject on which Thomas had left him little direction). In fact, he had considerably; cf. "The Slain Lamb" and the subsequent, later "The Blood of Christ". The **change** was clearly seen by **J.J.Andrews** and others.

And **that** is where our **TRADITION** has come from. And the **latter-day SCRIBES** are busy as ever, pouring over "*the writings*", to meet the **needs of the current BODY**.

**BUT IT WAS NOT JESUS' WAY!**

~~~~~  
CULTURAL RELATIVITY has to be *reckoned with* when we consider the **PERMANENT MESSAGE** of the **N.T.** today

- (1) the **LOCAL** and **TEMPORARY SITUATION** in which that message was **FIRST DELIVERED** must be appreciated, if we are to
- (2) discern **WHAT** its **PERMANENT ESSENCE** *really is*, and
- (3) learn to **reapply it** in the **LOCAL** and **TEMPORARY CIRCUMSTANCES** of our own culture.

~~~~~  
**FAILURE to recognize CULTURAL RELATIVITY in taking the gospel to Eastern Asia, and the Pacific, lands of different traditions from our own, has resulted in so many disasters in our Bible Mission work, to date.** (Two years as Secretary of the Bible Mission certainly opened my eyes to many of our short-falls in this direction. eg.:

- [i] Insisting on the **establishment of a "democratic form" of ekklesial government**, a la, **The Ecclesial Guide**, as the "original 1st century model", in a country that has no experiential awareness of democracy as a form of government.
- [ii] Spending large sums of money having **Christadelphian writings** on the **Nature of God**, (eg., **God is not a Trinity**) **ALL** of which do **not** deal with what the Bible **DOES** teach about the *nature* of God, but instead go into complex reasons why the **Bible DOES NOT** teach that **God is THREE GODS**, translated into the indiginous language of the country targetted, and at further considerable expense, **FLOODED into a Muslim country that is 98% MONOTHEISTIC.**
- [iii] Making almost no preparation for the *reality* of **CULTURE SHOCK-** both ways. etc.

~~~~~  
(But I don't want to use time, now, to **list the areas**, which are legion, **of total ignorance of CULTURAL RELATIVITY in the Bible Mission field**, which go a long way to explain our poor preaching record there, to date. I simply use the point, to drive home the fact that **we do not sufficiently consider the RELEVANCE OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES in our approach to almost ALL of our problems, our spiritual awareness, our part in the body of Christ.**)

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**I HAVE TAKEN A LARGE PORTION OF MY AVAILABLE TIME- to stress**

(1) the Patriarchal nature of the O.T.;

(2) the divine **ACCOMMODATION** of God in dealing with situations concerning **WOMEN**, that were less than satisfactory; over against his **ABSOLUTE WILL** and **ULTIMATE INTENTION** for **covenant mutuality between MAN and WOMAN**.

(3) the state of Judaism, its attitude to **WOMEN** when Jesus came.

How miserably **WOMEN** were treated by that system.

(4) **Jesus and WOMEN**. To show the **revolutionary** character of his teaching and attitude.

(5) The position of **WOMAN in the 1st century church**.

~~~~~  
Within which, to take **COGNICANCE** of the **CULTURAL SETTING** in which **THE WORD OF GOD** came.

~~~~~  
Because, a sympathetic **awareness** of the **CULTURES** in which the **GOSPELS** and **EPISTLES** first appeared will help us to understand those documents in **THEIR OWN SETTING** and also to profit by them in **OUR OWN SETTING**.

