

**WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN ASSEMBLIES OF GOD IN WEST AFRICA:
DOES THE BIBLE GIVE A CLEAR ANSWER?**

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DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this thesis to my wife, Mrs Miezán Año Nda. Nda, in her simple trust and dedication to the Lord, I have learned much about the real reason for God giving to me a helper. Thanks for being you and allowing the Lord to use the qualities He has placed within you. Your life, your intercessory prayer and your encouragement has impacted me in a profound way and for that I will always be grateful.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Everywhere there are winds of change in modern culture and society. In the secular world, time-honored role patterns for men and women have undergone considerable change as women have begun to fill roles which were traditionally reserved for men. The church has not been isolated from these changes and the church faces the ever-present temptation to conform to the dictates of modern culture.

Many people who believe in the authority of the Scripture have not been willing to abandon what they regard as the divine plan for men and women, no matter what changes might be taking place in the world. They choose to remain faithful to the traditional understanding of Paul's teachings concerning women. We are taught that women, according to Paul, are to obey their husbands and are subject to male leadership. On the other hand, we are taught that women, according to a double standard, have the ultimate position of leadership. Other people believe that women are only responsible for upholding sexual virtues.

Aristotle assumed that the leader of a swarm must be male. Why? Because he was firmly convinced that, "Male is by nature fitter to command than female."¹ Demosthenes, who was born just one year earlier than Aristotle was regarded as the greatest of Greek orators. He analyzed the role of women in Athens in an oft-quoted statement: "We have courtesans for our pleasures, prostitutes [that is, young female slaves] for daily physical use, wives to bring

¹ John Temple Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women* (Harper San Francisco: A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 6.

up legitimate children and to be faithful stewards in household matters.”² Where did the idea that woman is inferior to man really began? Did the early church face challenges concerning the thoughts of these pagan philosophers?

This must be resisted if God’s word is to continue to speak with full authority to us. On the other hand, the church has the opportunity to re-examine issues that were long thought, perhaps wrongly, to have been settled. Through such re-examination, teachings of the Scripture that have been hidden or distorted may be recovered and can speak to us with new power.

The momentous words of Galatians 3:38 provide us with the framework within which any and all differences or role relationships must be seen and considered: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”³ Here the apostle, recognizing the differences between Jew and Greek (cf. 1Co 9:19-21) and male and female, affirms that they are brought into one new being Christ Jesus so that they are all one. With this word the Apostle removes any ethnic, national, racial, social, or sexual characteristic as determinative of one’s spiritual standing in Jesus Christ.

Faith in Christ and nothing else brings one into spiritual unity with Christ. The theological underpinnings of this are the facts that all human beings are made in the image of God (cf. Acts 17:26), and that image is renewed in the image of Christ (Col 3:10-11; Ro 8:29; 2Co. 3:18). So also the apostle Peter affirms this coequality and unity when he speaks of male and female, husband and wife as joint-heir of the grace of life (1Pe. 3:7). The aspect of Peter’s treatment that is noteworthy for our question is that he affirms this spiritual equality in the midst of the passage speaking of a distinct role of wives and husbands – that is, the wives

² John Temple Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women* (Harper San Francisco: A Division of Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 7.

³ Except stated, *all Scripture passages are from NKJV, NIV, Jerusalem Bible, NEB, and American Standard Version.*

must be subject to their husband (3:1) and the husbands must give honor to their wives as “weaker vessels” (3:7).

The “weaker-vessel terminology” would seem to be Peter’s way of speaking to the femininity of the woman, comparing the size and muscle strength of the body to that of a man’s body, without intending to derogate the woman.⁴ While Peter appeals to the husband to honor his wife as a “fellow-heir” – that is, as equal – he also urges the husband to recognize his wife’s femininity (as the “weaker vessel”). Likewise Paul also writes of man and woman as one in Christ (Gal 3:28), and also of the wife’s submission to the headship of her husband (Eph. 5:22; Col 3:18-19). Equality and role differences are compatible.

Do the above explanations give room for the church to ordain women into position such as Pastor-Teacher, or leadership? The complexity of the biblical materials must be taken into account. On one hand, Paul declares: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (1Ti 2:12). On the other hand, women were permitted to edify the congregation through prophecy (1Co 11:5), and women did on occasion instruct men in more informal contexts (e.g., Acts 18:26).

Again does the exclusion of women from the teaching and ruling office and functions of the church in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-37 speaks for all the New Testament evidence on the role of women in the church, even though it is very specific? Was Paul speaking concerning the culture of that time or universal norms that prohibit women from ruling and teaching men?

The aim of the Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that women can be used or occupy leadership positions in Assemblies of God, Togo, and Côte d’Ivoire and in other African countries as can be seen in the entire biblical period and also the history of the church. There

⁴ Gustave Stahlin, “*Asthès*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. And ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 9 vol. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1974) 1:491.

are no differences between men and women in brain wiring, skill and orientation to the world. Women can and do lead just as well as men, and often better, because they typically have to work harder to get into leadership position.

It is the author's desire for women to know that the Scripture shows that God's nature transcends maleness and femaleness. The feminine and masculine image of God demonstrates that His character embraces aspects of both. When the New Testament describes God's coming to the earth, it is Christ's humanness, not His maleness that is the focus. Women can occupy a broad range of activities open in the church – as missionaries, Sunday school teachers, leaders, youth workers, music and choir directors, church administrators, and so forth and the church can be blessed by such efforts and activities of women. God used women as seen in the entire Bible and He is willing to use women in this generation. God's actions reveal timeless truths. He at times overruled patriarchy by choosing community and religious leaders, and wise partners in family settings.

God blessed women who acted in faith and obedience to Him, taking risks guided by the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, God's purpose was to lead people into a new pattern with the coming of Christ and the establishment of the Church. Priestly succession and hierarchy marked the Old Covenant. Ministry according to giftedness and egalitarian relationships in home, church and society mark the New Covenant. Examination of Christ's treatment of women in the culture of His day further reveals God's values. Peter, empowered by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost proclaimed God's desire to anoint all believers as prophets. And Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit in his first letter proclaimed God's desire that all believers are His priests – including women.

The author is not promoting feminist's ideology that overruns the principles of the Word of God. His aim is to challenge uninformed assumptions, long-held prejudice, and limiting traditions and also to sweep away non-biblical barriers and theologically locate the

ministry of women in God's sovereignty by sending of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Limitation

With due recognition of the nature and limitation of this level of thesis, the author will review some of the literatures relating to "God's Women Then and Now, Grace and Truth" and so forth. He will consider the theological and the historical basis for women in leadership which also includes the contemporary women, women in leadership role in Assemblies of God Togo and Côte d'Ivoire.

Hypothesis

The author strongly believes that women ought to be elected or ordained in leadership positions in the Church. Take for example, William and Catherine Booth who founded the Salvation Army. His famous line reflects the active leadership women gave in that church group. He said, "My best men are women." "Don't be afraid to empower women," says the pastor of the world's largest church. David Yonggi Cho advises churches to let women become spiritual leaders. "If you delegate your ministry to them, they will become tremendous messengers for the Lord."⁵

For nineteen hundred years, the church generally adhered to an understanding of Scripture as prohibiting the ordination of women to the offices of leadership. Paul's injunction in 1 Timothy 2:12-15 was almost universally understood to proscribe women from exercising spiritual authority over men. Nevertheless, the role of women in the early church was substantial. In Romans 16:1-3, 6,12,13,15, Paul mentions women who apparently were prominent in the church, including Phoebe (termed "a *diakonos* of the church in Cenchrea") and Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (who are said to "work hard in the Lord").

⁵ *Pastor of World's Largest Church Endorses Ministry by Women*, Religious News Services, July 12, 2000.

The author argues that the Scripture records that God placed women in power. God chose to equip women with capacity to influence people. God entrusted them with responsibility and held them accountable for how they used their authority. God empowered women with supernatural gifts that qualified them to minister in the church. And God chose women to speak to His people on His behalf.⁶ Women bring certain strength to leadership,⁷ just as do men. Both are needed in interdependent ministry for leadership to be most effective overall.⁸

The biblical image changes the metaphor of leadership from rulership to servanthood. Shepherding (as a leader) involves tending to the needs of God's people: caring for them, gathering them together, guiding them to pasture, protecting them, and keeping them from fear and harm. These nurturing activities are often associated with women's roles. Jeremiah 3:15 describes the servant-leadership of shepherds after the heart of God's own heart – whether by men or women.⁹ (Both in ancient and modern times, women have raised and cared for sheep). Biblical leadership model is *founded in calling* (“I will give you shepherd”), *expressed in character* (“after my heart”) and *confirmed in competency* (“who will lead you with knowledge and understanding”).¹⁰

Jesus, in John 10:1-16, described himself as the Good shepherd. He enters the sheepfold by the gate and becomes a door for the flock. The sheep listen to and know His voice; he calls them by name and leads them out. He goes ahead of them and they follow him. He lays down His life for the sheep. He doesn't flee when he sees the wolf coming, but he

⁶ Deborah Menken Gill, “*The Female Prophets: Gender and Leadership in the Tradition*” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1991), xiii, 267.

⁷ Janet L. Kobobel, *But Can She Type? ----- Overcoming Stereotype in the workplace* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1986); Sally Helgesen, *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership* (New York: Doubleday, 1986); and Sally Helgesen, *The Web of Inclusion* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1995). Quoted by Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God's Women Then and Now* (Springfield: Published by Grace and Truth, 2004), 173-179.

⁸ J. Robert Clinton, *Gender and Leadership: My Personal Pilgrimage* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1995), 12-13, 19-23.

⁹ Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God's Women Then and Now*, 173-179.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

cares for the sheep. The Good Shepherd is a model of servant-leadership: a mediator, a companion, a guide, a defender to the death and a friend.

God has ordained that every believer realize the significance of their mission and ministry as His servants. Gender is no restriction intended to limit significance or breadth of dimension in living for or serving Christ: “I will pour out My Spirit on your sons and daughters . . . upon your menservants and your maidservants” (Acts 2:17).

The author believes that the church would have grown tremendously, if the Assemblies of God Togo and Cote d’Ivoire force had permitted women to fill the position of leadership and participated in the various decisions at the local, Regional and General Council levels and in other committees. Taken as an inclusive group, women constitute an impressive part of the labor force for the churches in channels other than pastoral ministry. Then why bother about their exclusion from leadership position?

Ministerial Relevance to the Topic

There are several reasons why this topic holds great importance to the author and many other men and women. First, when the Bible says, “God created man in his own image” (Ge. 1:27), the word translated man does not represent a male person in this instance. The word is better understood as meaning humankind or human beings. The verse goes on to show that both men and women are created equally in the image of God.

Secondly, the fact Adam was made with dust from the ground and Eve was made with bone from Adam does not in any way support a claim that Adam was primarily in God’s image and therefore superior as Eve was made primarily in Adam’s image and only secondarily in God’s image. Scanzoni and Hardesty say, if being created first is to have precedence, then the animals are clearly our better.

This logic of argument, Adam was made first, breaks down rather quickly because it is arbitrary and invented. The New Testament portrays Esau, the older of the two brothers, as

rejected by God because of his sinfulness (Heb. 12:16-17). Later, Jacob's firstborn son Reuben lost his rights to Jacob's eleventh-born son Joseph (1Ch. 5:1-2) who ruled over all of his brothers (Ge. 48:22; 50:18). Moses, not his elder brother Aaron (Ex.7:7), was God's choice to lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan. David the youngest of the eight sons was chosen by God to become Israel's greatest king, making him ruler over each of his older brothers (1Sa 16:3, 10-11).

Thirdly, every member of the body of Christ (either male or female) has an important and necessary contribution to make. Since God placed the parts in the body of Christ as He wanted them to be (1Co. 12:17), no one should consider themselves or anyone else unnecessary (vv.15-26). Interdependence is essential! We are one Body, "and each member belongs to all the others" (Ro. 12:5).

Fourthly, leadership position is considered by many to be a ladder of power to climb. Rung by rung the leader ascends to higher rank, greater status, and increased benefits. Such a hierarchical view of leadership has been around since antiquity. This is a selfish view of leadership, which focuses on what the leader gets out of leadership – power and privilege. Biblical leadership however is based not on rank and status but on humility and service. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. This is not limited to men only.

Fifthly, the Old Testament priests were members of a selected group of men whose primary task was to offer sacrifices unto God on behalf of the people, including both sacrifices of repentance and sacrifices of worship. A young woman could not serve in this capacity, but neither could the vast majority of young men. Under the new covenant, every believer becomes a priest unto God (1Pe. 2:4-5, 9); Rev. 1:6) and serves in this capacity throughout eternity (Rev. 5:10, 20:6). This new priesthood of believers includes all men and women. What was done only by selected men under the old covenant is to be done by all believers (both men and women) under the new covenant. To use this office as a means of

excluding women or anyone else from anything runs contrary to everything the New Testament teaches about.

Finally, in Africa, particularly Assemblies of God Togo and Côte d'Ivoire, there greater percentage of our members is women and it very important to give opportunity to women in the leadership role, to train in our Bible Schools, and to include them in decision-making of the church.

Methods

Several methods could be used in a research paper like this; however, due to the limitation of this work, the author will use library resources, questionnaire forms, interviews, church records and other publications available that are relevant to this research.

Definition of Terms

It is important to define some terms that make up the topic of this thesis. These terms include *woman* and *leadership*. Their definitions follow:

Woman

The New Bible Dictionary 3rd ed., uses the Hebrew word “issâ” and the Greek word “gynè” for both man and woman. The common humanity and equal value of woman and man created in the image of God, is the theme of Genesis 1:27.¹¹

Baker Dictionary of Theology says, “Woman” - the generic term man includes women, but as an individual creation of God she was formed out of a man (Ge. 2:21-24).¹²

The Evangelical Dictionary of the Theology says, the concept of the place of “woman” in the family, society and in the church has been the object of much attention in the latter part

¹¹ I. Howard Marshall and others. *New Bible Dictionary* (Downers Grove, IL/Leicester, England: Inter Varsity, 1996), 1246.

¹² Everett F. Harrison, ed., *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1960), 556.

of the twentieth century. The Scripture provides a wholesome contrast with the oppressive attitude and practice which prevailed in biblical times in the nations surrounding the Jews, and which often prevails to this day around the world. He went further to explain that Genesis has an account of creation of humanity as the climax of God's activity. The supreme dignity of the human being is expressed in the concept that they are created in the image of God. This immediately relates to both male and female (Ge. 1:27).¹³

The *Merriam – Webster's Collegiate Dictionary 3rd ed.*, defines woman as an adult female person or a distinctively female nature.¹⁴

Leadership

The general editor of the *Spirit Filled Life Bible*, Jack W. Hayford defines leadership as one who equips the saints or assists them to fruitful life and service (Eph 4:11); someone who transmits the truth to each successive generation of converts, that is, disciplining those you touch, that they may in turn disciple those they touch.¹⁵

Ted W. Engstrom says, the concept of a leader is one who guides activities of others and who himself acts and performs to bring those activities about. He or She is capable of performing acts which will guide a group in achieving objectives. He or She takes the capacities of vision and faith, has ability to be concerned and comprehend, exercises action through effective and personal influence in the direction of an enterprise and the development of potential into practical or profitable means.¹⁶

¹³ Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1997), 1175.

¹⁴ Frederick C. Mish, gen. ed., *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10th edition* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1998), 1360.

¹⁵ Jack W. Hayford, gen. Ed., *Spirit Filled Life Bible, New King Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1991) xxvii.

¹⁶ Ted W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 24.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women Leadership: Present-Day Attitudes

The views concerning the role of women in the local church ministry are most often broken down by scholars into two distinct groups: those who believe women should be permitted to hold positions of pastoral authority in the church and those who believe that only men are permitted to hold such position in the local church. Some hold that women cannot serve in the local church as senior pastors but are permitted to serve as assistant or associate pastors. Others might believe that women should not serve any form of pastoral role in the church but are free to teach women in Sunday school classes.

One of the early church fathers, Augustine said in the Good Marriage that God created us male and female in a kind of friendly and genuine union of one ruling and the other obeying (thus male first, female second) or more broadly on a general belief in the subordination of women to men due to women's weaker nature.¹⁷

Jewett said in his book *Man as Male and Female* that the second creation narrative does say that woman was made from and for a man, but the theological leap from this to

¹⁷Augustine, *The Good Marriage*, trans. Charles T. Wilcox, in *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects*, The Father of the Church, ed., Roy Joseph Deferrari (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 27:9.

¹⁸ Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eardmans, 1975), 119-126.

¹⁹ S. M. Baugh, *A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century*¹⁷ S. M. Baugh, *A Foreign World : Ephesus in the First Century*, Essay in *Women in the Church : A Fresh Analysis of 1Timothy 2 :9-15*, Andreas J. Kostenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner and H. Scott Baldwin, eds, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 49-50.

woman's subordination is a traditional rabbinic understanding that is not supported by the text. After all man was made from dust but this does not make him subordinate to the earth.¹⁸

In 1 Timothy 2:13 prohibits women from teaching because Adam was formed first, then Eve. S.M. Baugh argued in an article "A Foreign World: Ephesus in the century" entirely devoted to the question whether Paul's command was only for the church at Ephesus:

Paul's injunctions throughout 1 Timothy 2:9-15, then, are not temporary measures in a unique social setting. Ephesus's society and religion – even the cult of Artemis Ephesia – shared typical features with many other contemporary Greco-Roman cities... Hence, we have every reason to expect Paul to apply the restriction of women from preaching and exercising official rule over a man to "every place" (v.8). . . . Exegetical treatments can proceed with the assumption that Ephesus was not a unique society as we read today.¹⁹

Another author T. David Gordon with S.M. Baugh agrees and writes that the context itself reveals that Paul's statement is not directed only to a local assembly, for Paul supports his command regarding a woman's role in the church by way of a universal principle:

It is crucial to note the causal relation of verses 13 and 14 to the preceding verses. Paul grounds his comments in a reality that exists outside of Ephesus: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." This is sufficient reason to recognize that some enduring principle is applied to this situation. The convergence of norm and occasion that we expect to find in Paul's letters is expressly communicated in the present passage. There is a command, and there is a norm, and these are connected by causal particle (*gar*).²⁰

Homer A. Kent writing on the same subject asserts that the very chronological order of creation proves that Eve was not intended to direct Adam. He went further to say that the role of leadership and teacher in the New Testament day was an authoritative office.²¹ In many cultures, women were prohibited even from learning, much less teaching or reading in public. Donald Guthrie in *The Pastoral Epistle* writes that "the equality of sexes . . . received little

²⁰ T. David Gordon, *A Certain Kind of Letter: The Genre of 1 Timothy*,²⁰ Essay in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, Andreas J. Kostenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner and H. Scott Baldwin, eds, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 61.

²¹ Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Pastoral Epistles* (Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1986), 106.

recognition in ancient times. Not only was the prevailing Greek attitude against it, but the Hebrew thought was equally unsympathetic.²²

In his book “What’s a woman to Do . . . In the church?” David Nicholas lists a variety of ministries that women could fulfill, not only in the church but also in the community as they teach other women, learn God’s word, and adorn themselves with good works. Such a role could include:

- A ministry in Christian education
- A Ministry in Personal Evangelism and discipleship
- A Ministry of Child Evangelism
- A Ministry in Missions
- A Ministry to Women

Certainly a woman can fill a variety of roles that would bring honor to God and would edify the entire body of Christ. Yet while women can serve in a variety of areas in the church, the word of God set forth a final principle that forbade women to exercise one particular function in the church.²³

It is the author’s strong feeling that when one carefully reads 1Timothy 2: 9-15, he will find that it is more concerned with deception and false teaching than with women. All Christians must beware lest false teachers deceive them as the serpent did to Eve. Apparently some women in Timothy’s church in Ephesus had been so misled (2Ti 3:6-7) and so they were barred from teaching.