~~~~~  
BUT *** we must not take the **N.T. VERSES**, and **TRANSPOSE THEM BLINDLY AS LAWS** into our **20TH CENTURY NEEDS**.

~~~~~  
**THAT IS THE SCRIBAL WAY**, which *they did* with the **laws** of the **Sinai covenant**, *transposing them straight into the 1st century situation*, **a practice WHICH WAS CONDEMNED BY JESUS**.

Our job is to **USE SCRIPTURE ARIGHT**. And that is to **HEAR** what the Spirit is saying through the word to the ekklesias of the 20th century, as well as **WHAT IT SAID** to those of the 1st.

We should **avoid treating the N.T.** as a **book of rules**. In **applying** the **N.T.** text to our **own situation**, we *need not treat it* as the **scribes** of our Lord's day **treated the O.T.**

We should **not** turn what were meant as **guide lines** for worshippers *in one situation* into **laws** binding for all time. (To make this point clear, I gave the 1st little test on the 1st night. **There are many Bible texts that we do not make a fixed literal rule of in our lives**. You know now some of the ones that you **do not** so apply.

Take the **"rule" about WIDOWS** in **1Tim.5:3-10**. Who would claim, today, to carry out *all the terms* of this advice **literally**, and not just the **principle**, or intent?)

~~~~~  
* **"IT IS AN IRONICAL PARADOX**, that Paul, who was *so concerned to free his converts* from the **BONDAGE OF THE LAW**, is treated as **THE GREAT LAW-GIVER** by *all those* **LATER GENERATIONS...**

The **freedom of the Spirit**, which can be safeguarded by **one set of GUIDE LINES** in a **particular** situation, may call for a **different procedure** in a **new** situation." (F.F.Bruce, **A Mind for What Matters**, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,G.R., Mich., 1990,p.263.)

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**GOD'S COVENANT INTENTION FOR WOMAN.**

**Redemption's purpose** is the **restoration of CREATION** to what it was **intended to be**. That is **why**:

- (1) **salvation** is spoken of as "**the new CREATION**" (**2Cor.5:17**)
- (2) **Jesus** is spoken of as "**the last ADAM**" (**1Cor.15:45**),
- (3) **Christians (men and women)**, have "**put on the NEW MAN**", *the (re)created image of God*, "**which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.**" (**Eph. 4:24**).

~~~~~

**** ANOTHER look at the GENESIS ACCOUNT.**

Realising how the **salvation intent** of the **N.T.** takes on the **language of CREATION**, we have an added incentive to go back to the **Genesis** account of **the description of WOMAN in Gen.1-2**, and look **more closely** at the words. Here we find they take on a **significance** that years of neglect have failed to bring into focus.

In **sharp contrast** to the male **chauvinism** of the ancient world, where the **WOMAN was the property of man**, -and **always his inferior**:

- (1) in **Gen.1:27**, she, *with man*, is "**the image of God**"
 - (2) **28**, is **equally**, with man, to be **fruitful**, a **partner to multiply and replenish, subdue and rule creation.**
 - (3) **Not a subordinate**, she is a "**helper suitable for him**",cf **2:18**. "**The Lord is my HELPER...**" Nothing subordinate there!
 - (4) Bev likes to say, **WOMAN is a complementary counterpart.**
 - (5) As "**bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh**" (**2:23**), **WOMAN** can't be *closer* to man, than man is **to himself**, as **Laban** recognized when he said to **Jacob**, his sister's son, "**Surely you are my bone and my flesh.**" (**Gen.29:14.**)
 - (6) cf. **Abimelech** to the men of **Shechem**, "**Remember ...that I am your bone and your flesh.**" (**Judges 9:2**).
 - (7) The **men of Hebron** to **David**, "**Behold, we are your bone and your flesh.**" (**2Sam.5:1**)... and **David** to the **elders of Judah**, "**You are my brethren, you are my bones and my flesh..**" **2Sam.19:12.**
 - (8) **Woman** bears the **closest of kin SOCIALITY** to man. They are "**one flesh**". (**Gen.2:24**).
 - (9) When **Paul** therefore says in **1Cor.11:7**, that "**man is the image and glory of God**", it is **nothing less than perversion of Scripture to suggest that WOMAN**
- [i] who was **made, like man, in the "image of God"** (**Gen.1:27**)

[ii] and *who*, in Christ, Paul says, *is "in the image of God" (Ephes. 4:24)*, is therefore, by some strange process of deduction, **NOT in the IMAGE OF GOD.** It cannot be!