Interestingly, nowhere does Jesus suggest that the woman is weak and easily deceived. He does not forbid her to study theology or teach his word. He does not blame her for the first

²² Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 86.

²³David R. Nicholas, *What’s a Woman to Do . . . In the Church?* (Scottsdale, AZ: Good Life Productions, Inc., 1979), 107.

sin or remind her that men will rule over her because of it. Rather he treats all daughters of Eve as persons created and re-created in His image and likeness.

The Proliferation of Female Pastors within the Christian Church

The role of women in local Christian churches has been a matter of debate within Christendom for many years. Yet in recent years, this issue has risen to a climax, not only in several mainline Protestant and Orthodox denominations, but also in evangelicals as well.

Southern Baptist Convention – According to Barbara Brown Zikmund and others, they have approximately 1.130 ordained women filling various roles of ministry.²⁴ The Association of Vineyard Churches – This group only allows men to hold the office of elder and pastor, but allows women to “preach, teach, evangelize, heal, prophesy, counsel, nurture, administrate, and build up the flock of God.”²⁵

The Church of the Nazarene – Shelly Steig reports that this denomination has ordained women to the ministry since its founding in 1908 and supports the rights of women to use their God-given spiritual gifts within the church. Nazarenes affirm the right of women to be elected and appointed to places of leadership at all levels of the church. It is important to note that some churches within this denomination have shunned their denominational title (Church of the Nazarene) for a more generic, community oriented name (e.g. New Life Community Church, etc.).²⁶

Assemblies of God USA believe women can serve in all roles of church ministry including that of pastor. In a position paper entitled “The Role of Women in Ministry as Described in Holy Scripture,” the authors conclude, “We cannot find convincing evidence that the ministry of women is restricted according to some sacred or immutable principle. ...

²⁴ Barbara Brown Zikmund, and others, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 138.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 133

²⁶ Shelly Steig, *Finding the Right Church: A Guide to Denomination Beliefs* (Iowa Fall, LA: World Bible Publisher, Inc., 1997), 110.

The existence in the secular world of bigotry against women cannot be denied. But there is no place for such an attitude in the body of Christ. We acknowledge that attitudes of secular society, based on long-standing practice and tradition, have influenced the application of biblical principles to local circumstances.”²⁷

The General Council assumed that as the Holy Spirit is given by God irrespective of the sex of the recipient, so the ministries conferred by the Spirit are to be exercised irrespective of the sex of the recipient.²⁸ The Council has its bylaws that involve the ordination of women. The current statement reads as follows:

Eligibility of women. The Scriptures plainly teach that divinely called and qualified women may also serve the church in the Word (Joel 2:28; Acts 21:9; 1 Corinthians 11:5). Women who have developed in the ministry of the Word so that their ministry is acceptable generally, and who have proved their qualifications in actual service, and who meet all the requirements of credentials committees of the district councils, are entitled to whatever grade of credentials their qualifications warrant and the right to administer the ordinances of the church when such acts are necessary.²⁹

Howe said, this principle, however, is not always clearly reflected in the statistics of the church structure.³⁰

Free Methodist Church of North America – This is the denomination in which the previous president of the National Association of Evangelicals, Kevin Mannoia, is an ordained bishop. This denomination believes that “the Gospel of Jesus Christ... knows no distinction of race, condition or sex. ... With these beliefs, women should be encouraged to take their place in all areas of church leadership and ministry.

Many other churches, fellowships and denominations including the Open Bible Standard Churches, Inc.; International Church of the Foursquare Gospel; The Church of God

²⁷Assemblies of God position paper. *The Role of Women in Ministry as Described in Holy Scripture*, August 1990. This document can be found at http://ag.org/top/position_papers/0000_index.cfm.

²⁸Bylaws, Article VII, 2.K, as quoted in “*Does God Deny Scriptural manifestations and Ministry Gifts to Women ?*” by Joseph R. Flower, General Secretary, General Council of the Assemblies of God, January 2, 1978 (unpublished) quoted by E. Margaret Howe, *Women & church Leadership* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982),138.

²⁹Ibid., 138-139.

³⁰Ibid., 138.

(Anderson, IN); and others allow women to hold positions of pastoral authority within the local church.

Clearly, with the growth of the Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements, which advocate female clergy and the increasing ecumenical inclusiveness of many evangelical churches, it is vitally important for the Fundamentalist Christians to know what God's Word teaches regarding this issue so that he might know how to answer those who question his position concerning the role of women in the ministry of the local church. It is evident that the majority of professing Christians and Christian churches today allow women to fill positions of pastoral leadership in the local church. This serious issue will remain with the church and continue to permeate all realms of Christian thought and practice as women's roles of pastoral leadership in churches and denominations continues to become more accepted and commonplace in the [professing] Christian community.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

There is a threefold reason why I have undertaken this study. My first concern is the fact that, in spite of the greater percentage of women in our churches, not much has been done to give woman leadership role. Women comprise well over half the membership of the churches; yet the number chosen to represent the churches in governing denominational or ecumenical bodies is a small fraction of the male representation.

With surveys I have done in our various churches, I found that the greatest majority of Church attenders – women – have a strong sense of belonging to their church and feel that it is adequately meeting their spiritual needs. They have never felt unwelcome in the Church in recent years, and have received sufficient assistance to complete a task when they have accepted responsibility. Respondents suggested that the best ways to increase women's participation were through prayer, increasing women's involvement in decision-making, church administration and reforming beliefs and practices that do not promote the equality of men and women. Some said they have neither experienced nor observed barriers to women's participation in the church but others said they did not accept the church's teachings on the ordination of women.

By contrast, the overall surveys, public hearing and targeted group revealed a strong sense of pain and alienation resulting from the church's stance on women. The results of the research approaches highlighted the enormous contribution of women to all aspects of the life of the church; except ordained ministry, leadership and decision-making. It was perceived that

little assistance and supports were received from the church to undertake anything other than auxiliary and support roles.

I have also found out that women are admitted readily to most of the Protestant seminaries, but upon graduation neither preaching nor teaching positions are given to them, except in rare instances. This has prompted me to write this thesis.

In this thesis the reader will find some reflections concerning women leadership roles in the following research materials:

- Biblical resources, Bible references, Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries,
- Theological appraisal
- Historical backgrounds
- Sources of books dealing with women: role of women in the church, teaching, preaching, ordination, care etc.
- Church leaders, those in Secular work, laymen etc.
- Tradition in the context of the nation.
- Personal interviews and questionnaire from various Social classes

With this thesis I tried to combine the historical background of the problem with a theological appraisal of it. As far as I know, this is very important. A linkage of history with theology is helpful in giving perspective on any social issue, especially in this field.

Secondly I looked at some evidences of women's age long subjection to men, but also at such steps as have been taken toward greater equality and wider opportunities. Since most of these developments have come about in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a considerable part of this thesis was also centred on these periods.

It is familiar knowledge that according to the second chapter of Genesis, woman was made from Adam's rib to be man's helper, and that Paul said some things not very favourable to the status of women. It is common knowledge also, or should know, that the Christian

gospel stands for the equality of all persons before God. These matters and what to do with their apparent contradiction have been taken up in a number of books on women in the church. However, I have found little the attempt to give a comprehensive theological study of these and other related issues. But unless we build from firm theological foundations, how shall we find the right guidelines?

I also recognized and analysed two aspects of the hermeneutical issue that I find particularly important. One is *consistency*. Those opposed to equal status of women in marriage and the church often stress on such texts as I Timothy 2:12, claiming that the “clear teaching of Scripture” obviously prohibits women from exercising any authority in the church’s ministry, and that if one accepts Scripture’s authority, the issue is closed.

It is to my credit that they accept the authority of Scripture and at the same time press for consistency in accounting for all the Biblical data. Hence, Paul’s comments on Phoebe in Romans 16:1 must be accounted for in any final decision on the intention and application of I Timothy 2:12; and II Corinthians 11:3. It must also be considered when interpreting I Timothy 2:14. This should warn against the “authorization” of one sentence of Scripture without regard for the consistency of the whole. Further, this care for consistency delivers me from giving too much attention to Galatians 3:28 while giving too little to other relevant texts.

The other aspect of the hermeneutical issue that I would stress is that of *context*. I clearly and correctly assess many aspects of the position and status of women in the cultural milieu in which Paul lived, thought, and wrote his letters. I also found out that Paul’s injunctions in I Corinthians 11 and 14 and I Timothy 2, which form the basis of the traditional interpretation that women are to be subordinate and silent, reflect both Paul’s culture and his genuine and practical acceptance, but not eternal endorsement, of certain of these cultural factors. Other Church leaders I interviewed object that whenever one allows cultural factors to

limit the intent or application of a text in time it is tantamount, to denying the Bible's timeless authority.

I carefully examined within evangelical Christian literature and many other Christian traditional literatures that argue over the place of women in the church and the nature of Christian marriage always comes back to arguments about the meaning of certain passages in the Bible. Thus, they have chosen to write about Paul's view of women (some with more emphasis on marriage than the ministry) since it is in the Pauline literature that majority of the crucial texts occur. (They do give brief attention to Genesis 2-3 in the context of Paul's references to the Old Testament and one footnote to Jesus in the Gospels, the other major areas of Biblical concern; see also women in Acts and I Peter 3:1-7).

It is with the hope that this thesis may provide some guidelines, and a stimulus to greater justice in a vital human relation, that this thesis is presented. Finally my aim is to build on both descriptive and constructive, both historical and theological issue.

CHAPTER FOUR

BIBLICAL APPROACH: THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Women in the Old Testament

Genesis Accounts

In Genesis 1 and 2, there are two accounts of the creation of humanity. In Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created". In Genesis 2, the man is created first; he names the animals and no helper for him is found among them." Then the woman is built from the man's rib to be a helper fit for him. The story of Genesis chapter one and two has been misinterpreted: Chapter one has been the absolute unequivocal equality of the sexes, and chapter two, the inferiority of the woman.³¹ Neither extreme is correct; the true picture of the creation of woman emerges only when both narratives are put together.³² Chapter one and two complement each other.

On the sixth day God created humanity, man (Hebrew word *adham*) in the generic sense, in two sexes.³³ There is no indication that there is any difference between male and female in Genesis 1:26ff. This passage expresses in what way man and woman are equal. Both man and woman are in the image of God in exactly the same way.³⁴ Some state that man was created in God's image and woman is a second in man's image so that the image of God

³¹ Phyllis Tribe, *Eve and Adam: Genesis 2-3 Reread, Andover Newton Quarterly*, 13:4 (March, 1973), 251.

³² *Ibid.*, 251

³³ Rousas J. Rushdoomy, *The Doctrine of Marriage, Toward Christian Marriage : a Chalcedon Study*, Elizabeth Fellersen, ed. (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1972), 14

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 15

in woman is a second hand, reflected image. Others suggest that since God reveals himself as male, God the Father and the Son, woman must be excluded from participating in his image.³⁵

Throughout all Judeo-Christian history God has been referred to as “he” and has inevitably left a residue of maleness in the thought of deity. The author does not recommend that we now substitute “she” or “he-she” or “it”; either of the first two would be ridiculous and the third could carry an impersonal connotation altogether too prevalent today. Even to address the deity as “Father-Mother God,” as we have heard it done, seems like straining the point further than is necessary. God’s fatherhood does not mean God’s maleness. God is father-like relationally not sexually. As wrong as it is for feminists to impose gender on God, it is equally wrong for chauvinists to impose male gender on God. Both claims are contrary to Scripture, are theologically dangerous, and are usually self-serving in motive. Since God is without gender, it is unnecessary to limit the ministry to one of the two genders.

Back to the issue of subordination, Genesis 1:27 make no distinction between female and male. Both are blessed by God and told to multiply and to subdue the earth. The stewardship by creation is given to both man and woman; they are jointly responsible for the care of the earth. However, Genesis 2 narrative has been called the “subordinating view” of woman for two reasons: man is created first, and woman is created out of man.³⁶

. . . But for Adam (or the man) no suitable helper was found. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs (or “took part of the man’s side”) and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib (or “took part of the man’s side) he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’ for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh (Ge 2:20b-24).

“. . . For Adam there was not found a helpmeet for him” KJV. “. . . no suitable helper [*èzer kenego*] was found” (NIV). The word translated “suitable” (*kenegdo*) means “face to face”

³⁵ Susan T. Foh, *Women & the Word of God, A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 51.

³⁶ Evelyn Stagg and Frank, *Woman in the World of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 34.

and denotes equality and adequacy.³⁷ Woman for centuries has been instructed to be a “helpmeet” for her husband. However, both the Old and the New Testament demonstrate that the noun “helpmeet” does not appear anywhere in the Bible. This has become a distorted contraction of the two KJV words, the noun “help” and the verb “meet,” the latter being Shakespearian English for “corresponding to” or “suitable,” a phenomenon that has been corrected in all later translations.³⁸

Nicole disagrees with the Genesis 2 passage which is often cited as biblical evidence that subordination represents God’s will for woman. He believes women’s place in the home, in the society, and in the church is not issues that can be conclusively determined by a few apparently restrictive passages. He writes that the starting point must be at the creation of humanity, as Jesus himself exemplified by quoting Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 in response to the question by the Pharisees (Mt 19:4-5; Mk 10:6-7).³⁹

The account of Genesis 2:4-25 also confirms in a definitive way the importance of sexual difference. Man (referred to with generic expression *Adam*) who was formed by God and was placed in the Garden to cultivate experienced loneliness. He needed a helpmate (Hebrew word *ezer*) who would be his partner. The term here does not refer to an inferior, but to a vital helper.⁴⁰ This is so that Adam’s life does not sink into a sterile and, in the end, baneful encounter with himself. It is necessary that he enter into the relationship with another being on his own level. Only the woman created from the same flesh and in the same mystery, can give a future to the life of the man. It is therefore above all on the ontological level that this takes place, in the sense that God’s creation of woman characterizes humanity as a relational reality.

³⁷ Roger Nicole, *Hermeneutics and Gender Issue*, in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. R.W. Pierce and R.M. Groothuis (Westmont, Ill.: Inter Varsity, 2005)355-63.

³⁸ *Christians for Biblical Equality*. “Men, Women and Biblical Equality”. Ltd. CBE on the Web at “Biblical Equality.” 1989, http://www.cbeinternational.org/new/about/biblical_equality.html (accessed 15 January 2008).

³⁹ Roger Nicole, *Hermeneutics and Gender Issue*, in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, ed. R.W. Pierce and R.M. Groothuis (Westmont, Ill.: Inter Varsity, 2005)355-63.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

In this encounter, the man speaks word for the first time, expressive of his wonderment: “This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” (Ge 2:23). From the very beginning they appear as a ‘unity of the two’ and this signifies that the original solitude is overcome, the solitude in that man does not find ‘a helper fit for him’ (Ge 2:20). This is a life companion with whom, as a wife the man can unite himself, becoming with her ‘one flesh and for this reason leaving “his father and mother” (cf Ge 2:24). In the unity of the two, man and woman are called from the beginning not only to exist side by side or together but they are also called to exist mutually ‘one for the other.

Creation and fall into Sin

God’s original plan for man and woman was later upset and darkened by sin. The original sin changes the way in which the man and the woman receive and lived the Word of God as well as their relationship with the creator. Immediately after having given them the gift of the garden, God gives them a positive command (cf. Ge 2:16), followed by a negative one (Ge 2:17), in which the essential difference between God and humanity is implicitly expressed. Following enticement by the serpent, the man and the woman deny this difference. As a consequence, the way in which they live their sexual difference is also upset. In this way, the Genesis account establishes a relationship of cause and effect between the two differences: when humanity considers God its enemy, the relationship between man and woman becomes distorted. When this relationship is damaged, their access to face God risks being compromised in turn.

God’s decisive words to the woman after the first sin expressed the kind of relationship which has now been introduced between man and woman: “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (Ge 3:16). It will be a relationship in which love will frequently be debased into pure self-seeking, in a relationship which ignores and kills love and replaces it with the yoke of domination of one sex over the other. In this tragic

situation, the equality, respect and love that are required in the relationship of man and woman according to God's plan are lost. Their equal dignity as persons is realized as physical, psychological and ontological complementarity's, giving rise to a harmonious relationship of "uni-duality", which only the structure of sin inscribed in culture render potentially confliction.

Kaiser, Jr. says most conservatives interpret Genesis 3:16, "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" as husbands exercise authority over their wives. He says the Hebrew word *teshuaqah*, now almost translated as "desire" was previously rendered as "turning." The word only appears in the Hebrew Old Testament three times: Genesis 3:16; 4:7 and in Song of Solomon 7:10. he confirms that the Greek Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Old Latin, the Sahidic, the Bohairic, the Ethiopic, the Arabic, Aquila's Greek, Symmachu's Greek, Theodotion's Greek and Latin Vulgate, almost render these three instances of *teshuaqah* as "turning" not "desire."⁴¹

The Church fathers (Clement of Rome, Ireneaus, Tertullian, Origen, Epiphanius and Jerome, along with Philo, a Jew who died about A.D. 50) seem to be ignorant of any other sense of this word *teshuaqah* than the translation of turning. It is a travesty of errors in which one man in particular, an Italian Dominican monk named Pagnino published his version at Lyons in 1528 translated Genesis 3:16 as that of "libido or sensual desire." Pagnino attached his teaching from the rabbis.⁴² The sense of Genesis 3:16 implies this: as a result of sin, Eve would turn away from her sole dependence on God and turn to her husband. The Hebrew reads: "You are turning away [from God!] to your husband and [as a result] he will rule over

⁴¹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. *Hard Saying of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVaisity Press, 1988), 32-34.

⁴² *Ibid.*

you [take advantage of you].”⁴³ Women did not acquire sexual desires or develop lust for men as a result of the fall.⁴⁴

Though this text only predicts how some husbands will take advantage of their wives, when they turn away from God. Many also hold to the belief that 1 Corinthians 14: 34 refers to Genesis 3:16 [he shall rule over you] when it records women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission. Paul’s answer to the Corinthians was found in the Talmud and Mishnah that taught that woman should not speak and that they must be silent, but this was not taught in the Old Testament. The only conceivable way a person could link up Genesis 3:16 with 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 would be if the Genesis passage said husband must rule over their wives. Genesis 3:16 is not also a command for man to rule over the woman, but it is a curse passage that predicts what will happen when women turn toward their husband instead of turning to God.⁴⁵

There is no mention of subordination until the end of Genesis 3:16, where God outlines the woman’s punishment for her disobedience: He will rule over you.” In that context, only relations within the home are viewed, not those in society or the church. The passage is not a command but a prophecy that has been fulfilled extensively over the centuries in all the earth. Whatever we may do to alleviate God’s curse is legitimate in the matter of subordination, no less than in providing some relief from the pains of the delivery of children (3:16) and the sweat in cultivating the ground and earning a living (3:17-19).

The seriousness of any tampering with the institution of marriage is demonstrated when polygamy is seen first in the home of a veritable scoundrel, Lamech, descendant of Cain (Ge 4:19-24), while monogamy is reasserted on Noah’s ark (Ge 7:1-2). While Genesis 6: 1-4 remains rather mysterious, it would appear that the terrifying human wickedness that

⁴³ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁴ Walter C Kaiser Jr. Paul, *Women and the Church, Worldwide Challenge* (Sept, 1976), 9-12 idem Shared Leadership, *Christianity today* 30 (October 3, 1986), 12:1.

⁴⁵Ibid, 12 :1

precipitated the Flood (Ge 6:5-7, 11-13) was at least in part due to certain wrong marriages (Ge 3:2,4). In this way, Satan himself bears witness to the centrality of marriage by directing his attack on the center rather than the periphery of human life.

The initial plan of God is that man and woman are created equally in the image of God. This equal dignity as persons is realized as physical and psychologically has given rise to live harmoniously. The equality of personhood is a contemporary term that covers such biblical ideas as all persons bear the image of God, all have sinned, the way of salvation is the same for all, and all who believe are children of God and heirs with Christ. However, the equality of rights is another question. The Bible direction is always the fulfilment of one's obligation, not the assurance of one's right. Though equality of personhood does not necessarily imply the equality of rights, one can be equal to one in one respect and not equal in others as per position and office. But this does not mean that it is institutionally forbidden for the other person to have access to that position.

The Treatment of women in the Old Testament

The oppression of women as the weaker sex has been over the ages, a notable feature of human history, thus fulfilling and amplifying the divine prophecy of Genesis 3:16. In special revelation, however, God has shown by contrast a remarkable care and protection of women. God rescued the wife of Abraham and Isaac, as both husbands used strategies to protect their own lives by endangering their wives (Ge 12:10-20, 20:1-18, 26:1-11). The first theophany on record was granted to Hagar, a humble slave who had been wronged (Ge 16:7-16). God showed concern for Leah the unloved (Ge 29:31-35); for Rebekah, and Hannah, the barren (Ge 25:21, 30:22; 1Sa 1:11); for Tamar the victimized (Ge 38); for Rahab the believing prostitute (Jos 6:22-23); and for Ruth the foreign widow (Ru 4:14). The two main cases of resurrection in the Old Testament were occasioned by the plight of mothers (1Ki 17:22-23, 2Ki 4:36).

God's concern for women is potently expressed in the Mosaic legislation. In the Decalogue, Sabbath rest is provided and enjoined for women as well as for men; the honor due to one's mother is the same as that due to one's father. The murder of a woman is forbidden as severely as that of a man because both are created in the image of God (Ge 9:2-6). Adultery, the sin that destroys the marital union is forbidden to both men and women as Jesus interpreted in the New Testament.

God's approach to family is made manifest by at least fifty passages in the Old Testament, wherein mothers and fathers are juxtaposed, followed by twenty –six such passages in the New Testament with the same feature.⁴⁶ The solemnity of the burial of women also reflects their importance in early Israel; the burial of Sarah (Ge 23), the nurse Deborah (Ge 35:8), Rebekah (Ge 49:31), Leah Ge 49:31) and Rachel (Ge 49:31). Additionally, God's mercy is manifested in a special way in legislation regarding widows (Ex 22:22; Dt 14:29; 16:11, 24; 24:17, 19-21; 26:12-13; 27:19). The right of a woman even in slavery must be protected (Ex 21:7-11, 22-24, 22:16, 22; Lev 19: 20-22, 29).⁴⁷

Status of Woman in the Old Testament

The Old Testament was written over many centuries. Even if we reject the traditional dates given in the books of the Scripture, we have to face the possibility that a passage may fall anywhere between about 1200 B.C (date often assigned for Judges Chapter 5) and 175 B.C. (date often given much of the book of Daniel). If we reflect on the changes in beliefs, customs, technology, government, and language that have occurred in Sub-Sahara Africa even since 1960 (date most of our countries became independent), the possibility that there were changes in Israel customs and attitudes over a millennium becomes clear. Ancient

⁴⁶ John Chrysotom, *Select Library of Nicene and Post Nicene Father 1*, ed. Philip Schaff and Herry Wace (Peabody, Mass: Hendricksen, 1994), ¹¹:555.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ¹¹:555.

civilizations appear to have altered slowly but a thousand years is too long a time in human history for there to have been no change.

Status is defined as a relative standing. The basic group within which relative standing are defined are the family and the community. Within the family, the status of women can be defined in relationship to parents (especially the father) and husband, siblings, and children. In the community aspects as a whole, a woman's standing may be described in terms of her relationship to males and to other women.

The Status of woman in the Old Testament is not uniform. There is a male bias and a male priority generally present in both private life and public life of women. However, it never becomes absolute. In the Decalogue of Exodus 20, both male priority and gender balance can be seen. In the tenth commandment, a wife is depicted in the examples of a neighbor's property not to be coveted: house, wife, male or female, ox, or donkey, or any other property. In this perspective, wife along with other properties belong to the husband. On the other hand, the fourth commandment does not make any distinction between honor to be shown to parents: "father and mother." This is consistent with mutual respect shown for both parents throughout the Old Testament.

Marriage

The family was the primary structure throughout the whole period of time covered by the writings of the Old Testament. It was the source of biological survival. It gave individuals their identity, provided whatever economic security there was and it was the primary entity in legal and governmental affairs. The continuation of the family through contracting marriages for the children was the responsibility of the family itself. This function is assigned to the father frequently in the Old Testament, although others also are reported to have discharged the responsibility.

The Scripture points out several times that father took wives for their sons. For example Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, and then tried to arrange a levirate marriage for his son's widow in order to secure male issue for his dead son (Gen. 38: 6-9). The Chronicler reports that Rehoboam, king of Judah, procured wives for all his sons (2Ch. 11:23, 18:1).

Fathers also are reported to have given their daughters in marriage. In the earliest of the narratives about Moses, Jethro, a priest of Midian, gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses for marriage (Ex 2:21). Caleb is said to have promised Achsah, his daughter, to anyone who would capture Kiriath-sepher (Jos 15:16). Samson's Philistine father-in-law, having decided that Samson had repudiated his daughter, gave her in marriage to one of Samson's friends (Jdg 15:2), and the men of the Israelite confederation that had sworn during a civil war not to give their daughters in marriage to the tribe of Benjamin relented and agreed to let the Benjaminites capture wives for themselves during a vintage festival (Jdg- 21:1-23). Saul is reported twice to have promised David one of his daughters (I Sa 18:17-19, 20-27). And Jeremiah is reported by Baruch his biographer, to have advised the Judeans taken into exile in Babylonian in 598 B.C. to take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage (Jer 29:6).

Others could act on behalf of the family. Rebekah's brother and mother represented her family in some of the marriage negotiations with Abraham's representative seeking a bride for Isaac (Ge 24:28-51) even though Bethuel, her father, was present (vs. 15, 50); and Jehoiada, a priest, secured wives for the young king for whom he was acting as regent (2 Ch 24:2f).

The passages just cited could be taken as proof that the ancient Israelite father when living so dominated the family that he alone contracted marriages for his children. Other passages, however, indicate the matter was not quite that simple. Samson's marriage to a

Philistine girl was arranged by his parents under protest because Samson insisted upon it (Jdg 14:1-4). Similarly, in the legendary story of a clash between the city of Shechem and invading Israelites, Shechem, pictured as a youth, raped an Israelite girl and then asked his father to arrange a marriage (Ge 34:1-4). Father and brothers sought to negotiate it together (vs. 5-12), and the girl was represented by both father and brothers (vs. 7, 13-17).

Other passages report the groom acting on his own behalf. The patriarch Judah is said to have taken a Canaanite girl as wife (Ge 38-2), and the legal restrictions placed on a priest's marriage say nothing about the participation of the parents in his choice (Lev 21:13-15; Eze 44:22).

The kings seem often to have arranged marriages for themselves. One of the narrative strands telling of David's rise to the throne pictures him as the captain of a band of mercenaries. An incident in this strand involves Nabal, a wealthy man who refuses to buy protection from David. Nabal's wife Abigail, however, provided the tribute. Her deed so enraged Nabal that he dropped dead when she told him about it, "Then David sent and wooed Abigail, to make her his wife" (1 Sa 25:39).

Princes are reported twice as seeking to take wives for themselves in the attempt to establish a claim on the throne by possessing the former king's harem. Absalom did this during his revolt against David (2Sa 16:20-22), and Adonijah, the older son displaced by Solomon's seizure of the throne, tried to strengthen his claim to be king by attempting to marry Abishag, David's last concubine (1Ki 2:22).⁴⁸

Marriages arranged by kings seem often to have represented alliances between royal houses. Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh King of Egypt (1Ki 3:1) which

⁴⁸ Louis M. Epstein, *Marriage Law in the Bible and Talmud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1942), 38.

probably reflected Egyptian foreign policy and gave Solomon status.⁴⁹ The seven hundred princesses that he married (ch. 11:3) may have represented as many alliances.

A final situation in which a man chose his wife can be reported best in the words of the Deuteronomic law code:

If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife, because he has violated her, he may not put her away all his days. (Deut 22:28f.)

This is a form of marriage by capture in which the captor is captured!

A woman also could display initiative in arranging marriage. Instances of this in the Old Testament are rare, yet the practice seems to have been sufficiently acceptable to be reported without comment. Michal's love for David was well known in Saul's court before there had been any thought of giving her to David as wife (1Sa 1:20). Tamar, David's daughter, tried to change the threat of rape by Amnon into marriage, replying to his demand that she lie with him:

No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this wanton folly. And as for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the wanton fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you. (II Sam 13:12-13)

Daughters whose fathers had died without male issue inherited the family property and chose their own husband, according to decisions made about the daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 27:1-11; 36:1-12). There was one condition: "Let them marry whom they think best; only, they shall marry within the family of the tribe of their father" (Nu 36:6b).

Two other incidents indicate that the bride shared in the decisions involved in the marriage. When the servant who represented Abraham, the father of the groom (Isaac), urged Rebekah's family to allow her to leave with him immediately, they said, "We will call the maiden, and ask her and they called Rebekah, and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?'

⁴⁹Louis M. Epstein, *Marriage Law in the Bible and Talmud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1942), 39.

She said, 'I will go' "(Ge 24:57f.). Abigail displayed a similar decisiveness when David asked her to become his wife (1Sa. 25:40-42). Rebekah was a dependent virgin, and Abigail was a widow; but each decided when to join her future husband and thus determined when the marriage would be consummated. Abigail also seems to have decided to accept David's proposal. No male relative is mentioned.

The passages we have just examined suggest that the contracting of a marriage was a family matter. The person (or a person) who was the functioning head of the family seems to have had the formal responsibility for arranging marriage for both sons and daughters. This individual often was the father, although husbands and wives are described as acting together. The person to be married, whether female or male, could have the responsibility if he or she were the de facto head of the family. There also is evidence that the wishes of the bride and groom were influential.

There are passages in the Old Testament that seem to imply the purchase of the bride. Bride purchase appears to be reported in Exodus 22:16f. :

If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall give the marriage present for her, and make her his wife. If her father refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equivalent to the marriage present for virgins.

Shechem, in Gen. 34:12, promises to provide whatever "marriage present and gift" is asked.

The matter cannot be left here, however. This is a scanty sampling of the reports in the Old Testament of exchanges of property accompanying marriage.⁵⁰

There is at least one reference in the Old Testament to a gift given the bride by the father of the groom. In the story of the betrothal of Rebekah and Isaac, we are told that the servant representing Abraham "brought forth jewelry of silver and of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah" (Ge 24:53). The "marriage money" for virgins mentioned in Exodus 22:16, presumably was paid to the family of the bride, but other narratives describe a father

⁵⁰ Ephraim Neufeld, *The Hittite laws: Translated Into English and Hebrew with a Commentary* (London: Luzac & Company, Inc., 1951), 8.

asking of a prospective groom seven years' service (Ge 29:16-30; Hos 12:12), circumcision (Gen 34:12-17), of water (Jos 15:16; Jdg 1:12), and military service (1Sa 18:17-27). Each of these was substantial value to the family bride.

The Covenant Code, a Canaanite law code adapted adapted by the Israelites to their own use, provides for the sale of a daughter:⁵¹

When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed; he shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt faithlessly with her. If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money. (Ex. 21:7-11)

Both sons and daughters could be sold into slavery by their parents. This law restricts the type of servitude to which the daughter could be subjected and protects her rights while she was enslaved. The slavery here is a form of marriage. This and the bitter comment by Leah and Rachel in Genesis 31:14 constitute the primary evidence in support for the hypothesis that a daughter was negotiable property.

The variety of donors and recipients of marriage gifts makes it difficult to maintain that the bride had been sold by her family. The evidence available to us suggests strongly that selfhood for the ancient Israelite was corporate rather than individualistic, and that the fundamental reality in it was the family group in its totality.⁵² Since that totality included every person in the family, as well as all that the family owned the children from one family to another through marriage would seem to change the relative strength of the families involved. It is possible that the exchange of gifts was a redress of the original relative strengths of the families of bride and groom.

It was not always the family of the groom that gave a present to the family of the bride, yet the groom's family had been enlarged by the addition to it of the bride. Millar

⁵¹Ephraim Neufeld, *The Hittite laws: Translated Into English and Hebrew with a Commentary* (London: Luzac & Company, Inc., 1951), 7.

⁵²Millar Burrows, *Levirate Marriage in Israel*, (America Oriental Society), 23.

Burrows suggested, the gift established a bond not merely by creating good will or a sense of obligation but by actually conveying something of the life of the giver to the recipient.⁵³ This implies that marriages represented a fusion of the families involved. The exchange of gifts would thus become a part of that merger.

The practice of polygamy in ancient Israel has been held on three counts to imply an inferior status for the wife. The purpose of marriage has been said to be to perpetuate the husband's name, and "two or three wives do more than one to satisfy the husband's demand for progeny."⁵⁴ The ability of the husband to support a harem was a form of conspicuous consumption, a witness to the standing of the man in the community.⁵⁵ And the existence of the institution gave rise to a double standard which discriminated against the wife. It is sometimes claimed that only the wife commits adultery in a polygamous marriage.

Woman as Mother

Childbearing was a social function in ancient Israel, and fecundity, barrenness, and the loss of children were of urgent concern to men, women, and the nation. Although God is sometimes said to have been responsible for the opening the womb when the child was to be come a "man of God," this is not as frequent as we would expect. Samson's mother was told she would conceive and bear a son (Jdg 13: 3") whom she was to rear as a Nazirite. Samuel was born when the Lord made Hannah fecund after her urgent prayers and her vow to dedicate the son to God's service (1Sa 1:11). In the majority of the cases, however, unusual divine participation is not claimed in the birth of a person later distinguished as a religious leader. No special intervention is recorded in the conception and birth of Moses, for example, or of any prophet other than Jeremiah.

⁵³ Millar Burrows, *Levirate Marriage in Israel*, (America Oriental Society).

⁵⁴ David R. Mace, *Hebrew Marriage: A Sociological Study* (Philosophical Library, Inc., 1953), 122.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

Since the Lord was believed to open the womb, God also was held to close it. We are told that God made Rachel (Ge 30:2) and Hannah (1Sa 1:6) barren. In neither case was the husband nor the wife said to have displeased that. In other passages, however, childlessness was attributed to sin if a man lies with his uncle's wife, it will be counted a sin and "they shall die childless" (Lev 20:20), as shall the woman if a man has intercourse with his brother's wife (v 21).

In their social organization, the ancient Israel assigned to male the formal preservation of the basic structure of the society, family; but to the female belonged the constant replenishment of the pool of life that was the guarantor of the survival of the society. They believed that God has promised them survival if they would to be faithful. They saw new life to be the consequence of the Lord's direct intervention; the woman was seen to be the primary locus of divine activity. Her fecundity was a basic evidence of divine care of Israel. Motherhood was not only a biological and sociological function; it was a sacred act of great magnitude that only the woman could perform. The very high esteem in which mother was held was then described, especially as it reflected in simile of God's care for Israel and of God's judgment upon Israel. No higher status could be given anyone than given the mother in ancient Israel.

Women in the Cult

The religion of Israel was in general man's religion. The oldest laws of worship (Ex 23:17; 34:23, Dt 16:16) explicitly address themselves only to the men and demand of them at least three appearances at the shrine yearly at festivals corresponding to our three major festivals, Easter, Pentecost, and Harvest Festival.(63)

Since ancient Israel had a theocentric culture, participation in the public cult is a crucial index of status. The Old Testament reports the official cult as the veneration of the

Lord and describes the worship of all other gods as apostasy. The status of women in the Old Testament depends on her participation in the worship of the Lord.

The presence of women when “the people of the Lord” appeared in God’s presence is basic to the standing of women in the cult. If they were excluded, it is difficult to see how they could have anything but second-class standing. If they were present, then the possibility exists that they may have participated in other ways.

Exodus 23:17; 34:23; and Deuteronomy.16:16 stipulate that all males must appear before the Lord three times each year: “Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the LORD God of Israel” (Ex 34:23, 23:17). Deuteronomy 16:16 adds the names of the festivals: “at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks, and at the feast of booths”. If these passages alone be considered, we would have reason to believe that women had no place in the sacred congregation.

Other passages, however, attest the presence of women. Deuteronomy 29:10-13 describes a solemn convocation of all the people of God gathered to make (or to renew) its covenant with the Lord. Wives are explicitly mentioned as being present (v.11). Deuteronomy 31:12 stipulates that wives are to participate in the Festival of Booths (v. 10f), even though they were not mentioned in Deuteronomy 16:16 as cited earlier: “Assemble the people, men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, and be careful to do all the words of this law.”

After the Babylonian exile, a solemn convocation of all the people was held in Jerusalem. “And Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding, on the first day of the seventh month” (Ne 8:2). It then was read; presumably, “all who could hear with understanding” meant children also were told enough to comprehend, although it might refer to those who knew enough Hebrew to

understand. The solemnity of the occasion is clear. This is the sacred congregation, the whole of the people of God. It is also clear that women were included.

Two other post-exilic passages also state that women were members of the holy convocation. One passage in an oracle proclaimed by Joel in which the people are summoned into God's presence during a plague of locusts (Joel 2:16). Not only were brides summoned, but also nursing infants. Their presence would have made for an unruly congregation unless their nurses were there also! Finally, a late commentary on the Deuteronomic history (Judges, Samuel, and Kings) reports that Jehoshaphat and "all the men of Judah" appeared in the temple to appeal for divine help during an attack by Moabites and Ammonites. They were joined by "their little ones, their wives, and their children" (2Ch 20:13).

There were no priestesses in ancient Israel. The feminine form of the word for priest does not appear in the Hebrew Old Testament. This, however, is the only cultic office reserved to the male. Since other peoples in the ancient Near East worshiped in cults which used priestesses, their absence in the Yahwism of ancient Israel must have been deliberate.

Vos says: only men supported families and priesthood provided an income. Some priestly duties required a male's strength; a mother was preoccupied with material duties; woman became unclean periodically; and restricting the priesthood to one sex would discourage the intrusion of baalistic fertility worship.⁵⁶

The feminine form of the Hebrew word for prophet (nebi'ah) is applied to five individuals in the Old Testament. One of them is the wife of the prophet Isaiah (Isa.8:3). The other prophetesses are Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Noadiah.

Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, is called a prophetess in a very old passage in which she is described as leading a victory song (Ex 15:20f). She is mentioned along with her brothers in Micah 6:3f. a late passage. The longest reference to her as a prophetess reports a family squabble in which she and Aaron base their protest to Moses' Cushite wife on their

⁵⁶ Clarence J Vos, *Woman in the Old Testament Worship* (Delft: Vernigde Drukkerijen Judels & Brinkman, 1968), 193.

prophetic authority (Nu12:1-8). This evoked a divine response which subordinated them to Moses without denying their prophetic standing:

Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself know to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (Nu 12:6-8)

The activity of Deborah is reported both in an ancient victory song (Jdg 5) and in a later prose version (ch.4). She is called a prophetess in the prose version (ch.4:4). It continues:

She sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and to him, “The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you ‘Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor, taking ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. And I will draw out Sisera, the general, the general of Jabin’s army, to meet you by the river Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand’”. (Jdg 4:6f)

When the Israelites had mustered out, “Deborah said to Barak, “Up! For this is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hand. Does not the LORD go out before you?” (v.14). In both oracles, Deborah is reported as speaking and acting as the Deuteronomic historians elsewhere picture male prophets as speaking and acting (see I Sa15:2f; 1Kg 12:22-24, 15-17; 2Kg 3:16-20; 13:14-19; 20:13f). We cannot here enter the discussion of the differences, if there were any, between these prophets and such figures as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. It will suffice to say that the Deuteronomic historians felt it proper to identify Deborah as a prophetess, and to describe her as acting precisely in the same way as six male prophets are reported to have functioned.