~~~~~

**SO, WHAT is PAUL saying in 1 COR.11?**

So as to **explain the REASON** for a **WOMAN** who is:

[i] *exercising her God-given gift of PRAYING in an UNKNOWN TONGUE (1Cor.14:14)*, or

[ii] *exercising her right to EXHORT, EDIFY, or COMFORT by PROPHESYING (1Cor.14:3)*, in the **full gathering** of the church (**1Cor.14:23**),

.....To have **HER HEAD COVERED** in the **PROCESS**,-**THE APOSTLE, PAUL**, for a moment, separates the **WOMAN** from her rightful **TITLE**, *which she shares with MAN*, of being "the **IMAGE AND GLORY OF GOD**";- so as to give her an additional **ALTERNATE TITLE**, "**THE GLORY OF MAN**", which she *now* has, **IN ADDITION** to the **TITLE** which she *still* **SHARES WITH MAN** ("**THE IMAGE AND GLORY OF GOD**"). (eg., *listen to this; and see what you think: "Man is a human being. Woman is his charming companion. Therefore, woman is not a human being."* Logical? In giving the woman an *additional* title, have I denied her *former* ones?)

He calls her, "**THE GLORY OF MAN**". Why? Because *She is that, TOO!* And that's why, in her *exalted* position officiating in the meeting, she needs to be reminded of the **ADDITIONAL** characteristic, and **RESPONSIBILITY**, she bears.

\*\*\* She can, **UNWITTINGLY**, by no fault of her own, **DISTRACT** the **MAN** from the **RIGHTFUL FOCUS** of his **WORSHIP**.

She should, **THEFORE**, **COVER HER HEAD**, lest, *not meaning to*, she did just that.

\*\*\* **HER GLORY** (worth, importance, honour) is so *bright* it will **DISTRACT** from the **GLORY** of **GOD**. (It distracts the *man*, in the nature of things, not the woman.)

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So, she puts on her "**BADGE OF AUTHORITY**", her **POWER**, as Paul calls it (**10**); *not* her "**BADGE OF HUMILITY**" as I heard a brother call it, recently.