Huldah is the major prophetess. A law code which contained ominous threats had been found during the remodelling of the Temple. King Josiah ordered its finders to consult a prophet about it:

So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikan, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they talked with her. And she said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Tell the man who sent you to me, thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read...

But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel.... Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place” (II Kings 22:14-26).

Huldah was married, yet she was known in her own right as the most reliable prophetic figure in Jerusalem, even though Jeremiah had begun to prophesy in six hundred and twenty six, five years before this consultation.⁵⁷ Her words were preserved, even though her prediction about the way Josiah would die proved to be wrong, and she used the same words to introduce her oracles as did Jeremiah (compare 2 Kings 22:15f. with Jer 2:2, 5; 4:3; 6:9; etc). It is clear that Huldah was a major cult official, and her reputation in her own time probably was greater than Jeremiah’s.

The prophetess Noadiah is mentioned as one of those who opposed Nehemiah’s rebuilding Jerusalem after the exile (Ne 6:14), and an oracle by a post-exilic prophet simply assumes the presence of both female and male prophets: “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28).

Freedom of Action

The most elementary criterion for determining participation in society outside the home is freedom of movement. Wives confined to the home are automatically excluded from much of the life of the community. Epstein says, when we seek to describe this facet of the life of ancient Israelite woman, we are influenced far too much by Arab seclusion of woman.⁵⁸ We find our preoccupations confirmed by the picture we seem to be given of Sarah eavesdropping on the conversation of Abraham with his guest from her seclusion in her tent

⁵⁷Clarence J Vos, *Woman in the Old Testament Worship* (Delft: Vernigde Drukkerijen Judels & Brinkman, 1968)., 186.

⁵⁸Louis M. Epstein, *Sex Laws and Customs in Judaism* (Ktva Publishing House, Inc., 1967), 68-75.

(Ge 18:9). If, however, we let the Scriptures speak for themselves, a quite different picture emerges.

A series of passages which are to be dated over a period of several centuries' pictures girls and women as moving quite freely outside the home. The Pentateuch twice reports unmarried daughters as coming alone to a well to draw water for their father's flocks. Both stories give the setting in which a future wife is met. One relates:

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. The shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. When they came to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come so soon today?" They said, "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and even drew water for us and watered the flock. "He said to his daughters, "And where is he? Why have you left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread."(Ex 2:16-20; see also Gen.29:4-14).

Watering the father's flock seems to have been the girl's responsibility. They also seem regularly to have been driven away from the watering troughs by shepherds tending other flocks. These unmarried girls carried a family responsibility outside the home which exposed them to the superior force of a group of shepherds. Both here and in Genesis 29:4-14 the girl is apparently expected to invite a helpful stranger into the home.

The report of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to the court of Solomon (1 Ki 10:1-3) cannot be used as a portrayal of Israelite custom during the monarchy. She was not an Israelite. However, the laws in Deuteronomy dealing with rape also come from the period of the monarchy, even though they are later than the time of Solomon. Deuteronomy 22:25 prescribes, "But if in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man lay with her shall die." This passage presupposes the freedom of a young woman to move about alone in the open country.

Women are reported as discharging various activities in ancient Israel which we associate only with the male: leading the community in peace and war, usurping the throne, building a city, and engaging in combat.

The narratives report women as leading their community in peace and war. The oldest is Judges Chapter five, an ancient epic poem telling of an Israelite victory over the Canaanites. Deborah and Barak were the Israelite leaders. Deborah's role is described twice in the poem:

The peasantry ceased in Israel, they ceased until you arose, Deborah, arose as a mother in Israel (Jdg 5:7). . . Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, sing a song! Arise, Barak, lead away your captives, O son of Abinoam (v.12).

A third allusion to Deborah appears in the roster of the tribes: The princes of Issachar came with Deborah and Issachar faithful to Barak; into the valley they rushed forth at his heels (v.15a). Deborah is pictured in these lines as having aroused the Israelite tribesmen and as having sustained their fighting zeal. Barak appears to have been the military leader. The relationship between Deborah and Barak is reported in greater detail in the later prose version of the same campaign (Jdg 4:6-8).

A woman provided crucial leadership in the suppression of Sheba's revolt against David:

And Sheba passed through all the tribes of Israel to Abel of Beth-Maacah; they cast up a mound against the city, and it stood against the rampart; and they were battering the wall, to throw it down. Then a wise woman called from the city, "Hear! Hear! Tell Joab, "Come here, that I may speak to you!" And he came near her, and the woman said, "Are you Joab?" he answered, "I am". Then she said to him, "Listen to the words of your maidservant." And he answered, "I am listening". "Then she said, "They were wont to say in old time. "Let them but ask counsel at Abel"; and so they settled a matter. I am one of those who are peaceable and faithful in Israel; you seek to destroy a city which is a mother in Israel; why will you swallow up the heritage of the LORD?" Joab answered, "Far be it from me, far be it, that I should swallow up or destroy! That is not true. But a man of the hill country of Ephraim, called Sheba the son of Bichri, has lifted up his hand against King David; give up him alone, and I will withdraw from the city". And the woman said to Joab, "Behold, his head shall be thrown to you over the wall". Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off his head Sheba the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab. So he blew the trumpet, and they dispersed from the city, every man to his home. And Joab returned to Jerusalem to the king (II Sam.20:14-22).

Several details in this passage are interesting. The first is the ability of the woman living in a besieged city to summon the commander of the besieging army for a parley. This

hardly conveys the impression that she was held to be an inferior either by Joab or by the narrator of the story. The second is her readiness to commit her city to a dangerous course of action. Her promise to have Sheba beheaded could not be kept unless the Bichrites, members of his clan and his supporters, were first disarmed. She is described as having gone “to all the people in her wisdom.” We are given the impression of a woman gaining assent to her proposal because of widespread response to her sagacity. It hardly needs to be added that she could not have done what she did had she been confined to her home.

Ancient Israel was not an industrial nation, and there seems to have little separation between life in the family and participation in the economy. Nonetheless, the kinds of relationships that would be characteristic of family life and of economic life would have differed enough for it to have been possible for a woman to participate in the one without sharing in the other. Everyone shares in economic life simply as a consumer. Every woman ate food, wore clothing, used household utensils, and, often, added adornment of one kind or another to her basic wardrobe (see Isa.3:18-23!). But did women hold property, sell goods, and buy land? If they are reported as doing these things, then they were economic persons in their own right.

The first example of women holding property rights is the inheritance of Zelophehad. He is described as “the son of Hopher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph (Nu27:1). He had died during the wilderness wanderings, leaving five daughters and no sons. The daughters petitioned Moses to be given their father’s share of land in Canaan since his name, or his line of descent, would die out for lack of an inheritance:

Moses brought their case before the Lord. And the Lord said to Moses, “The daughters of Zelophehad are right; you shall give them possession of an inheritance among their father’s brethren and cause the inheritance of their father to pass to them. And you shall say to the people of Israel, ‘If a man dies, and has no son, then you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter (Nu 27:5-8).

The evidence surveyed in this chapter is slight in comparison with that available for a reconstruction of the status of the ancient Israelite woman in the home. Nonetheless, we have seen that there are passages which do describe women acting in society outside the home. The relative proportion of the two categories of data indicates that the family was the primary frame of reference for the woman, as it was also for the man. Outside the family, however, we found women described as moving about freely, as exercising a role of leadership in the village and in the court, as holding personal property, as representing the family in its claim to the title to land, as engaging in economic activities, and as appealing to the king for justice.

At no point in the Old Testament are we given explicit answers to our questions about the role and status of woman. We have to deduce this from the evidence preserved for us for reasons having nothing to do with our questions. From that evidence, however, it now seems proper to conclude that the assessment proposed earlier continues to stand. Women had a primary role in ancient Israelite society of the utmost importance. This role was the bearing and raising of children. It was a role essential for the survival of the people. By its nature, it was carried on within the family. There, the husband and wife were differentiated biologically but appear to have been granted equality within the differentiation.

Outside the home, women seem to have had access to nearly every activity we normally associate with men. The fact that fewer women than men ruled is most easily explained by the more dangerous and demanding role of woman within the family than by any hypothesis of the repression of woman in ancient Israel. Such a hypothesis makes the evidence of their participation in government and in the economy virtually inexplicable.

Woman's Social Position among Israel's Neighbors

Woman's status in a given society greatly depends upon her power and position within the economic-opportunity structure of the society. As Simone de Beauvoir points out, where a woman is permitted to own nothing she cannot experience the dignity of being a person; she

herself is part of a man's property.⁵⁹ In societies where economic opportunities for women are greater, women hold a higher position. For example, there are African tribes in which, though the land is owned by the men, the women have ownership of the crops and all food supplies that obviously places tremendous power in their hands⁶⁰ Now the question the author asks is, did the degree of property rights and privileges held by women in ancient Israel cultures affect women's social position among their neighbors?

Sumerian Culture

In the early days of the city-state, women served as priestesses and temple prostitutes. Their service was valued as highly as that of men and was rewarded with allotments from the temple. But over time this changed, and the change was related to the disappearance of goddesses in Sumerians religion.⁶¹

Assyrian Culture

According to Saggs, although Assyrian girls as well as boys were taught to read and write, the amount of social freedom depended on their rank in society. Bare feet and bare heads characterized lower class women as they went to the marketplace or visited the homes of friends. Higher status women were expected to remain secluded in their homes.⁶²

Veils became important during certain period of Assyrian history. Laws of the second millennium B.C. required the veiling of married women and concubines.⁶³ Harlots were commanded by law to keep their heads uncovered; if they dared to put on veils, they were beaten fifty stripes and pitch was poured on their heads.⁶⁴ An awareness of the significance of

⁵⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), 75-76.

⁶⁰ Phyllis M. Kaberry, *Women of the Grassfields* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1952), quoted in Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1980), 30.

⁶¹ H. W. F. Saggs, *The Greatness That Was Babylon* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1962), 186- 187.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 187.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 214.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 214.

veils for women in different cultures is helpful in understanding otherwise baffling Bible passages, such as I Corinthians 11. Saggs said that the Assyrian women had many rights during the Old Testament times, but they were somewhat more restricted than another of Israel neighbors – Babylon.

Babylonian Culture

Babylonian culture provided a fairly equal status for its women. Women could own property, attend to their own businesses, appear in public, plead in courts of justice, and even hold office. Marriage regulations, property rights for widows (including the privilege of conducting business in their own names), and other provisions of the code of Hammurabi indicate a genuine concern for female citizens' rights. Women could be judges, elders, and secretaries. They were recognized as witnesses to documents. The Code of Hammurabi speaks of businesswomen who ran wineshops.⁶⁵

Marriage in the Hammurabi Code was more than a sale of a woman by her father to her husband (though legally there were some elements of this practice). It was also viewed as a contract between a husband and wife. Divorce privileges, however, favored men more than women; there was ample provision for wife's rights and protection.

Women in the New Testament

Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Context

In the New Testament period we can see convergence of cultural influences – Greek, Roman, Oriental, Jews, and more. Each of these contains inconsistencies, fluctuations over time, and much that is ambiguous. Therefore, to understand the position of women in

⁶⁵ Eva Matthews Sanford, *The Mediterranean World in Ancient Times* (New York: Roland Press Co., 1938), 45, 110; The Cod of Hammurabi, in James B. Pritchard, ed., quoted in Letha Scanzoni. Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1980), 39-40.

Christianity, we must give attention to the Jewish milieu and the Greco-Roman world at the time Christianity began and then spread.⁶⁶

In comparing Greek and Roman culture as regards women, we see strange paradoxes. For example, Rome's upper-class women had more prominence in public than did the women of Athens. Yet, opportunities for education was seldom extended to Roman girls (except for study in the home and sometimes at the primary school level, i.e., through about age eleven). For Greek girls, on the other hand, education even up through the secondary level was quite common. The Athenian Academy even had women professors.⁶⁷ Simone de Beauvoir makes the point that Greek women were, legally speaking, less enslaved than Roman women; but paradoxically, Roman women were "much more deeply integrated in society."⁶⁸

Greek Culture

Throughout the history of Greece, attitudes toward women varied – as is reflected, for example, in the great Greek plays. The philosophers disagreed about women. Socrates (470-399 BC), said, "All the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all women is inferior to man."⁶⁹ Plato (428-378 BC) suggested that girls be given a liberal education and that women be granted a share in the government of the republic. He wrote: "There is no occupation concerned with the management of social affairs which belongs either to woman or to man, as such. Natural gifts are to be found here; they are in both creatures alike."⁷⁰ Aristotle, however, disagreed. He viewed women's nature as being inherently defective and inferior,⁷¹ and man by nature superior, rule and the other is ruled.⁷²

⁶⁶ Michael Grant, *The World of Rome* (New York : American Library Mentor Book, 1960), 80

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 86.

⁶⁹ Robert M. Hutchins, ed., *Great books of the Western World, vol. 7, Plato: The Republic* (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), V.455:359.

⁷⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press, paperback, 1945), 149, 153.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 153.

Gill and Cavaness said, from early times, Greeks taught that women were in all ways inferior to men. Parents' often abandoned female babies outdoors to die or to be collected by strangers and brought up as slaves or prostitutes. Women could not participate in the official religions, but found many opportunities in the mystery religions and cults.⁷³ Demosthenes said, "We have hetairai for the pleasures of the spirit, concubines for sensual pleasure, and wives to give us sons."⁷⁴

Wives were secluded and closely guarded to insure that all offspring were those of the husband. Regarded as permanent minors, a woman's person and property were controlled by a guardian – father, husband, husband's heir, or even the state. However, ancient monuments show that many men of Athens deeply respected and loved their wives, honoring them as mothers of their children and managers of their homes. On the other hand some served as prostitutes. Some were slaves and others were streetwalkers who lived a miserable existence. There was also the specialized category of prostitute-priestesses, such as the temple girls who served in the Temple of Aphrodite at Corinth.⁷⁵

??(Where the Idea that Women are inferior to Men really Begin)??

Most of the idea that women are inferior began in Athens, the capital of ancient Greece. The capital city – Athens was named after the lovely goddess of wisdom.⁷⁶ How ironic that a system of philosophy that maintains that females are in all inferior to males should originate in a city named after a female deity who embodied wisdom! It was Socrates (C.470-399 B.C) who immortalized the Athenian disdain towards women. Often referring to women as "the weaker sex", he argued that being born a woman is a divine punishment, since a woman is halfway between a man and an animal.⁷⁷

⁷³ Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God's Women Then and Now*, 59-63.

⁷⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 81.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁷⁶ John Temple Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women*, 3-4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Socrates admitted that his idea of having women trained to perform the same functions in society as men (however inferior the performance of women would be naturally) was a radical departure from Athenian custom and would be very unlikely ever to win approval. He may have had in mind a statement made by Pericles, the principal ruler of Athens who strove to make that city center of art and literature and architectural beauty (and who was responsible for the construction of the Parthenon, as well as other marvellous buildings). Pericles stated that it was the duty of an Athenian mother to live so retired a life that her name would never be mentioned among men, either for praise or for shame.

Women in Athens never went out alone, never shared meals with men, and never entered into the life of the community. They led lives of greatest seclusion. The few Athenian women who were educated and could discuss current literature and philosophical thought were, for the most part, among the courtesans, upper-class prostitutes called hetairai. They attended lectures and were able to enter into intellectual discussions and debates with their clients.⁷⁸ Others lower-class prostitutes and Greek matrons had no such educational opportunities.

The teachings of Socrates come down to us through his star pupil, Plato (C.427-347 B.C.), who left to the world a fascinating assortment of lectures on various subjects, including a collective on natural history. In his discourse on insects, he noted that a single bee will lead a vast swarm of bees to a new location, where they will industriously build a new nest and establish their complex society. And because the swarm follows one individual, Aristotle unquestioningly assumed that this single leader must be male, the “king bee.” Centuries passed before naturalists corrected this false impression with objective observation. Only then was Aristotle’s terminology changed to “queen bee.”⁷⁹ Aristotle assumed that the leader of a swarm must be a male. Why? He was firmly convinced that “male is by nature fitter to

⁷⁸ John Temple Bristow, *What Paul Really Said About Women*, 3-4

⁷⁹ Stephen Jay Gould, *Hen’s Teeth and Horse’s Toes* (New York: Norton, 1984), 244.

command than female,” and taught, this applied to all creatures especially human beings. He also added that the inequality between male and female is permanent.

In the generation after Aristotle, another Athenian philosopher named Zeno founded a school of thought that greatly influenced Greek and Roman society. He taught on a porch (which in Greek is *stoa*), and so his followers were called Stoics. Zeno objected to the way men used women for their pleasure. However, his criticisms were not based on any concern for the rights or plight of women in Athenian society. Rather, he objected because men who became enamored with women might thereby be distracted from the study of philosophy. He taught that sexual intercourse is justified only when its purpose is procreation. All passions and pleasures are to be disdained by those who would truly pursue wisdom. Zeno’s followers championed the value of asceticism and celibacy for the sake of higher goals, the search for truth.

In subsequent centuries the essence of that appeal was felt within the Christian church. The life of celibate, it was supposed, is that most suited to a personal search for holiness in a corrupt and evil world. The finest and most devout men and women would forego sexual intimacy and marriage for the sake of higher spiritual goals.

The impact Stoic philosophy had on the attitudes about women and sex might be illustrated in the person of Epictetus, a Stoic teacher in Rome until A. D. 90. He seemed reluctant to admit any possible good could be found within women, except perhaps that of physical beauty. “Do not admire your wife’s beauty,” he advised his pupils, “and you are not angry with the adulterer.”⁸⁰ He taught that women from the age of fourteen think of nothing and aim at nothing but lying with men.⁸¹ He constantly wrote of women as a temptation to

⁸⁰ T. R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in Early Roman Empire* (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1909), 51; accessed on 24 January 2004 on Internet: www.Archive.org/details/conflictoreligi027630mbp

⁸¹Ibid.

men, how they lure “with softer voices” a young philosopher who is no match for a “pretty girl.”⁸² Other Stoic philosophers echoed these same sentiments regarding women.

The philosophers of Athens then bequeathed to the world a double indictment against womanhood. From the classic period, especially in the teachings of Aristotle, came the conviction that women are inferior to men. Therefore, women are to be commanded by men and used for the pleasure of men. Then, from the Stoic philosophers come the conviction that women are a distraction and temptation to men. Therefore, women are to be avoided by men who would thereby be free to pursue those qualities that make men superior.

Roman Culture

In Rome, the condition of women was somewhat better than in Greece – not so much legally, but in practice. During the days of the Republic, women had been quite restricted and were under the authority of father or husband with little rights of their own.⁸³ But with the establishment of the Empire, (things began greater rights to the wife). Women were highly esteemed as wives and mothers, shared responsibilities with heir husbands with regard to children and property, were not confined to their homes, ate with their husbands and dined with invited guests also, went to the public baths, and accompanied their husbands to the theatre, races, and other public entertainment.