"**Her POWER**", as Paul says in v.10, "**For this cause** ought the woman to have **POWER (Authority)** on her head **because of the angels**".

~~~~~

\*\* It's **her** head, **her** covering, **her POWER**.

"**NO!** It's her **HUSBAND'S "power" over her**", *claim the would-be rulers*. But they've got it **wrong!** Paul has **just explained why** it's the **woman's power** that he is talking about, and **to suggest other** is to **import** a whole set of **ideas** that **run directly COUNTER** to what the Apostle is saying.

He says, in v.7, "...the **WOMAN is the GLORY of the MAN.**"

v.8, "For the **MAN is not of the WOMAN**; but the **WOMAN of the MAN**". [And, here, he is **not** talking about **any WOMAN** or **any MAN**.

He is talking about the **ONLY WOMAN** that was **ever OF THE MAN**. He is talking about **EVE**, who was **made OF ADAM**.

In fact, the **whole** argument, up to v.12, is **centred in its language in EDEN.**]

[Incidentally, the word "**HEAD**" in v.3, "the **head** of the woman is man; and the **head** of Christ is God"...that we *naturally think of* as, "**BOSS, CHIEF**", can also mean "**SOURCE**", as in "**the SOURCE of the river**". \*\* I believe [with F.F.Bruce, and others] that **this** is its essential meaning **here**, and I think the **Edenic account of the creation of the woman** from the side of man, is the focus that **Paul** would have us see.]

**THE COVERING OF THE HAIR IS NOT A SIGN OF SUBSERVIENCE, BUT OF AUTHORITY. (1 COR.11:10). IT WAS HER CROWN, HER POWER.**

Considered the implication of this: **If the WOMAN is the GLORY of the MAN, and the MAN is the "IMAGE AND THE GLORY OF GOD", then WOMAN is the GLORY of the "IMAGE AND THE GLORY OF GOD". She is "The IMAGE and the GLORY of GOD", but \*\*\* she is also the "GLORY" of MAN.**

**"THE GLORY OF THE IMAGE AND THE GLORY OF GOD"**. Have you ever heard *language* like that before? It's not for nothing, in each of the two previous addresses, I have repeated **Ezekiel's vain attempt**, with all the limitations of trying to accommodate language **to describe the indescribable**, of precisely telling us **what/who** he saw sitting upon the cherubic throne, in his vision of the **1st chapter**. He saw, he said, "**THE APPEARANCE OF THE LIKENESS OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD.**" HE SAW **GOD**, YOU MIGHT SAY. Yes, of course he **did**, but it wasn't actually the **INCREATE. IT WAS A PROPHETIC MANIFESTATION OF GOD**, that he saw. He saw the **RESTORATION OF COVENANT MUTUALITY IN CHRIST**, the end to which the whole **PURPOSE** of God is moving. He saw **MAN and WOMAN, as ONE**, how God intended them, **from the BEGINNING, sitting, THRONED.**

**HE SAW "THE GLORY of the IMAGE and GLORY of GOD."**

**ONE DAY:** I'm going to **write a book** about "**THE IMAGES OF GOD.**" It will be about

[I] the **brooding of the Holy Spirit** over Creation,

[II] the **Levitical Priest** as a model of the image of God,

[III] the Prophetic model in **the Angel of his Presence**,-

[IV] and, of course, **the Cherubic visions**, in **Ezekiel** and **Revelation**; but it will not stop, D.V., as so often it does, with graphic illustrations of **creatures covered with eyes**, and **wings**, and **infurling fires**, and **smoke**, and **wheels** which go in every direction, and **thunderings** and **lightnings**, and the terrible **crystal**.

**\*\*\*\* IT WILL END WHERE DEITY INTENDS IT TO END, WITH THE FULL RESTORATION OF COVENANT MUTUALITY OF MAN AND WOMAN IN CHRIST, ACCORDING TO HIS ABSOLUTE WILL, EXPRESSED IN THE BEGINNING.**

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[We are reminded of Paul's way of **attributing** something to a person, and then throwing in an **extra**. As when he says, in **Ephes. 5:23**, "For the husband is the **head** of the wife, even as Christ is the **head** of the church: **AND HE IS THE SAVIOUR OF THE BODY.**"]

~~~~~  
**NO WONDER THE WOMAN WAS TO COVER HER HAIR WHEN SHE PRAYED WITH A TONGUE, OR PROPHESED, IN THE CHURCH.**

~~~~~  
*** LOOK AT THE EFFECT OF SIN UPON COVENANT MUTUALITY.**

Before the Transgression, **MAN and WOMAN** lived in **COVENANT MUTUALITY** and **SOLIDARITY** before God. **TOGETHER, IN JOINT-PARTNERSHIP they REBEL against God and REND THAT HARMONY,**

MUTUALITY, SOLIDARITY,

(A) with ADAM blaming:

(1) his WIFE and

(2) GOD. (**Gen.3:12**, "The **WOMAN WHOM THOU GAVEST TO BE WITH ME SHE** gave me of the tree, and I did eat.") and

(B) the WOMAN blaming the serpent. (**Gen.3:13**, "The **serpent** beguiled me, and I did eat.")

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**\*\* THE CONSEQUENCE: SIN IS ITS OWN REWARD.**

As **ALWAYS**, (Paul, in **Rom.1:24**, "Wherefore God also **gave them up to UNCLEANNES**, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ...26, For this cause **God gave them up unto VILE AFFECTIONS**: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ...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.**

~~~~~  
THE APOSTLE SHOWS CLEARLY **THE EFFECTS OF SIN**. THERE ARE **CONSEQUENCES, WITHIN**, THAT ARE **INEVITABLE**. GOD'S JUDGEMENT ALWAYS FITS THE CRIME. AND THOSE **CONSEQUENCES** ARE SURE.

THIS HAS BEEN **THE INVARIABLE PATTERN SINCE EDEN**.