In Roman society, it was not unusual for men to dissolve marriages if the wife bore no children (infertility was always assumed to be the woman’s fault). And changing of mates for political advantage was very common (one sad example being the Emperor Augustus’

⁸² T. R. Glover, *The Conflict of Religions in Early Roman Empire* (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1909), 51; accessed on 24 January 2004 on Internet: www.Archive.org/details/conflictoreligi027630mbp.

⁸³ Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We’re Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women’s Liberation* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1980), 51.

demand that his stepson Tiberius divorce his beloved wife in order to marry Augustus' daughter Julia).⁸⁴

Judaism and Its Literature

As Yahwism, the original religion of Israel developed into Judaism, women's status declined. Judaism was more institutionalized⁸⁵ and more secularized⁸⁶ than the Old Testament religion of the Jews (Yahwism). God's ideals for woman (from Genesis one) were replaced with an inferior view of her status.

What caused this change? In the latter part of the Old Testament, the Jews suffered God's punishment for their idolatry.⁸⁷ The Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians (722 BC)⁸⁸, never to exist as a people again. The Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians (597-587 BC).⁸⁹ Following 70 years of exile, only a remnant (a small portion) of its people returned to their homeland. During this period (Inter-Testament period), Alexander the Great conquered much of the world and spread Greek culture, called Hellenism. In order to resist the pull of paganism during the period of Hellenization (the attempt to influence people to adopt Greek way of life), conservative Jews became more and more strict in their interpretations of the Torah (the first five books of Hebrew Bible). They added many more regulations to God's laws, becoming more rigid, exclusive, and male-biased.⁹⁰

At the same time, other Jews were impressed with the Greco-Roman intellectuals. To prove they were enlightened and not culturally backwards, these Jews adopted many of the

⁸⁴Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 1980)., 52.

⁸⁵Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God's Women Then and*, 63-65.

⁸⁶Ibid., 63-65.

⁸⁷Ibid., 62.

⁸⁸Stanley M Burstein, Walter Donlan, Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, Sarah B Pomeroy, *A Brief History of Ancient Greece: Politics, Society, and Culture* (England: Oxford University Press, 1975), 255.

⁸⁹Ibid., 255.

⁹⁰Henrietta Szold, *Beruriah*, in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1948 ed

philosophers' worldviews. Jewish intellectuals like Philo replaced God's ideal – women created in the image of God - with the pagan's view – that women are less than human.⁹¹

A variety of Jewish writings from the period reflect this low view of women: the Old Testament Apocrypha (books excluded from the Jewish and Protestant canons of the Old Testament),⁹² the Pseudepigrapha (writings falsely claiming they were authorized by important religious figures),⁹³ the works of Philo and Josephus, and the Talmud (Jewish oral tradition put into writing).⁹⁴ Though Christians do not consider these to be accurate sources of theology, these writings do reflect the history of Jewish thought.

Rabbinic Literature

The ancient rabbis from the fifth century before Christ began a new method of oral instruction and memory work. This method followed the order of the Scriptures themselves. In the two centuries just before Christ's birth, Jewish rabbis began to arrange their interpretations of the laws by topics, not in scriptural order. The "traditions" began to grow as teachers addressed issues, often without referring to the biblical text.⁹⁵ They asserted that the text supported their teaching, but interpretations often appear to be very subjective (more opinion than on fact). The schools of various rabbis collected these oral materials and put them in writing from about 100 BC to AD 200. This collection became known as the Mishnah.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Philo, *On the Special Laws. In Philo. Vol. VII* trans. F.H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Leob Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1937), I.200-201:215.

⁹² James A. Charleworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. I* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 784.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 784.

⁹⁴ Henrietta Szold, *Beruriah, in The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1948 ed

⁹⁵ Deborah M. Gill and Barbara Cavaness, *God's Women Then and Now* (Springfield: Published by Grace and Truth, 2004), 63-65

⁹⁶ Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 46.

Many in Rabbinic Judaism⁹⁷ held the view that women should stay in their homes, wear veils, and refrain from eating with or talking to men. Some texts reveal a perspective that women are inferior and evil. Others taught that men should avoid contact with women and should not talk even to their wives or daughters in public. Rabbis restricted women even further in religious affairs, not permitting them to recite prayer at meals or study the Torah. Women were not obligated to attend festivals, nor did they count in the number of persons required to have a synagogue. They were generally not given an education. Thus, this period of Judaism severely limited women's roles in both society and religion.

Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphic writings also demonstrated a similar bias against women based upon a distorted view of history. In *The Life of Adam and Eve*, Eve is mourning over the sin she caused. Near the beginning of the story she says to Adam, "My Lord, would you kill me? O that I would die! Then perhaps the Lord God will bring you again into Paradise, for it is because of me that the Lord God is angry with you" (*The Life of Adam and Eve, Vita 3.1*).⁹⁸ And at the end of Adam's life she is still saying, "I have sinned, O God I have sinned... and all sin in creation has come about through me" (*The life of Adam and Eve, Apocalypse, 32.1, 2*).⁹⁹

In the Testament of The Twelve Patriarchs, Reuben, in the Testament of Reuben, calls his sons together and tells them to instruct their wives not to wear jewelry or cosmetics, because he believes those are the devices that women use to seduce men. "For women are evil, my children.... Indeed, the angel of the Lord told me and instructed me that women are more easily overcome by the spirit of promiscuity than are men" (5:1, 5)¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 46.

⁹⁸ James A. Charleworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 2* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 258.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 287.

¹⁰⁰ James A. Charleworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, vol. 1* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 784.

Philo, a Jew who lived in Alexandria, Egypt (one of the intellectual capitals of the ancient world) at the time of Christ, wrote six times as much material as is found in the New Testament. His writings attempted to build a bridge between Old Testament Jewish teaching and those of the philosophers Plato and Aristotle. In *Question and Answer on Genesis*, Philo asks, “Why does the serpent speak to the woman and not to the man?” His answer: Because “woman is more accustomed to be deceived than man.... But the judgment of woman is more feminine, and because of softness she easily gives way and is taken in by plausible falsehoods which resemble the truth.”¹⁰¹

Josephus, a Jewish historian who died about AD 100, lived in Palestine until the destruction of the Temple. He first served as a Jewish general, then switched sides and worked for the Romans. He wrote more than 20 volumes of Jewish history. He read Greek interpretations into Old Testament. In *Against Apion* 2.25, Josephus wrote:

For, saith the Scripture, “A woman is inferior to her husband in all things”. Let her; therefore, be obedient to him; not so that he should abuse her, but that she may acknowledge her duty to her husband; for God hath given authority to the husband.¹⁰²

In the early Christian period following the New Testament, an apocryphal gospel about Mary called the *Protevangelium of James* (AD 150) reveals Judaistic tendencies. It is possibly the earliest reference to Eve’s being alone in the Garden. Though absent in the original Genesis 1-2 account, from AD second century on, it is assumed Eve was alone. In the story at 13.1, Joseph has just come in to his betrothed, Mary. He has discovered for the first time that she is pregnant. He becomes very angry and says,

Who has deceived me? Who has done this evil in my house and defiled her [the virgin]? Has the story of Adam been repeated for me? For as Adam was absent in the hour of his prayer and the serpent came and found Eve alone deceived her and defiled her, so also it has happened to me.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Philo, *Philo Supplement I: Questions and Answers on Genesis*, trans. Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, MA: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1953), I.33:20.

¹⁰² Josephus, *Flavius Josephus Against Apion*. In *Josephus: Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1960), 2.25:632.

¹⁰³ Eager Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds. *New Testament Apocrypha vol. 1* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 381.

Still, to summarize, in the literature of Judaism of the late first century on, women were viewed as inferior socially, religiously, culturally, sexually, and in every other way.

Early Church Fathers, Renaissance and Reformation

The pagan influence that affected Judaism is also seen in the writings of some of the early Church Fathers. Tertullian, an early Christian writer (AD 160-230), became a famous, influential preacher. He wrote, addressing women,

And do you know that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age; the guilt must of necessity live too. *You* are the devil's gateway; *you* are the unsealer of that [forbidden] tree; *you* are the first deserter of the divine law; *you* are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. *You* destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of *your* desert – that is, death – even the Son of God had to die.¹⁰⁴

The Church Father Augustine (AD 354-430) said, “Marriage is a covenant with death”. He contradicted Scripture in saying,

the woman, together with her own husband, is the image of God, ... but when she is referred to separately ... then she is not the image of God, but as regards the man alone, he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman too is joined with him in one (Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 7.7, 10).¹⁰⁵

The theologian Thomas Aquinas (AD 1224-1274) wrote,

As regards the particular nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex, while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external change, such as that of a south wind, which is moist.¹⁰⁶

During the Renaissance and the Reformation other theologians tempted to interpret Genesis account for women. The Geneva Bible (AD 1560) comments, “The woman seduced by the serpent enticeth her husband to sin”. Adam ate of the fruit, “not so much to please his wife as moved by her persuasion”. And further: “The woman was first deceived and so

¹⁰⁴A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 4, *Tertullian, On the Apparel of Women* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972[1885]), 1.1:14.

¹⁰⁵ Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmation of women* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1979), 348-350.

¹⁰⁶Hutchins, vol. 19, *Thomas Aquinas: I, The Summa Theologica*, vol. I, Q. 92, Art. 2:489.

became the instrument of Satan to deceive the man ... woman was guilty of the transgression.”¹⁰⁷

Martin Luther wrote in *Table Talk*:

Men have broad shoulders and narrow hips, and accordingly they possess intelligence. Women have narrow shoulders and broad hips. Women ought to stay at home; the way they were created indicated this, for they have broad hips and a wide fundament to sit upon [keep house and bear and raise children].¹⁰⁸

The Rheims-Douay Bible used marginal notes to quote Chrysostom, who used Genesis to justify the position that women should not teach: “The woman taught [the man] once ... and ruined all.”¹⁰⁹ It also quotes Ambrose, who viewed Eve as sinning and Adam as innocent: “Well do the Scriptures omit specifying where Adam was deceived; for he fell, not by his own fault, by the vice of his wife.”¹¹⁰

Jesus’ Treatment of Women

Jesus was born into a male-dominated culture. Some of its basic presuppositions he quietly and indirectly undermined. His treatment of the divorce question, for example, not only illustrates His constant appeal to first principles (. . . at the beginning the Creator made male and female . . . the two become one flesh, so they no longer become two but one [Mt 19:46-]); its chief practical effect was the redressing of a balance which was heavily weighed on women. His male disciples immediately realized this, as is shown by their response. “If a man cannot divorce his wife under any circumstances”, they meant, ‘it is better not to marry’ (Mt 19:10).

The attitude of Jesus in the New Testament was revolutionary. In the Lukan story of the nativity, Elizabeth and Mary outshine Zechariah and Joseph, and Anna the prophet matches Simeon. Jesus was willing to give private instruction to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4)

¹⁰⁷ Ilona Rashkow, *Upon the Dark Places* (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1990), 91.

¹⁰⁸ Helmut T. Lehmann, ed., *Luther’s Works*, vol. 54, *Table Talk*, ed. and trans. Theodore Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Ilona Rashkow, *Upon the Dark Places* (Sheffield, England: Almond Press, 1990), 91.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

and to Mary, sister of Lazarus (Lk 10:39, 42). He accepted the companionship and even the support of women (Lk 8:2-3). He entertained a special friendship with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (Jn 11:5). He validated the homage and repentance of a sinful woman (Lk 7:36-50), as well as the similar devotion of Mary (Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:3-8). Four parables center on the experience and life of women: the yeast (Mt. 13:33, Lk 13:21), the lost coin (Lk 15:8-10), the importunate widow (Lk 13:21), and the ten virgins (Mt.25:1-13).

Jesus performed healing on women (Mt.8:14-15, 9:22; Lk 13:11-16; Mk 7:24-30), and the three resurrections that he performed were for the benefit of woman (Matt. 9:23-25, Luke 7:12-15, Jn 11:43-44). After his own resurrection, Jesus appeared first to the women (Mt.28:9) and specifically to Mary Magdalene alone (Jn 20:10-20). He commissioned women to be apostles to the apostles (Matt.28:7, 10; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:9, 23; John 20:17).

In the first chapter of the book of Acts, Mary the mother of Jesus and the women are listed among those who joined in prayer with the eleven apostles in the upper room (Acts 1:14). In chapter 2, we have the fundamental account of Pentecost and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, initiating the Spirit's new relationship to God's people made possible by Christ's ascension (John 16:7, Acts 1:3-4). A universal reference is anticipated by the use of many human languages rather than just the Hebrew tongue (Acts 1:4-12). This also indicated a new economy for women: the first Scripture that Peter quoted in his inspired address was the great prophecy of Joel 2:28-32, emphasizing that "sons and daughters" will prophesy. Peter actually adds to the text a second "they will prophesy" (Acts 2:18) to emphasize the participation by women in the gift of prophecy.

Luke concludes this narrative by saying that those who accepted the message were baptized and that about 3000 souls were added to their number (Acts 2:41). Compare this with Acts 4:3 that lists "5000 men," or again Matthew 14:21 that mention "5000 men, besides women and children". In Acts 5:14, Luke specifies, "men and women believed in the Lord

and were added to their number”. We are not surprised, therefore, to find in Acts 8:12 that “they were baptized, both men and women”, and in Acts 16:15, “[Lydia]... was baptized”.

In the Old Testament, circumcision as the sign of the covenant was anatomically perforce limited to men. In the New Testament, as baptism, the sign of the covenant is available to women as well. In the Old Testament, a woman’s relation to the covenant was through a father, a husband, or perhaps a brother or a son; in the New Testament, it is direct: grace, not ethnicity or gender that counts. Apostle Paul expresses this in the triumphant cry, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal.3:28). Salvation is individually applied and received.

Jesus Established Equal Relationship throughout His Ministry

If the Rabbis did not talk about women or talk to women or have contact with them, they certainly did not keep contact with women. There was no virtual possibility of rabbis welcoming women to become students in their itinerant travels.¹¹¹ But each of these things occurred in Christ’s ministry. There is no explanation of such unrestricted associations other than Jesus held a very different view of women than did the religious establishment of His day. It should not be surprising that He is still breaking the barriers set by the religious establishment and is still welcoming women to approach His teaching and His service.

Receiving the financial support of women was not extremely unusual for first-century rabbis, but allowing them to participate in the ministry by travelling with the rabbis was something that was not done. According to Scripture, however, there was a band of women who joined Jesus in this way during His travels in Galilee (Lk 8:1-3). The exact wording of the reference is interesting: “The twelve were with him and also some women.” This group of women travelled with him through Galilee and beyond. They are recorded as having been

¹¹¹ Ruth Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 29.

with Him through His crucifixion (Mt 27:55-56; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 23:49), something that cannot be said of the twelve disciple (Mt 26:56).

Obviously, travelling with Jesus gave women many opportunities including the opportunity for daily discipleship. This is not the only way in which Jesus broke the barriers that kept women from receiving training from Him. During His visit to Martha to the home of the sisters Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42), Martha busied herself with appropriate domestic responsibilities while Mary “sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he said (10:39). Martha protested to Jesus, demanding that He corrects Mary. Not only did Jesus refuse Martha’s request, He said Mary was doing the better thing.

Some men today would respond to a complaint such as the one brought against Mary by shooting the woman back in her “proper place,” away from her intrusion into the activities and privileges of men. But Jesus did just the opposite; he commended her for seeking the spiritual opportunities that were culturally off-limits to women. Jesus allowed and welcomed Mary to learn as only men were permitted. Also by visiting their home, Jesus showed these two women the same esteem and intimacy that he has shown to men.

The Great Commission

One of the most well-known of all of Jesus’ commands, the Great Commission, was voiced only to the eleven disciples who were left after the resurrection: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Mt 28:16-20). As has been made clear, the fact that the audience was limited does not necessarily mean that the assignment was to be restricted to that audience alone. And it is doubtful that today’s clergy would ever present the Great Commission as applying to ministers alone. Indeed, after telling sinners to become converts, the church is quick to tell all converts to witness to others, and the Great Commission is used as the primary basis for this exhortation.

But the point that is oftentimes overlooked is this: the same individual who is told to go and to disciple others is also told to baptize and to teach the converts who are discipled as a result of the going. If someone wishes to bar women from baptizing and from teaching, then biblically, he must bar women from witnessing as well. And it is highly unlikely that Jesus was describing in the Great Commission the witnessing that occurs in a sanctuary church service, since very little of His ministry took place in any type of religious building or service.

Banning women from witnessing would mean banning them from the everyday witnessing that occurs in homes and in workplaces and along the roadways of life. Of course, any such absolute stifling of women would align well with a strict interpretation of the “be silent” passages, but the silencing would have to extend outside the sanctuary service into all Christian witnessing. Women would not be able to open their mouths about Jesus, but of course they would be free to talk about absolutely everything else. How ludicrous!

The Great commission, though first spoken to the eleven disciples was recorded in the Scripture to be read and obeyed by all of Jesus followers, men and women alike, pastors and laity alike. According to the closing verse (28:20), Jesus will be with the individual who obeys this commission: going, discipling baptizing and teaching. Religions opinion may not be with such an individual but Jesus will be with him or her.

Women in the New Testament Church

In terms of Christian service, Paul lists a number of activities that are particularly fitting for elder widows. In 1 Corinthians 11:5, he indicates that a woman may pray or prophesy in the church with her head covered. In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, he discusses various gifts of the Spirit “for the common good,” without specifying whether men and or women are recipients. He emphasizes the gift of prophecy as having a greater value for the church than the gift of tongues (1Co 14:1-25), saying specifically, “One who speaks in tongues edifies oneself, one who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Co14:14). Philip the

evangelist had four unmarried daughter who prophesized (Acts 21:9). Whether this was a private activity or one performed in the church meetings is not specified, but it is mentioned together with the ministry of Agabus, who did speak in public (Acts 21:10-12, cf. Acts 11:28). It is a precarious position to assert that prophecy by a woman was deemed illegitimate in the early church. Whatever 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2; 12 forbid, it cannot be the exercise of women's gift of prophecy.

It is very instructive to consider what we may know about the women who are mentioned in connection with St. Paul's ministry. There are eighty-nine individuals listed, some of them by name, in Acts and St Paul's thirteen epistles, as his companions. Out of these eighty-nine, twenty are women! In Roman 16:1-15, there is a mention of Phoebe, and salutation to twenty-eight persons, not counting mentions of church, household, brothers, and saints with others. Out of twenty-eight individuals, eight are assuredly women: Prisca, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, and Julia. The name of Junia must be added to these. Furthermore, some women must be assumed to be included in "the church that meets in Prisca and Aquilas' house" (v.5) the "Household of Aristobulus" (v.10), of Narcissus (v.11), and "all the saints with Nereus and Olympus" (v.15). The names of Patroba(s), Herma(s) and Olympas(s), with their accusative form, - an, could possibly be those of women, although being masculine is not ruled out. We know nothing whatsoever about these except that Apostle Paul greeted them. Apart from those three, there are sixteen masculine names, and, of these, only Urbanus is identified as a co-worker of Paul.

In contrast to this, out of ten women referred to in this chapter, seven are described as participating in ministry. Phoebe is called a "deacon" (note the masculine form related to an office rather than the gender of the person who holds it) of the church in Cenchreae, "who has been a benefactor of many people," including Paul (vv.1-2). Prisca, to whom Luke refers as Priscilla (Acts 18:2, 18, 26) is named ahead of her husband Aquila. They undertook to explain

God's way more accurately to Apollos, an adult man (Acts 18:26), and are called here Apostle Paul's co-workers in Christ Jesus," a term used additionally only of Urbanus (v.9) and Timothy (v.21) in Romans 16.