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**\*\*\* LET'S LOOK AT GEN.3:16b, "THY DESIRE SHALL BE TO THY HUSBAND, AND HE SHALL RULE OVER THEE."**

~~~~~  
How do we read this? "**Because you have DONE this...YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR HUSBAND, AND I WILL GIVE HIM THE RULE OVER YOU**"?

The **general notion** promoted, as arising out of this **TRADITIONAL APPROACH**, is that the **WOMAN'S "LOVE" for her HUSBAND** is of such an order that she **DESIRES** nothing **better** than that she may **SERVE HIM in a subservient spirit**. And, **because of her MAJOR ROLE** in the transgression, God decrees that her husband shall henceforth **have the RULE** over her.

[Not likely].

~~~~~  
**LOVE is something PURE**. But when we **SIN**, God "gives us up to" something **UNCLEAN** (as Paul says); ie., **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**. "**Loving your husband**" **is surely something NOBLE, something good, something PURE?**

\*\*\* The **effect** of what she had **DONE** had put **ENMITY** in Eve's heart toward the **SERPENT** (v.15). Why would the same **SIN** 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 to RIGHTLY RULE over SUBMISSIVE WOMAN**.

"HER DESIRE is to LOVE HIM: (and God Prophetically [?] declares) HIS SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO RULE OVER HER."

~~~~~  
**SIN WORKS OUT ITS OWN COURSE**. What God is actually saying is that the **SOLIDARITY** that 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 CONTROL THE HUSBAND, and the MAN DESIRING TO BETTER THE WOMAN, MASTER HER, and RULE OVER HER. UNCLEAN, VILE AFFECTIONS, springing from REPROBATE MINDS, and far from the divine intention at creation.**

**"Because you have DONE this (to the WOMAN), 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."**

In such a struggle, **history** has only too clearly indicated the **UNEVENNESS** between them. **MUTUALITY** all too readily turned to:

**(1) SUPERIORITY and**

**(2) INFERIORITY.**

MAN has, **until the 20th century**, had all the advantages of physical and economic strength. But those advantages, in the more developed countries, have been whittled away by the

industrial and post-industrial revolutions, so that the conflict is now, for the 1st time in history, more evenly engaged. But the curse of sin is still there, and the conflict continues. It is well called in popular parlance, **THE BATTLE OF THE SEXES**.

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A PRETTY THEORY: CAN IT BE EXEGETICALLY DEMONSTRATED? YES.

The word translated "**DESIRE**" (8669: teshuwqah: tesh-oo-kaw, from the root, to run after or over, ie. overflow: -overflow, water. In the orig. sense of stretching out after; a longing: -desire.), **only OCCURS 3X in the O.T.**

(2) In **Gen.4:7b**. And it is this text, in the very next chapter, that **destroys the traditional INTERPRETATION**. Not only does the word for "DESIRE" occur almost immediately after, and in the same CONTEXT, but **this WHOLE (unusual), Hebrew clause is there**.

It is the story of **CAIN and ABEL**. God does not respect CAIN'S OFFERING. CAIN is "very wrath". **6**, "And the LORD said unto CAIN, Why art thou wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen?" **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.**"

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It is **INCREDIBLE**, that this verse should be so closely placed to the words of God to Eve, in **Gen.3:16b**. And that they focus, as does that verse, on the **EFFECTS OF SIN**.

(1) **EVE did not DO WELL**, and the result was that she entered into a **CONFLICT situation with her HUSBAND**. Each striving for the **MASTERY**.

(2) **CAIN did not DO WELL**, and the result was that he entered into a CONFLICT situation with SIN (personified). Each striving for the MASTERY, a struggle graphically described for us by Paul in Romans chapter 7, the "spirit" and "flesh" in conflict.