Junia's name is listed with that of Andronicus, presumably her husband (v.7), and they are characterized as "outstanding among the apostles", which led Chrysostom to exclaim: "How great is the devotion of this woman that she would be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle."¹¹² This appeared so incredible to Aegidius de Columna (C.1245-1316) that, by a remarkable sex-change operation, he posited that the name should be a masculine Junias rather than feminine, as had been understood for more than a thousand years.¹¹³ Unfortunately for Aegidius, there is no evidence elsewhere for this name, while Lampe records more than 250 examples of Junia, mostly in Latin, as noted by J.D.G. Dunn in his commentary on Romans.¹¹⁴

Mary (v.6), Tryphena and Tryphosa, and Persis (v.1) are described as "women who worked hard" or "very hard" in the Lord. This is the language used by Jesus for Christian workers (John 4:38), by Apostle Paul for his own apostolic ministry (Gal 4:11, Php.2:16, Col 1:29), and for that of his co-workers (1 Co 16:16, 1Th 5:12, 1 Ti 4:10, 5:17).

Surely Apostle Paul would not, in 1Timothy 2:8-15, condemn on the basis of Genesis 1-3 what he had so freely commended in Romans 16. Some claim that the solution is to posit that 1 Timothy is not authentically written by Paul, a desperate expedient that is wholly unacceptable to evangelicals and that would raise serious questions about Timothy's place in the canon and even as to its inspiration.

¹¹² John Chrysostom, *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers I*, 11:555.

¹¹³ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16, Word Bible commentary 38* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1998), 894.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 894.

Leadership in the New Testament

What is more striking than the necessary presence of authority in New Testament leadership, however, is the deliberate de-emphasize of it. Jesus was adamant that the exercising of authority should not characterize spiritual leaders (Mt 20:20-28; Mk 10:35-45). Though it characterizes leadership in the world, things are to be markedly different in the church. In fact, Jesus completely reversed the world view of leadership. It is out of sacrifice for others, not out of standing or status over others, that any influence is to arise (Mt 20:22; Mk 10:38). It is an opportunity for eager service and giving oneself as an example (1Pe 5:2-3). The leader is to be at the disposal of others, seeking and promoting their good rather than the rule. Later Paul would echo this same principle in his discussion of the “head” of the home (Eph 5:25). It is through being in low standing and through serving others that anyone is seen by God as being in high standing and as leading others (Mt 20:26-27; Mk 10:43-44; Lk 22:26). Jesus modeled this during His earthly ministry, and He expected His disciples to follow His example (Lk 22:27; Jn 13:13-15).

To insist upon a hierarchical arrangement that positions men authoritatively at the top and women subordinately at the bottom could not be any more diametrically opposed to the explicit teachings of Jesus. Jesus identified hierarchal authority as just that, the way of the world (Mt 20:20-28; Mk 10:35-45). He made it quite clear that no such arrangement is appropriate in the community of those who are redeemed from sin. If an individual is not to conduct himself in this way, certainly no class of individuals is to do so either. Believers are not to be ruled any longer by sin but are to be ruled by righteousness (Ro 6:17-18). Those who argue that, “boss in the marriage results in boss in society and boss in the church” are actually saying that “wrongdoing in the marriage results in wrongdoing in society and wrongdoing in the church.”

If authority must be present in leadership and yet not to characterize leadership, how are these two “opposites” united in the New Testament’s description of spiritual leaders? First and foremost, decision-making rests upon determining the will of God. This can be done by all believers by virtue of being transformed into godliness (Ro 12:2; Eph 5:8-10). It can also be done by leaders who are then, in turn, recognized and supported by others as being right (Acts 15:6-7,27-28,31-34; 1Co 14:29; 1Jn 4:1). Leadership, by this definition, is discovering or helping others discover God’s will, rather than exerting one’s own will. In fact, the leader’s interests are frequently sacrificed for the good of the whole community (Php 2:3-4).

Specific Theological Issue: Corinth and Ephesus

The New Testament makes it plain that Christian women, like men, have been given spiritual gifts (1 Co 12:7-11). Women, like men, are to use these gifts to minister to the body of Christ (1 Pe 4:10); their ministries are indispensable to the life and growth of the church (1 Co 12:12-26). There are many examples in the New Testament of just such ministries on the part of gifted Christian women. To be true to the New Testament, then, the contemporary church needs to honour those varied ministries of women and to encourage women to pursue them.

But does the New Testament place any restrictions on the ministry of women? From the earliest days of the apostolic church, most orthodox Christians have thought so. One important reason they have thought so is the teaching of 1 Timothy 2:8-15:

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deed, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Has the church been right to think that this passage imposed certain permanent restrictions on the ministry of women? Certainly this is what the passage, as translated above, seems to say. Women are not to teach or to have authority over men. They are not to do so because of the order in which God created man and woman and because of how man and woman fell into sin. However, many in our day think this passage does not require the contemporary church to limit the ministry of women. Others think it may limit only certain women from certain ministries in certain circumstances.

Many people refuse to apply the passage to the church today because they question whether it has authority over us. For example, non-evangelical New Testament scholars generally believe that all three Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) were written by an unknown person in Paul's name long after he was dead. While this unknown person in Paul wanted to use his authority, he also contradicted Paul. In such cases, if anyone is to be able to speak to the church today with authority, it is the "true Paul," not the "pseudo-Paul" of the Pastoral Epistles. And the "true Paul" taught that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28).

The Setting

Paul writes this first letter to his disciple and co-worker Timothy to remind him "how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God" (1Ti 3:15). Paul must send this reminder because the church at Ephesus, where Timothy has been left to continue the work of ministry, is beset by false teaching (see 1:3). Certain people from within the church departed from the true teaching of the gospel; and became quarrelsome and argumentative, and propagated doctrines that were erroneous. Many interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 rely heavily on the nature of this false teaching at Ephesus in explaining what Paul means in these verses. There is nothing wrong with this in principle; good exegesis always takes into consideration the larger context in which a text

appears. However, Paul tells us remarkably little about the specifics of this false teaching, presumably because he knows that Timothy is well acquainted with the problem. This means that we cannot be at all sure about the precise nature of this false teaching and, particularly, about its impact on the women in the church-witness the many, often contradictory, scholarly reconstructions of this false teaching.¹¹⁵ But this means that we must be very careful about allowing any specific reconstruction-tentative and uncertain as it must be-to play too large role in our exegesis.

We will, then, take a cautious approach to this matter. In our exegesis, we will use only those aspects of the false teaching that may be clearly inferred from the Pastoral Epistles and related New Testament passages to shed light on the text. Some of the aspects specifically to 1Timothy 2:11-15 are:

- The false teachers sowed dissension and were preoccupied with trivialities (1Ti 1:4-6; 6:4-5; cf. 2Ti 2:14, 16-17, 23-24; Titus 1:10; 3:9-11).
- The false teachers stressed asceticism as a means of spirituality. They taught abstinence from certain foods, from marriage, and probably sex generally (1Ti 4:1-3). In keeping with these ascetic tendencies, they may also have stressed physical training as a means of spirituality (4:8).
- The false teachers had persuaded many women to follow them in their doctrines (1Ti 5:15; 2Ti 3:6-7).
- The false teachers were encouraging women to discard what we might call traditional female roles in favour of a more egalitarian approach to the role relationships of men and women. This is not stated explicitly as a plank in the false teachers' platform anywhere in the Pastoral Epistles. Nevertheless, it is an inference with a high degree of probability for the following reasons:

¹¹⁵ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI : Eerdmans,1957), 32-38 and J. N. D. Kelly, *A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Black, 1963), 10-18).

First, an encouragement to abstain from marriage, which we know was part of the false teachers program, is likely to include a more general denigration of traditional female roles. Second, the counsel in 1 Timothy 5:14 to young widows “to marry, to have children, to manage their homes” --- i.e., to occupy themselves in traditional female roles-is issued because some “have... turned away to follow Satan” (verse 15). Since Paul labels the false teaching as demonic (1Ti 4:1), it is likely that this turning away to follow Satan means following the false teachers and that they were teaching the opposite of what Paul commanded in 5:14. Third, the false teaching that is besetting the church at Ephesus sounds very similar to the general problem that seems to lurk behind 1 Corinthians. In both situations, the problem arose from within the church, involved the denial of a future, physical resurrection in favour of a present, “spiritual” resurrection (2Ti 2:18; 1Co 15, coupled with 4:8), and led to incorrect attitudes toward marriage and sex (1Co 7; 1Ti 4:3), toward food (1Co 8:1-13; 1Ti 4:3, although the specific issues are a bit different), and, most importantly, to a tendency on the part of the women to disregard their appropriate roles, especially vis-à-vis their husbands (1Cor 11:2-18; 14:33b-36; 1Ti 2:9-15; 5:13-14; Titus 2:3-5).

While we cannot be sure about this, there is good reason to think that the problem in both situations was rooted in a false belief that Christians were already in the full form of God’s kingdom and that they had accordingly been spiritually taken “out of” the world so that of this creation, like sex, food, and male/female distinctions, were no longer relevant to them.¹¹⁶ It may well be that these beliefs arose from an unbalanced emphasis on Paul’s own teaching that Christians were “raised with Christ” (Eph 2:6; Col 2:12; 3:1) and that in Christ there is neither “male nor female” (Gal 3:28). What Paul would be doing in both 1 Corinthians and the Pastoral Epistles is seeking to right the balance by reasserting the importance of the created order and the ongoing significance of those role distinctions between men and women

¹¹⁶ P. H. Towner, “Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus of Pastoral Epistles and Corinthian Enthusiasm,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987): 95-124.

that he saw rooted in creation. Whether this specific interpretation of the data of 1 Corinthians and the pastorals is correct or not, the similarity between the batteries of problems in the two situations strongly suggests that in Ephesus, as in Corinth, a tendency to remove role distinctions between men and women was part of the false teaching.¹¹⁷ Very likely, then, Paul's teaching about the roles of men and women in church ministry in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is occasioned by the need to counter the false teachers on this point.

F.F. Bruce when trying to explain women's situation both in Corinth and Ephesus said, exegesis seeks to determine the meaning of the text in its primary setting but when exegesis has its work, our application of the text should avoid treating the New Testament as a book of rules. In applying the New Testament text to our situation, we need not treat it as the scribes of our Lord's days treated the Old Testament. We should turn what were meant as guidelines for worshippers in one situation into the laws binding for all time. It is commonly recognized that the regulations regarding widows, later in 1 Timothy were not meant to be carried out literally today, although their essential principles should continue to be observed.¹¹⁸

It is an ironical paradox that Paul who was so concerned to free his convert from bondage of law, is treated as a law-giver for later generations. The freedom of the Spirit which can be safeguarded by one set of guiding lines in a particular situation, may call for a different procedure in a new situation. It is very naturally asked what criteria can be safely used to distinguish between those elements in the apostolic letters which are local and temporary in application and those which are of universal and permanent validity. Where the writings of Paul are concerned, however, 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 licence on the other hand). Here it is: whatever in Paul's teaching promotes

¹¹⁷ Alvera Mickelsen, *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1985), 198.

¹¹⁸ F. F. Bruce, "*Christian Brethren Review Journal*" No 33: December (1982): 7-14.

restrictions on a Christian's temporary condition. (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).

An appeal to principles in our application of the New Testament might demand the recognition that when the Spirit in his sovereign good pleasure bestows varying gift on individual believers, these gifts are intended to be exercised for the well-being of the whole church. If he manifestly withheld the gifts of teaching or leadership from Christian women, then we should accept that as evidence of his will (1Co 12:11). But experience shows that he bestows these and other gifts with undistinguishing regard on men and women alike (not on all women or on all men). That being so, it is unsatisfactory to rest at a halfway house in this issue of women's ministry where they are allowed to pray and prophesy but not to teach or lead.

Women Throughout History

In the Early Centuries

According to Acts and other New Testament letters, women did fulfil Jesus' mandate to serve in ministry alongside their Christian brothers. The criteria for being considered an apostle was having seen the risen Lord (1Cor.9:1), which Joanna certainly had (Luke 24:10), and who Paul considered an apostle who had been significantly helpful to him (Rom.16:7).¹¹⁹ Priscilla was not only Paul's colleague but was the teacher of Apollos as well (Rom.16:3-5, Acts 18:24-28). Phoebe was a church leader as were Syntyche, Euodia (Phil.4:2-3) and Lydia

¹¹⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2002), 166-169.

(Acts 16:14-15, 40). In addition, there is well-argued speculation that the anonymous author of the Book of Hebrews is one other than Paul's beloved friend, Priscilla.¹²⁰

“What went wrong?” female students of Christian history inevitably ask themselves, because once we leave Scripture and move on to extra-biblical reading, Christian history reads in such a way as to imply that women were completely uninvolved in the formation of the church. The last of the apostles would have not lived much beyond the beginning of the 2nd Century A.D., and women in church leadership seem to have disappeared along with them.¹²¹ How did it come to pass that women ceased to function as church leaders, and why so early in the church's development?

Fortunately, with the 20th Century advent of feminist historians and theologians, church history has been revisited, but the answers to these questions are not easily discerned and must be teased out from a historical framework that records the passage of time solely from a male perspective and reports the history of women only as it pertains to men.¹²² Although, there is a scarcity of documents written by women about the lives of members of their own gender upper class women in the Roman Empire were highly educated and historians surmise that women likely wrote a great many more works than what has survived.¹²³ Among the few surviving works believed to have been written by women is the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*, most of which Perpetua is believed to have written herself and the Apocryphal Acts, which is essentially a series of lively stories about women who, upon encountering a male apostle, reject secular life in favour of ascetic Christianity.¹²⁴ And, of course there is the controversial Gospel of Mary Magdalene, which, despite its much

¹²⁰ Ruth Hopin, “We are Witnesses to a Mystery” (www.godswordtowomen.org/studies/articles/hoppin.htm, accessed February 2008)

¹²¹ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, volume I: The First Thousand Years* (Mary knoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 101.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 35.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 245.

¹²⁴ Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical press, 1983), 78-98.

debated historical and theological; validity suggests that she had a ministry that was significant enough to warrant a gospel account.¹²⁵

The little else that is known about women in the early church has been gleaned from epitaphs on tombstones, artwork and from what the church “fathers” wrote about them, and the evidence suggests that women held positions of authority in the church and were also exegetes. An ancient mosaic in Rome names a Bishop Theodora. There were women Bishops in Egypt and women presbyters in Sicily and Greece.¹²⁶ A woman named Paula was the most intimate friend of the church “father”, Jerome with whom he enjoyed challenging debates over Scripture.¹²⁷ Another woman, Melania the Elder, was dubbed a “female man of God” by her Christian brothers on account of her learnedness.¹²⁸

While a few select women as mentioned above received accolades from church “fathers,” most often when writing about women, they denounced them for performing certain ecclesiastical tasks, or they penned diatribes on woman’s intrinsically sinful nature. Feminists deduce from these writings that if “fathers” deemed it necessary to speak against women functioning in specific ecclesiastical roles, women must have been in fact participating in them. The fact of laws forbidding women to preach indicates that there were preaching women who needed to be silenced.¹²⁹ Condemnation of women prophets can only mean that women were prophesying. If the Second Century Statutes of the Apostles lambasted women presiding over the Eucharist, the assumption must be that they were presiding over it and likewise regarding women baptizing.¹³⁰ If the Didascalia, a manual on church organization, castigated the “order of widows” for evangelizing, discipling believers, hearing confessions

¹²⁵ Jean-Yves Leloup and Joseph Rowe, trans. *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene: Translation from the Coptic and Commentary* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2002), 7.

¹²⁶ Karen Jo. Torjesen, *When Women Were Priest: Women’s Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity* (San. Francisco: Harper, 1993), 9-10.

¹²⁷ Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, 163-168.

¹²⁸ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, volume I*, 148.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁰ Karen Jo. Torjesen, *When Women Were Priest: Women’s Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*, 42-44, 148.

and performing baptisms, then it stands to reason that the widows were doing all of these things.¹³¹

Women apparently also exercised authority and leadership through their influence as patrons. Lucilla of Carthage held considerable sway as a patron Donatus and was instrumental in the rise of the Donatist movement that plagued the “orthodox” church for several centuries. Origen was also assisted by a woman patron as was Crysostom.¹³²

With a clearly extensive female presence in church leadership and the support of Scripture behind them, it seems inconceivable that the church devolved so rapidly into an institution that viewed itself as an exclusively male domain that eventually came to consider the creation of women as almost a misguided afterthought on God’s part. Egalitarian historians, both male and female, generally attribute it to the pressure applied by the pervasive influence of Greco-Roman culture.¹³³ However, this explanation does not adequately convey the manner in which this influence was visited on women in the quest to prohibit them from church leadership. What began as the relatively soft-cell of persuasion in the form of written attacks and ecclesiastical legislation eventually transcended the church and escalated into violent acts of force that sought to subdue women across the spectrum of society.

Attitudes towards women in the Roman Empire were inherited from the Greeks. Greek mythology taught that women were created by Zeus as a curse against the human race, which prior to offending the gods, was strictly male.¹³⁴ The Greeks defined masculinity which in their minds equaled humanity, through the male genitalia. They associated honour with sexual

¹³¹ Ibid., 146-149.

¹³² Ibid., 90-92, 100-103.

¹³³ Mary Stewart, Van Leeuwen, et al., *After Eden: Facing the Challenge of Gender Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1993), 22.

¹³⁴ Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton, with Janice Rogers, *Why Not Women: A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry and Leadership* (Seattle: Youth with A Mission, 2000) 72-75.

proress to the degree that orgies were rampant and homosexual relations with young boys were highly regarded.¹³⁵

On the other hand, women were associated with shame and were viewed strictly as male possessions for usage that had to be endured as the unfortunately necessary means of procreation. Since men were honourable, they could be separated from their sexuality and carry on public business and political activity, whereas women were sexual in any sphere because of their being the curse of men. To be a woman meant to carry shame everywhere, and private life was the only sphere in which her taint could be endured. From this philosophy evolved the assumption that public life was male, and private life was female. Any woman who held a public office was deemed unchaste and was seen as attempting to establish sexual independence. A woman's sexuality was a male possession, and a sexually independent woman was a threat to every man's authority.¹³⁶

Prior and Post Constantine

Prior to the conversion of Emperor Constantine, persecution and the fact that Christians "conceived themselves explicitly as an alternative family or household," meant that the church functioned as a private institution. Christians confined worship primarily to meeting in homes where women in leadership was not an issue.¹³⁷

However, due in great part to the rising veneration of celibacy, not all Christians in the pre-Constantine church embraced female leadership. With the deaths of the apostles, the church lost the authority of its first-hand witnesses to the teachings of Jesus, and as Greco-Roman converts continued to be brought in the church, their secular culture had increasing impact. Celibacy was the combined birth child of Greek disdain for women and Christianity's desire to distance itself from the appalling sexual promiscuity of the Roman pagans.

¹³⁵ Karen Jo. Torjesen *When Women Were Priest: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*, 180-188.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12, 40, 113-115.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 126 -127.

In some churches, female virgins were part of the clergy and were greatly revered. They sat in special places during worship, and as a sign of having dedicated their lives to God, they did not wear the veils normally worn by women. Tertullian, a third century theologian with a robust Greco-Roman contempt for women, opposed all manifestation of female leadership and insisted that virgins should not be bestowed any measure of honour and accordingly, should wear their veils in church despite it being “private” space.¹³⁸

Emperor Constantine’s conversion and the subsequent legalization of Christianity with the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D. catapulted Christianity into the public realm for which it was unfortunately unprepared.¹³⁹ Many of Constantine’s subjects converted to Christianity motivated more by a desire to curry his favour than by religious fervour. Established Christians also desired his goodwill more than they desired God’s. This, when coupled with Constantine’s own faith being of a questionable degree, made for a situation in which Biblical authority took a back seat to the will of the emperor and the ambitions of undiscerning Christians.¹⁴⁰ A natural consequence of a more secular, Greco-Roman influenced and less Spirit-led church was the widespread consensus that women ecclesiastical leaders were absolutely unacceptable.¹⁴¹

The campaign to eject women from ministry that began with the quills of the church “fathers” in the third century transitioned into ecclesiastical legislation during the fourth Century when the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. banned women from the clergy.¹⁴² Nevertheless, history shows that women did not universally or easily accept their banishment because over the ensuing centuries the church had to repeatedly enact legislation against

¹³⁸Karen Jo. Torjesen *When Women Were Priest: Women’s Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity.*, 158!-172;

¹³⁹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1, The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1984), 107-108.

¹⁴⁰ Eeric de Bruyn, “*HI 260 Christian History to the Reformation.*” Lecture, Alliance University College, 2005.

¹⁴¹ Karen Jo. Torjesen *When Women Were Priest: Women’s Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*, 155-158.

¹⁴²Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, volume I.*, 125.

women leaders and enforce it with their customary disciplinary measure of excommunication and burning at the stake.¹⁴³

The continued persistence of women in fulfilling her call from God kept the attack on women alive. The pens of the “fathers” marched on relentlessly, but their ranting had one significant difference; rather than being merely unfit for leadership, woman became sin personified. Whereas for the Greeks, woman would not have been created if man had not sinned, the church “fathers” determined that if woman had not sinned, faultless man would still be enjoying himself in the Garden of Eden in perfect harmony with God.

Writing in 375 C.E., Ambrose of Milan’s attitude toward woman may have been one of the more affirming ones among the church “fathers” in that he conceded that God had deemed woman good despite her being the very source of sin. Augustine, on the other hand was not so kind. In 401 A.D., he agreed that God had made woman to be man’s helper, but the issue was what kind of helper she was supposed to be. Any man could outwork a woman; therefore, it could not have been for the purpose of physical labour. “One could also posit,” he argued, “that the reason for her creation as a helper had to do with the companionship she could provide for man, if perhaps he got bored with his solitude. Yet for company and conversation, how much more agreeable, it is for two male friends to dwell together than for a man and a woman, nor could it have been for the purpose of companionship. . . I cannot think of any reason for a woman’s being made as man’s helper, if we dismiss the reason of procreation.” His contemporary, John Chrysostom, magnanimously chimed that as a helper to man, woman was far superior to an animal because God had made a clear distinction between women and beast in the Genesis creation story.¹⁴⁴

Sadly, to make the situation for women worse, the evolving all-male, church leadership came to believe the “fathers” had so thoroughly summarized Christina theology

¹⁴³ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, volume I.*, 126-127,149.

¹⁴⁴ Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, 28-34.

that their writings superseded the authority of Scripture. This negated the necessity of reading Scripture altogether and granted the church the license to do whatever it wanted. In time, the “fathers” authority was conferred on the Pope as infallibility.¹⁴⁵

By the end of the fifth Century, the only option for formal ecclesiastical service for women was celibate life as a nun or a masochistic ascetic. Undaunted, women were determined to follow the call to ministry and flocked to monasteries and convents, often defying their families. Unfortunately, becoming a nun was available almost exclusively to wealthy women since life in a monastery required a substantial dowry. The remaining masses of lower class women had to content with life within the confines of marriage; and institution the church increasingly denounced as an unfortunate necessity for individuals too weak and too sinful to embrace the higher calling of celibacy.¹⁴⁶

Without the ascendancy of Scripture, the denigration of woman continued unabated, and of which canonized Peter Damian’s following harangue was typically representative. “I speak to you, O charmers of the clergy, appetizing flesh of the devil, that castaway from Paradise, poison of minds, death of souls, companions of the very stuff of sin, the cause of our ruin. You, I say, I exhort women of the ancient enemy, you bitches, sows, screech-owls, night-owls, blood-sucker, she-wolves, . . . come now, hear me harlots, prostitutes, with your lascivious kisses, your wallowing places for fat pigs, couches for unclean spirits.”¹⁴⁷

In face of such spiraling hatred it is no surprise that the church’s misogyny eventually culminated in the witch-craze that began in the twelfth Century and did not end until the seventeenth Century. Often, the proof that a woman was a witch was the crime of being an impoverished middle-aged widow, but the real root of the problem was, as always, female sexuality. Impotency, infertility, disease, death and above all, male lust, were all the fault of women who were supposedly sleeping with Satan. Women were tortured until they confessed

¹⁴⁵ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, volume I*, 125

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 172, 187.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

to night-flying, killing babies, stealing penises, impregnation by the devil and so on. The witch-craze reached its pinnacle in 1492 when the European town of Langendorf declared that only two women in its entire village were not witches.¹⁴⁸ It is estimated that upwards from one million women were burned at the stake as witches and often first suffering other public atrocities such as having their breasts hacked off.¹⁴⁹

Another far less gruesome but equally un-biblical by-product of the church's spiteful sexism was the Vatican's 1854 A.D. declaration on the sinlessness of the Virgin Mary. It was impossible for the Roman church to fathom God having debased himself by birthing his son through a woman, the very source of all sin. They conclude that Mary had to have been a super-woman, born without the taint of her sisters.¹⁵⁰

The Period of Reformation

The plight of women finally began to turn around with the Reformation. Martin Luther and his colleagues dug the Bible out of the cellar and blew off a thousand years of dust. They reinstated salvation by faith and resurrected the blessing marriage. Unfortunately, Protestant women were still not quite as equal as Protestant men, but they were expected to read the Bible alongside their brothers.¹⁵¹ And with the Scriptures once again in their hands, women began the slow process of reclaiming their freedom in Christ, a process which continues to this day.

Naturally, there are detractors who argue that although Greco-Roman culture undeniably held sway, the only women leaders in the early church were those in heretical

¹⁴⁸ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, Volume II: From 1000 to the Reformation* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2002), 216-219.

¹⁴⁹ Karen Jo. Torjesen *When Women Were Priest: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*, 228-233.

¹⁵⁰ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, Volume III: From the Reformation to 21st Century* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2002), 184.

¹⁵¹ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, Volume III: From the Reformation to 21st Century*, 56.

sects like the Gnostics. They contend these sects endangered the orthodoxy of the church and justify the “fathers” strong stand against women.¹⁵²

On the surface this evidence would appear to be true, but the argument does not hold up against Scripture, and it must be remembered that only male writings survived the censure of a male-dominated church. We do not know if orthodox women wrote in defense of their leadership. We do know there were orthodox male voices such as Helvidius and Jovinian, who affirmed marriage and gender equality. Furthermore, the asceticism many church “fathers” followed was itself a derivative of the Gnostic view that the body was inherently evil and needed to be deprived of comfort to facilitate holiness.¹⁵³

More likely, the real issue was not heresies or female sin but male sexuality. As much of their writing suggests, the various “fathers” struggled with their sexuality. This sheds much needed light on their susceptibility to a culturally influenced repugnance of women. Asceticism and celibacy are not natural human states. We are not androgynous. We are sexual beings, male and female, and we were created to care for our bodies and for each other, physically, emotionally and sexually.¹⁵⁴

In the Gnostic gospels of Mary Magdalene and Philip, Jesus is fully human and fully male. This was a problem for the Greco-Roman ascetic “fathers.”¹⁵⁵ Their desire to live fully dedicated to God as celibates was not inherently wrong. The problem was that for them sex was inherently sinful and inherently female. They believed that were it not for women they would not have had to struggle with their lust. They did not know how to reconcile their sexuality with the redemptive plan of Christ without rejecting woman. In their minds, Jesus

¹⁵² Elizabeth A. Clark, *Women in the Early Church*, 20-21.

¹⁵³ Mary T. Malone, *Women and Christianity, Volume I: From the Reformation to 21st Century*, 163-166.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Jean-Yves Leloup and Joseph Rowe, trans. *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene: Translation from the Coptic and Commentary*, 9-12.

was holy and as such was not sexual.¹⁵⁶ Scripture affirms Jesus as being fully human and also affirms his sinlessness (Heb 4:15). If the “fathers” had divorced their culturally informed understanding of sex and sin from their interpretation of Scripture, they would have understood that, because Jesus never sinned and never married, He had been celibate by virtue of premarital sex being sin. Jesus rejected sin, not his sexuality. To think otherwise is to believe that sexuality was never redeemed by Christ. Unfortunately, this is exactly what the “fathers” believed, and the repercussions reverberated far into the future.

Since the days of the Reformation much headway has been made in the way of feminist exegesis of Scripture, but there remain many women who mistrust Scripture as the Spirit inspired inerrant Word of God because (with the possible exception of the Book of Hebrews) its human authors were men and because the Canon was completed by the “fathers.” With so much hurt in women’s history, they will continue to struggle with their view of God unless the church attempts to answer their demand to know where God was while women were beaten into silence by the church and why He took so long to release them.

An answer might be found if we revisit Christian history once again and this time remember that God’s involvement in history did not end with the closing of the canon. History is not the story of humanity; it is the story of God. It is the story of His redemptive work in His creation, male and female, who image Him together as one. It is the only way to make sense of all the sin and hurt we humans have inflicted on each other.

Since creation, God has ceaselessly moved humanity toward eternal redemptive reconciliation with Him and just as ceaselessly, humanity has rejected His offer of mercy and heaped sin upon sin instead. Adam and Eve rejected Him. The early human race of Noah’s day rejected Him. Israel, his chosen people rejected Him in the desert, in the Promised Land

¹⁵⁶Jean-Yves Leloup and Joseph Rowe, trans. *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene: Translation from the Coptic and Commentary*.

and when their Messiah came. Would His church be any different than the rest of humanity or His chosen Jewish people? The first humans rejected God and the last humans will reject Him (Rev 19:11-21).

Mercifully, despite our sin, God remains steadfast in His plan to bring into eternity with Him, those who accept the reconciliation He offers through Jesus Christ. He promised that those who sought Him with all their heart would find Him (Jer.29:13) and that He would preserve them. He saved Noah and his small family. He preserved Israel through a faithful remnant (Isa.6:13), and He preserves His church through a faithful remnant like the early monasteries, who objected to the church's alliance with the Roman Empire, and the Reformers who restored His Word, and the countless marginalized women who persevered through the centuries, and the millions of ordinary people who strive to know God in a church that persistently rejects Him (Rev.2, 3, 18:4-5).

Example of Certain Women in History

Christian views or attitudes about women vary considerably today as they have throughout the last two millennia, evolving along with or counter to the societies in which Christians have lived. For much of Christian history, the role of women in the life of the church both local and universal though has been downplayed, overlooked or simply denied, Christian women throughout history have played a great role in the society we now live.

In the early fourth century, Catherine of Alexandria defended the faith before philosophers and courtiers, before she was tortured to death by Maxentius, the son of the Roman Emperor Maximian.¹⁵⁷ Macrina the Younger (328-380) was founder of a religious community for women in the Eastern Church. With her brothers, Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, she was a pioneer in the monastic life. She healed, prophesied, and actively spread the faith. John Crysostom wrote of her that “she was a great organizer, and independent

¹⁵⁷Richard M. Riss “God’s Word to Women.” www.godstowomen.org/studies/articles/richardriss.htm, (accessed 13 February 2008).

thinker, and as well educated as Basil himself.” After the death of her mother, she reared and educated her younger brother Peter, who became Bishop of Sebaste.¹⁵⁸

Marcella (325-410) was an important teacher in the early church who was highly esteemed by Jerome. She was in the front lines in interacting with heretics and bringing them to a better understanding of Christian truth. Her palace on the Aventine Hill became a center of Christian influence. At one point, when a dispute arose in Rome concerning the meaning of the Scriptures, Jerome asked Marcella to settle it. Her church of the Household was not only a house of study and prayer, but a center for deeds of Christian charity and sacrifice. It was here that another woman, Fabiola, received inspiration to establish the first hospitals in Rome. Marcella later established on the outskirts of Rome the first religious retreat for women. It was also at Marcella’s Church of the Household that Paula (347-404) and her daughter Eustochium first made their decision to assist Jerome in his Latin translation of the Bible. They went to Bethlehem in order to aid him in this work, revising and correcting his translations and making new Latin translations from the Hebrew and Greek texts. Biblical manuscripts were copied. This became a model for what soon became the universal practice at monasteries for many centuries.¹⁵⁹

Genevieve (455-500) lived in Paris when Attila and his Huns invaded France in 451. She assured the inhabitants of Paris that God would protect them if they would pray. While the men prepared for battle, she persuaded the women to pray for hours in the church. Then, after Attila destroyed Orleans, he decided not to touch Paris. At a later time, she was said to have averted a famine in Paris and the surrounding cities by distributing miraculous gifts of bread.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Pamela Scofield. “Women in History” in Internet Catholic Encyclopedia, [Http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02782a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02782a.htm) (accessed 13 February 2008).

¹⁵⁹ Richard M. Riss “God’s Word to Women.” www.godstowomen.org/studies/articles/richardriss.htm,(accessed 13 February 2008).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

Bridget, also known as Bride (455-523), inspired the convent system that made an indelible impact upon life in Ireland. After settling in Kildare, she built for herself and female friends a house for refuge and devotion. As other houses were founded through her missionary efforts, she became known as the “mother abbess” of all of Ireland.¹⁶¹

Theodora I (500-548), wife of the emperor Justinian, was an important and influential Christian. A woman of outstanding intellect and learning, she was a moral reformer. Justinian, as Christian Emperor, was for all practical purposes, head of the Church of his generation, and his wife, as Empress, shared his power to select church leaders. The inscription “Theodora Episcopa” or “Theodora, Bishop (fem.)” in a mosaic at the Basilica of Sts. Prudentia and Praexedis in Rome may have been a reference to the Empress.¹⁶²

Hilda (614-680) was appointed by Aidan as abbess of the convent at Hartlepool in County Durham in 649. Ten years later, she founded a double monastery for men and women at Whitby in Yorkshire, which became world famous as a school of theology and literature. Five of her disciples became bishops and sixth, Caedmon, became the earliest known English poet.¹⁶³

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was a German abbess, mystic, and writer known throughout all of Europe. Skilled in subjects as diverse as theology, medicine and politics, she did not hesitate to rebuke the sins of the greatest men of her time in both Church and state. She exerted a wide influence among many people, including the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and various kings, prelates, and saints. Many miracles were attributed to her during her lifetime.¹⁶⁴

Clare (1193-1253) was co-founder, with Francis of Assisi, of the Poor Clares, a mendicant order which spread rapidly through Italy and into France, Germany, and Spain. In

¹⁶¹ www.godswordtowomen.org/studies/articles/richardriss.htm, (accessed 13 February 2008).

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Pamela Scofield. “Women in History” in Internet Catholic Encyclopedia, [Http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02782a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02782a.htm) (accessed 13 February 2008).

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

1249, when she was lame, her convent was attacked by a group of Saracens. She told the sisters to carry her to the door of the monastery, then addressed the Saracens and prayed aloud that God would “deliver the defenceless children whom I have nourished with Thy love.” She heard a voice answer “I will always have them in my keeping,” and turning to the sisters, she said, Fear not.” At this moment the Saracens scrambled down the walls of the cloister, recoiling from her valiant words. Clare’s care for the poor was a tremendous inspiration to Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-1231), a princess who, in the last years of her short life, led a life of religious self-sacrifice and service to the poor and sick.¹⁶⁵

Jane Addams, the first woman to win the Noble Peace Prize. The award recognized her lifetime work in the pursuit of peace for all humankind. Her work included services for immigrants, housing initiatives, and childcare and education programs as well as the founding of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom in 1820. She also helped found the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 1820.¹⁶⁶ Aitkin and Jane inherited her father’s printing firm in 1802, becoming the first woman to publish the Bible in the United States of America.¹⁶⁷

Reverend Elizabeth Barr., in 1935 was ordained at a United Free Church in Auchterarder, Perthshire, where she served until 1955 when she was called to be a minister at Central United Free Church in Glasgow. Just five years later she served as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Of her ministry she wrote:

As I look back over my ministry, I would say that any difficult situations were not due to the fact I was a women. She went to add, “Men or women, we must serve as best we can. One must realise that those who do not approve have their reasons and we would respect their opinion.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ [Http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02782a.htm](http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02782a.htm) (accessed 13 February 2008).

¹⁶⁶ J. Phyllis and Bernard L. Witlieb, *The Book of Women’s First* (New York: Random House, 1982), 17.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶⁸ DP Thomson, *Women Ministers in Scotland: Personal Records of Experience and Discovery* (Perthshire, Scotland: St Ninian’s, 1965), 3.

Reverend Beatrice Boner, when she was called to be a pastor at Langholm Congregational Church in Dumfriesshire in the 1940s anticipated opposition; instead she found a 24 year home:

When I came here during the vacancy, I was warned, before hand, that the Congregation was so conservative that they were most unlikely to choose a woman. However, they risked it, and when I said, almost two years ago, that I should like to retire; I was asked to stay on.¹⁶⁹

Catherine Booth co founded the Salvation Army with her husband William. From a young age, she was interested in the Bible, even reading the entire Bible four times by the age of 8. She met her husband while he was preaching at her local church, then with his support she also began preaching. She wrote several articles defending women's preaching.¹⁷⁰

Amy Carmichael was from Northern Ireland, where she felt a call to serve the Lord in the mission field. She began her ministry in Japan in 1893. By 1894 poor health forced her to leave the ministry in Japan. Eventually she moved to India, where she opened an orphanage. The orphanage grew into the Dohnavur Fellowship. Many of the children she helped were the result of temple prostitution. Her ministry led to the formation of the Sisters of the Common Life.¹⁷¹

Fanny Cosby born in 1820 became one of the greatest hymn writers in the church. Despite being blind, she wrote some of the best loved hymns of all time, including "Blessed Assurance," "Blessed Redeemer" and "To God Be the Glory."¹⁷²

Mary Slessor, on August 5, 1876, she set out to begin her mission for Christ. Despite being a woman; despite having been raised in the mills of Dundee, where as a child she worked 12 hours a day, Slessor felt called as a missionary to Calabar in Africa. The Foreign Mission Board of the United Presbyterian Church offered her the opportunity to fulfil that

¹⁶⁹ DP Thomson, *Women Ministers in Scotland: Personal Records of Experience and Discovery* (Perthshire, Scotland: St Ninian's, 1965), 5.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ <http://www.alabaster-jars.com/womeninhistory-c.html> (accessed 12 February 2008).

¹⁷² Dewey Huston, Class Lecture, HIS 601E, May 2005.

call. At the age of 27, she left the safety of her home in Aberdeen for the rigors of Africa. She arrived in what is now Nigeria to face human sacrifice, witchcraft and cruelty, in addition to the challenge presented by Africa's wildlife. At the time of her arrival, human beings were still sacrificed to appease the gods, and suspected criminals were "tested" by poisons. She realized she could not simply demand these activities end; instead she worked to gain the trust and respect of the people, teaching by example. The people gradually modified and abandoned some of their more extreme practices. At the time, twins were considered "evil", deserving only death. Slessor put faith into practice: she adopted many of these children.¹⁷³

Women Perspective of Leadership in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo

The Ethnic Groups and their Cultures

The population of Côte d'Ivoire is ethnically diverse. More than sixty indigenous ethnic groups are often cited, although this number may be reduced to seven clusters of ethnic groups by classifying small units together on the basis of common cultural and historical characteristics. These may be reduced to four major cultural regions – the East Atlantic (primarily *Akan*, includes the Baoulé, Abbron, Abouré, Ehotilé, and Nzima), West Atlantic (primarily *Kru* includes the Beté, Dida, Guérré, Wobé and several smaller groups), *Voltaic*, and *Mandé* – differentiated in terms of environment, economic activity, language, and overall cultural characteristics. In the southern half of the country, East Atlantic and West Atlantic cultures, separated by the Bandama River, each made up almost one-third of the indigenous population. About one-third of the indigenous population lives in the north, including Voltaic peoples in the northeast and Mandé in the northwest.