To try to **INTERPRET Gen.4**, in the same way as we have **TRADITIONALLY interpreted Gen.3**, would not only produce a nonsense, but it would be wrong doctrine.

**"If thou **DOEST NOT WELL**, CAIN, then **SIN** (like a hungry lion) **LIETH** at the door. **HE shall LOVE YOU**, and **DESIRE** to **SERVE YOU** in a subservient role, **BUT, I, GOD, WILL GIVE YOU THE DOMINION OVER SIN.**"**

Paul clearly teaches in **Romans 6:16**, "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 THEREBY HAVE DOMINION OVER SIN.**

**Gen.4:7**, clearly establishes the true meaning of **Gen.3:16**. Any **SUPERIORITY** that accrues to MAN, as a result of the transgression, is not one that is divinely bestowed, as of **RIGHT**, or **INHERENTLY** put there by God, so that MAN can turn back to this text as his **divine right of KINGSHIP**, in the same manner as he was wont to quote other verses to justify his slave-trading. The Creator's words to Eve, "your desire shall be for your husband, and he will rule over you", mean that, in our sinful human condition, **MAN** exploits the **WOMAN'S** weaker state to

dominate and subjugate her. She, also suffering impaired affections as a consequence of her sin, would have the control, if she could. But MAN is the essential victor, and his subsequent subjugation of WOMAN, in fact, is a symptom of his fallen nature. Far from being the will of God, it is in reality, **contrary to his ABSOLUTE WILL for covenant MUTUALITY in Christ in his eternal kingdom.**

If the work of Christ involves the breaking of the entail of the fall, 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.**

I know of **no verse** in Scripture that gives **MAN RULE OVER WOMAN**. The **MARRIAGE CONTRACT** is a **separate** issue, and needs treatment elsewhere.

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**YOU ARE PROBABLY**, by now, **thinking of that N.T. bastion of AUTHORITY, by which God has given MAN the UNDISPUTED RIGHT TO RULE over WOMAN FOREVER: (1Tim.2:11-15)?**

Paul says to Timothy, "**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 SEXUAL POWER STRUGGLE**, begun in Eden, **HAD DEVELOPED IN N.T. TIMES**, in the only way **WOMEN in the ancient world** could conduct it (cf. **Jules Michelet's** thesis on medieval superstitions, **Satanism and Witchcraft**, referred to in the 1st address) **into THEOLOGICAL HERESY.**

(1) **Forms of GnosticisM** spoke of **SYSTEMS of INTERMEDIATE BEINGS** who **bridged the gap** between God and man.

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Some spoke of **WOMEN** as these **INTERMEDIARIES**, and of **EVE** as the bringer of both:

(1) **LIGHT**, and

(2) **LIFE**,

... the **MEDIATRIX who brought DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT to MANKIND.**

Some, and notably, - **ONE**, whose **DOCUMENTS** have recently been discovered, archaeologically, as existing in 1st century **EPHESUS**, where Timothy was residing when Paul wrote him the Pastoral Epistles (of which **1 Timothy** is one), - contains an **EMBELLISHED ACCOUNT of the Genesis fall**, and gives to **EVE a PRIOR EXISTENCE**, on the basis of the accounts of the **FEMALE WISDOM of Proverbs 1-9. WISDOM is taken to be EVE**, who was **with God from before the CREATION OF THE WORLD**. She talks with the **ANGELS**, and receives **LIGHT** (superior knowledge) from them, that **ADAM** did not have access to. The text in **Gen.3:20**, that says "**EVE...was the mother of all LIVING**", they render as, "**the MOTHER OF ALL LIGHT**" (ie. all *knowledge*). This would give **her**, and her **DAUGHTERS**, the qualification to be **TEACHERS and LEADERS** over their group.

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We have already made the point, that we cannot be **ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN what the situation was**, to which the **EPISTLES** were addressed, and in many situations, are left to **GUESS**.

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But it is **possible** that **Paul's PROHIBITION AGAINST WOMEN TEACHERS in 1 Timothy 2:11-15** had some such **GROUP in mind**. We have long recognized that this is the text, *if there is one*, that "**PUTS DOWN WOMEN**". But it depends on:

(1) **where** they are "put down" **FROM**, and

(2) **where** they are "put down" **TO**.

If, they are "put down" from a oneness with MEN, to a lower status, then they are certainly *made INFERIOR to MEN.*

But, *if* they are "put down" from an *assumed and IMPROPER ELEVATION, they may well be "put down" to the same ONENESS with MAN that Christ's offering achieved for them,* when he loved them and gave his life for them, *that there should be* "no MALE and FEMALE, but ALL ONE in him."

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**One thing we can be CERTAIN about, from the TEXT, is that:**

- (1) the **HERETICS led astray "WEAK-WILLED WOMEN" (2Tim.3:6),**
- (2) they **forbid MARRIAGE (1 Timothy 4:3).**

In opposing them, Paul reminds *the WHOLE CHURCH,* not just **WOMEN,** of **the SOLE MEDIATORSHIP OF CHRIST (1 Tim.2:5-9).** Which brings us right up to *where* we are.

**11, "LET THE WOMEN SUBMIT TO QUIET LEARNING",** may well be a most refreshing and **LIBERATING** change for a sex that has, as we have seen, been kept in **ABSOLUTE IGNORANCE by MEN,** through countless ages. (We should be careful not to see that statement against our **CULTURAL ENLIGHTENMENT for WOMEN,** where we see our **DAUGHTERS FULLY ENTITLED TO THE SAME EDUCATIONAL ADVANTAGES AS OUR SONS,** without discrimination.)

\* It's that old yardstick of **CULTURAL RELATIVITY,** again!

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Another question to ponder: Can you be *certain* that the "**SUBMISSION**" required of the **WOMEN:**

- (1) is to **MEN,**
- (2) *rather* than to **LEARNING?**

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[a] "Do they **SUBMIT,** quietly, to **LEARNING,** or

[b] to **MEN?"** or

[c] to "**Learning from MEN,**" which is the only **PLACE** they are going to **LEARN** from?? Since *only* the **MEN were EDUCATED.**

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12, "For I suffer not a WOMAN to teach..." Does this refer to the **WOMAN** in v.11, who is **IGNORANT,** and has not yet **LEARNT,** and therefore does not have the necessary qualifications to teach, viz. **KNOWLEDGE?**

Is this prohibition as **literally BINDING FOREVER,** as his equally firmly expressed directions in vv.8,9, "I will therefore, that **MEN pray everywhere WITH THEIR HANDS UP IN THE AIR, and that WOMEN DO NOT ADORN THEMSELVES WITH BRAIDED HAIR, OR GOLD, OR PEARLS, OR COSTLY ARRAY."**?

"I do not suffer a WOMAN to **USURP AUTHORITY OVER THE MAN.**" Does this suggest that the WOMAN in "**USURPING**" (for that is what the word suggests to us) "authority", is taking something that **RIGHTFULLY belongs to MAN**? This word "USURPING" has no place here. (It is another eg. of TRANSLATOR BIAS.)

What Paul is saying is, "***I do not permit a woman to HAVE authority over a man.***" I would expect him to say, if he were addressing a MAN on a similar issue, "I do not permit a man to HAVE authority over a woman."

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**BUT I MUST FOLLOW MY PREDELICITION: I believe Paul is addressing a particular "uprising" of WOMEN in Ephesus, and is "pegging them back, not to SUBSERVIENCE to MEN, but to "ONENESS" with them.**

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13, **Adam**, he continues, was created first rather than Eve. In no way did she precede Adam in the order of creation. He was first formed, then she. And Eve, far from being an unflinching **INSTRUMENT OF LIGHT**, was very much **IN** the transgression. She was **DELUDED**. There is no escaping this, from the record.

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(But, the curious argument that some of our brethren put forth, from this verse, that therefore, somehow, Adam was **less guilty** than Eve, is indeed a curious one. If anything, he is more guilty, because Eve, at least was deceived, whereas he has no such excuse. **HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING**, and is therefore the more **CULPABLE**.

But that is no more Paul's point, than to argue Adam's **first**, in creation, made him **SUPERIOR**. There is a strange bit of "heavy exposition" going around the traps that suggests that Adam, the earliest eg. of **PRIMOGENITURE**, was therefore the "**FIRSTBORN**", and by inheritance, was recognized by God as being worthy of the **BIRTHRIGHT**, two-thirds the honour, power and supremacy, over Eve. I much prefer **John Wright's** simple little suggestion last week, that that argument doesn't say much for **second** attempts.

The simple counter-answer to such an irrelevant bit of "logic", is that "**second thoughts are always best**", and the **last made** in creation was meant to **CROWN the work**. But all such comments are, in the end, quite beside the point.)

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NO-ONE, PAUL ARGUES, HAS A PRIVILEGED POSITION WITH GOD ON THE BASIS OF GENDER.

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**MARRIAGE IS THE MODEL FOR THE RESTORATION OF COVENANT MUTUALITY IN CHRIST** [and why I so stress the need to keep **THE SONG OF SONGS**, read in our Bible the way it was meant to be read, as the **MARRIAGE MANUAL OF THE BIBLE**, and not as some bloodless abstraction, an **ALLEGORY** of something or other, that destroys its basic message that **MARRIAGE** is the one place where the **covenant intention of MUTUALITY**, in the mind of God, from the beginning can be worked out, this side of the kingdom.].

(1) **In Christ the *curse* on MARRIAGE is lifted and COMPLEMENTARITY (Bev.) is restored. (1Cor.11:11, "Nevertheless, *neither* is the MAN without the WOMAN, *neither* the WOMAN without the MAN, in the Lord.")**

(2) **The HUSBAND'S ROLE OF HEADSHIP (1Cor.11:3, "...the *head* of the WOMAN is MAN." and, Ephes.5:23, "For the husband is the *head* of the wife..."); and**

(3) **The WIFE'S ROLE OF SUBMISSION...ARE REAFFIRMED, BUT RADICALLY ALTERED.**

(4) **SUBMISSION BECOMES A MUTUAL CALLING (Ephes.5:21), transforming MALE HEADSHIP from AUTHORITATIVE CONTROL to RESPONSIBLE CARE.**

(5) **Its PARADIGM is now MODELLED after the SELF-SACRIFICIAL DEATH of JESUS for the CHURCH (Ephes.5:25-33); and**

(6) **Its PURPOSE is not to CRUSH but to LIBERATE.**

(7) **SUBMISSION on the part of the WIFE is transformed from SERVILITY and SUBORDINATION to RESPECT (Ephes.5:33) VOLUNTARILY GIVEN, and**

(8) **to "the UNFADING BEAUTY of a GENTLE and QUIET SPIRIT" (1Peter 3:4).**

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(1) **In TRADITIONAL PATRIARCHY, the HUSBAND was a DESPOT and the WIFE a *virtual* SLAVE.**

(2) **In CHRIST-CENTRED COVENANT MUTUALITY, each COMPLEMENTS the OTHER in their TRANSFORMED ROLES.**

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**WHAT, then, is the CRITERIA that can be safely used to DISTINGUISH between those elements in the apostolic letters which are of LOCAL and TEMPORARY APPLICATION and those that are of UNIVERSAL and PERMANENT VALIDITY?**

May I quote from ***F.F.Bruce***, one of the great 20th century Pauline scholars:

"Where the writings of Paul are concerned, **a reliable rule of thumb** is suggested by his passionate ***emphasis on freedom***- true freedom by contrast with spiritual bondage on the one hand and moral license on the other. Here it is: **whatever** in Paul's teaching ***promotes true freedom is of universal and permanent validity***; whatever seems to impose **restrictions on true freedom** has regard to ***local and temporary conditions***. (For example, to go to another area, restrictions on a Christian's **freedom in the matter of food** are conditioned by the **company** in which he or she is at the time; and even those restrictions are manifestations of the ***overriding principle of always considering the well-being of others.***")

(***A Mind for What Matters***, p.263, 4.)

E J Russell

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