Most Akan societies are organized into matrilineages (*abusua*). Each lineage is identified with a home village or section of a town, although lineage members may be

¹⁷³ Mary Slessor: *Missionary in Africa*, biography written by George R. Collins: Bob Jones University, www.bju.edu/faith accessed 12 February 2008.

dispersed. Lineages demonstrate their autonomy with respect to other similar groups through the ownership of a symbolic chair or stool, named after the female founder of the lineage. All are matrilineal peoples with a heterogeneous population and mixed economy. Possession of the ritually important stool is seen as vital to the existence of the group. Large lineages may segment into branches, each led by an elder or headman not a *woman*, but a branch does not possess a stool as a symbol of its social autonomy.

Despite their matri-focal center, Akan societies are dominated by men. Men occupy most leadership positions, but they succeed former leaders based on their relationship through their mothers and sisters. Thus, a leader is succeeded, and his valuable property is inherited, by his brother or his sister's son. Matrilineal descent and inheritance produce particular strains in the social fabric under the pressures of modernization. Tensions often arise between a man's sons, who help him acquire wealth and property, and his sister's sons, who may inherit it. Similarly, a man is expected to support children of deceased maternal relatives, a demand that may conflict with the interests of his own children. Akan people used to cope with this contradiction by allowing a senior woman in the lineage to rule that a matrilineal relative had to relinquish his rights in favour of a man's son.

In the Akan society chieftaincy is succeeded by a man nominated by the senior women of the lineage. This nominee, usually one of the deceased chief's matrilineal heirs, is confirmed, or on rare occasions rejected, by a council of lineage elders. No woman has the right to be the chief or leader of the given society, village or township.

Among the three Mandé groups that continue to dominate the northwest – the Malinké found in neighbouring Guinea and Mali, and the Bambara, include the Juula, who are dispersed retains its ancient hierarchical political structure, but each has a hereditary nobility and fairly extensive social stratification. The Malinké and Bambara group men and women according to fairly narrow age ranges, and the result sororities and fraternities serve to

strengthen social solidarity and organize communal work project. The Juula have a history of itinerant preaching, teaching, and trading, and they own converts easily in areas characterized by patrilineal descent, patriarchal family organization, and plural marriage.

Kru cultures generally lack the centralization characteristic of the Akan to the east. The basic social unit is the patrilineage, tracing descent through males to a common male ancestor for both men and women. The lineage, which usually coincides with a village, is further subdivided into segments or branches. Village leadership may be exercised by a council of elders, men sometimes headed by a chief whose power is limited by the council. The result is an uncentralized, but not anarchic, society. With these four major cultural regions – the Akan, Kru, Malinké and the Voltaic, leadership and major decision either in homes or public are dominated mostly by men. Most of these are similar to other ethnic groups in Togo and across West Africa.

Political Changes

The late president, Houphouët-Boigny's political style and longevity shaped Ivorian elites into a wealthy male, educated social stratum. By the late 1980s, women were beginning to emerge within this group, as education and acculturation enabled them to challenge the established order. Official attitude toward the status of women was pragmatic, like most official attitudes in Côte d'Ivoire. Beliefs about the role of women in society were partly the result of ethnic conditioning, however, the cultural bias against equality between the sexes was embodied in customary law, where ethnic diversity and cultural conservatism slowed the pace of modernization of regulations regarding women.

Role expectations for women changed, however, altered by colonial legislation, which liberated captives throughout francophone Africa in 1903, and then by the Mandel Decree of 1939, which fixed the minimum age of marriage at fourteen and made mutual consent a formal necessity for marriage. The Jacquinet Decree of 1951 invoked the power of the state to

protect women from claims to their services – by their own or their husband’s family – after marriage.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, it enabled women to obtain a divorce more easily and invalidated in laws’ claims to any bride-price that had been paid to a woman’s family to legitimize the marriage. This decree also recognized monogamy as the only legal form of marriage and allowed couples to marry without parental consent. These changes altered popular perceptions of marriage and established the colonial government as the authority on most aspects of the status of women.

At independence, the government of Houphouët-Boigny acknowledged existing decrees affecting the status of women and went on to establish the primacy of the nuclear family, raised the minimum age for marriage to eighteen, and condemned in general terms the notion of female inferiority. At the same time, however, legislation during the 1980s established the husband’s right to control much of his wife’s property, and it required a woman to obtain her husband’s permission to establish a bank account or obtain a job. The government also placed restrictions on a woman’s right to divorce, denied legal recognition of matrilineal rights of inheritance (inheritance by a man’s nephews before his sons), and finally condemned the practice of bride-price.

In 1963 women reacted to the extent and direction of government control by forming the Association of Ivorian Women (Association des Femmes Ivoiriennes – AFI). They also persuaded the president to establish the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (Ministère de la Condition des Féminine) in 1976 and to appoint AFI leader Jeanne Gervais as minister. Gervais’s goals were to obtain better educational and employment opportunities for women and to establish judicial equality for women. Legislation was enacted in 1983 to allow a

¹⁷⁴ Robert E. Handolf, ed. *Ivory Coast: A country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1998.

woman to control some of her property after marriage and to appeal to the court for redress of a husband's actions.¹⁷⁵

The status of women, in practice and in the law, was still well below that of men through most of the 1980s, but educational opportunities for women were improving at all levels. In 1987 about one-sixth of the students at the National University of Côte d'Ivoire were women, and the number of women in the salaried work force had also increased. Women made up almost one-fourth of the civil service and held positions previously closed to them, in medicine, law, business, and university teaching.

Personal Interviews from Various Social Classes – Inferiority of Woman

The question of the story of Adam and Eve has affected our culture up to date. Eve is depicted as falling for the promises of a smooth-talking serpent, and as a result she is cursed with pain in childbearing and with an altered relationship with her husband. From this time on, her husband will rule over her. Meanwhile, Adam (who has followed Eve's example in disobedience to God) is cursed with earning his bread with the sweat of his brow. The ground that Adam tills will now bear thistles and thorns. Such is the pitiable state of the first human family after the curse: the husband works long hours with little reward, and then he comes home and rules his wife, who desires her husband and who bears children with great painfulness.

Some interpretations have centered upon the relationship of men and women inasmuch as Adam and Eve symbolize the whole human race. Some have argued that since Adam was made before Eve, Adam (male) is superior to Eve (female). It is interesting to note that no one has carried out this basis of ranking according to the order of creation to its logical conclusion: that cows are superior to man, since cows were created before Adam, and fish are superior to cows, since they were created first, and so on. The order in which the first couple

¹⁷⁵ Robert E. Handolf, ed. *Ivory Coast: A country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1998..

fell to temptation has been given more attention, however, with the conclusion that since Eve sinned first, women are more tempted into error than are men. Moreover, since Adam was tempted by Eve, one must conclude that women constitute a moral threat to men.

Husband-wife relationship in Assemblies of God Perspectives

Man-woman companionship is an essential part of successful marriage in Christian family, and it performs a useful social function. It cannot be eliminated. In fact, some type of man-woman companionship probably has to be fostered. When placed in the context of Christian family life, where it is one element in a relationship that exists for the sake of serving the Lord and others (and not merely for the sake of individual gratification), the harmful effects of much of contemporary man-woman relating are lessened and perhaps eliminated. But man-woman companionship is not the only kind of significant relationship in the lives of husbands and wives, and it is not the predominant form of social relating among single people (until they are moving toward marriage). Sex, and the kind of man-woman relationship to which it gives rise, is at its healthiest and most constructive when it is placed in the context of stable social relationships which have other purposes than simply gratifying the two individuals involved.

In order to successfully restore Christian social relationships, an emphasis must be placed both on brother-sister relationships between men and women and on relationships among men and among women, as well as on the man-woman relationship of marriage in the context of family life. "Brother-sister relationships" should be the primary relationships between men and women. These relationships are those which occur where people relate freely to one another as brothers and sisters in the Lord—to be cared for and served, and not to be seen as candidates for a special one-to-one relationship with someone of the opposite sex. In order to have the right kind of relationships among men and among women, the importance of relationships of companionship and friendship among people of the same sex and social

role must be restored. These relationships cross age group lines (older women and younger women, older men and younger men) and bring people together for a constructive social purpose, and not just because of personal interest and attraction. In other words, man-woman companionship is part of a larger fabric of social relationships that is centered on and structured around building the body of Christ and bringing others to life in him.

Likewise, the man-woman relationship within marriage is shaped by what the family is as a set of social relationships. The husband-wife bond can be so all-absorbing that the husband is unable to relate to his sons or to other men, or so that the wife is unable to relate to her daughters or to other women. The husband-wife bond is very important in family life, but it is served to bring together the husband's set of relationships and the wife's set of relationships, rather than including all other relationships. In fact, the children are not to feel that they are growing up in someone else's family; the father-son, mother-daughter relationships is strong companionship relationships, and is centered on training the children to take on the same roles and responsibilities as their father or mother.

Husbands and wives are partners with complementary roles who are one flesh. The husband is the head of the family. He is to care for and protect his wife. He is to provide for her clarity in what is expected of her, and he is to provide a steadying and ordering influence on her emotional life. He ought not to try to have the same reactions to situations as she does, nor should she try to share his. In fact, when their companionship leads them to share each other's emotional reactions, the effect is to feminize the man. The wife in turn is to support her husband. She is to serve him freely, not equating this service with something beneath her dignity. She is to be a loyal partner whom he can count on as part of his own person. If Christian family life is working well, the husband ought not to love his wife in the same way she loves him, but there ought to be a complementary aspect of their love. They do not share everything in the sense that they can approach everything in the same way and feel alike

about everything. One of the greatest benefits of marriage is that the husband and wife are not the same and cannot share together in that sense. Rather, the husband and wife are able to share everything in a much deeper sense, in that they belong to one another and make up one person.

The Bible says women are supposed to submit to their husbands in everything, just as the Church does to Christ. The Apostle Paul taught in Ephesians one truth (the husband-wife relationship) by using another truth (the relationship of Christ and the Church) and the whole teaching concerns living in the Spirit. The “household of faith” is, first of all, to be marked by the mutual submission of its members – not any one or any group being totally controlled by another.

In Christ, submission and love are tied together, and submission means voluntary deferring, nor demanded subjection. Wives are to take the teaching about submission as seriously as the Church takes its submission to Christ, yielding her own rights and personal preferences to her husband (Eph.5:23-24). A husband is also to take seriously Christ’s relation to the Church by giving himself up as completely as He did – including yielding his own rights and personal preferences – because of love for his wife (Eph.5:35).

This submission, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband’s every request if not in harmony with the right reason or with her dignity due to the wife. Her submission does not imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors, to whom it is not customary to allow free exercise of their rights on account of their lack of mature judgment or of their ignorance of human affairs. But it forbids that exaggerated liberty which cares not for the good of the family; it forbids that in this body which is the family, the heart be separated from the head to the great detriment of the whole body and the

proximate danger of ruin. For the man is the head, the wife is considered the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim herself the chief place in love.

Again, this submission of wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different cultures – different condition of persons, place and time. In fact, if the husband neglects his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family. But the structure of the family and its fundamental law established and confirmed by God, must be always and everywhere maintained intact.

Christ's love is absolute and one of a kind. He gave up His life to the death; He sanctifies and perfects His bride. He is the only one who has such abilities and authority – in His unique relationship to the Church. This is why all believers submit to His leadership. Husbands are to love their wives “as their own bodies” (5:28-29), but no husband can redeem his wife in the way Christ redeemed the Church. (The analogy should not be pressed beyond its points of contact.) A husband gives of himself in love; he cares for his wife as one who has become a part of his own flesh (5:31). But neither can he save his wife, nor be her absolute lord.

When Jesus (Mtt.19:4-6) and Paul (Eph.5:31) taught on marriage, they both based their directives on the pre-Fall text. Thus, one can concluded that this passage –Genesis 2:24 – contains God's defining ideal or standard for marriage. It speaks of unity, not hierarchy: “A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” Neither Jesus nor Paul quoted Genesis 3:16, the past-Fall passage that describes fallen behaviours. Neither Jesus nor Paul talked about male dominance and female subservience.

Paul calls the relationship between Christ and the Church a “profound mystery,” yet he uses it to help the Ephesians understand the profound relationship between spouses. The

husband's level of caring and serving, giving and sacrifice, could never equal Christ's. But that's not the point –the point is mutuality, not hierarchy; the exercise of love, not of power.

Similarly, mutual submission and love apply not only to husbands and wives but to other relationships and to the whole church. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another humbly in love” (Gal 5:13). And further, he wrote,

Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. But in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of the others (Php 2:2-4).

Women's Activities in the Assemblies of God

In the Assemblies of God, Togo/Côte Ivoire women are directly involved in ministering to other women and helping every woman find her personal place of ministry. The first goal of the women's ministry group is to minister to every woman according to her need through prayer groups, Bible studies, and a variety of Ministry Groups in the local church.

Women are given opportunities for outreach on every level of ministries. Ministry is the goal of everything that is done through Women's Ministry. All functions should either minister to women or offer opportunity for women to minister. Their ministry is to involve every woman in some aspect of ministry, helping her to be personally involved in fulfilling the Great Commission. Missions have been the purpose of Women's Ministries since its beginning. Through the local church many opportunities are given for women to be involved in every level of missionary outreach.

Our world is changing rapidly and women who can reach Christians thus emphasize the unlimited opportunities open to women for ministry in their local churches and communities. Every woman is involved in ministry according to her need, and every born-again woman is encouraged to find her place of ministry within the body of Christ. The

women's Ministry also help to reach women, to disciple them and to help bring wholeness and balance to their lives. By providing an atmosphere for women to strengthen their gifts and by training those to find their places of ministry, women can successfully touch their world for Christ. The most effective way to reach women is at the local level.

Women's Ministries is women ministering in the following ways:

- Teaching Bible studies
- Ministering through prayer opportunities
- Singing in the choir, playing in band or orchestra
- Ministry to single women
- Ministry to single moms
- Ministry to widows
- Ministry to professional women
- Ministry to senior adults
- Ministry to the disabled
- Teaching a Sunday School class
- Assisting with funeral dinner, assisting with recovery meals
- Event evangelism
- Ministry to victims of abuse
- Care of church building
- Hospitality ministry
- Fellowship groups
- Mentoring opportunities
- Marriage ministry
- Child care cooperative
- Home schooling network

- Wedding hostess
- Missions opportunities of all types
- Ministries as unlimited as women's ideas!

Theologically women could be accepted to a leadership positions of the church or as an ordained Pastor but there are a number of practical reason that can cause hindrances or limitations to ordain women pastors or have leadership positions in our cultural setting.

Single, Career Woman

- She may be carrying tremendous responsibility alone: job, financial security, maintaining living quarters, and social life.
- She may be struggling with accepting her singleness.
- A lot of doubt in ministry if not married.
- Hard for the community to accept a woman as an authority figure.

Young Married Woman

- She is to make many adjustments.
- She may need to work outside of the home, which will take much of her time and energy.
- She, along with her husband, may not be ready for commitment to the church.
- Pregnancy
- Transfers – where husband and wife are in different geographical areas.

Mother of Young Children

- She may be under much stress just keeping her family and home running smoothly.
- She may lack time and energy for outside ministries.
- She may lack time for personal spiritual renewal or preparation for ministry.

- She may be experiencing marital difficulties.
- Her young children may limit the types of ministries in which she can participate.

Working Mother

- She may be under so much pressure juggling two full-time jobs, career and wife/mother, that she may not have time or energy for outside ministry.
- She may not have time to build friendships with other women in the church so she may not feel like part of the fellowship.

Single Mother

- She's so busy working outside the home and caring for her children alone that she may not have any time for ministry.
- She may feel judged by the people of the church. She also may feel guilty about the break up of her marriage. These feelings may make her feel like an outsider in the church.
- Hard to accept a divorced mother to hold leadership position

Mother of Teen/College Children

- She may be emotionally drained from coping with her child's rebellion and struggle for independence and from helping her children make important decisions.
- She may be juggling several stages at once: younger children, aging parents, working mother.
- She may be experiencing her own mid-life crisis.

The fact that women are unable to be ordained pastors or hold a leadership position must in no way be taken to imply that women are unequal in dignity and value as compared to men. Also, this decision cannot be taken to mean that women are incapable of conveying the

“humanity” of Christ as opposed to the maleness of Christ. This is true because the Church believes that both women and men were made in the image and likeness of God.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Of primary importance in defining the scriptural role of women in ministry is the biblical meaning of ministry. Of Christ our model, it was said, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many” (Mk 10:45). New Testament leadership as modelled by Jesus portrays the spiritual leader as a servant. The question of human authority is not of primary significance, though it naturally arises as organization and structures develop.

The Old Testament presents several women who served in high-level positions of spiritual leadership within Israel, indeed, sometimes over all of Israel. Of course, far more men than women ministered in such capacities because Israel was predominantly patriarchal, and God did tolerate certain cultural inclinations. But the women who led God’s people did so with God’s approval and anointing, and they did so with unusual distinction and effectiveness.

When Jesus began His ministry, there were rules for women and about women, plenty of rules. Because women were seen as inferior to men by both religion and society, they were to be treated accordingly. As has been discussed the oral teaching of the rabbis as well as the general culture of Palestine was exceedingly restrictive of women but Jesus ignored all of this and treated women as He treated men. He viewed both as being fully capable of spiritual understanding and as being totally responsible for their own spiritual decisions. He did not ignore or patronize women; instead, He treated them as persons fully deserving the same respect and dignity that were given to men, as equal to men in every respect.

Jesus rewrote the rules regarding women by His words, His actions, and His relationships. Through each of these means, He established their value and potential as being equal to that of men. He departed radically from the perceptions and behaviours of His day in order to demonstrate God's regard for the "other half of humanity" who had been made in His image. In particular, the examples of Jesus' words relating to women cluster into three categories: His references to women, His direct teaching about women, and His conversations with women.

Though Jewish rabbis would not have had direct dealings with women, yet Jesus did so, on a number of occasions. The same blessings that He made available to men, He also gave to women –the physical miracles of healing and the spiritual miracles of salvation. Not only did Jesus discharge a considerable amount of His ministry in the direction of women, He also singled out women to be the recipients of some of His most significant and impressive miracles.

The New Testament offers a list of ministries that have been given to the church by Christ. "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.... It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4/7, 11). This list should not be seen as exhaustive because the New Testament contains other lists. It is better understood as being representative of various ministries that exist within the church. It may be unwise, as well, to draw sharp line between ministries. While Timothy was pasturing, he was told by Paul to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5). Philip the deacon was also called Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8). But before Timothy or Philip discharged the ministry of an evangelist (herald of good news), women served Jesus in this capacity.

After Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to the women, He gave considerable attention to the eleven disciples. He said such things to them as, "As the Father has sent me, I

am sending you” (John 20:21), “If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven” (20:23); and “Feed my sheep” (21:17). Whether before His death or after His resurrection, if Jesus explained or assigned some aspect of ministry to the disciples that today’s clergy wishes to withhold from women, this is usually done by making much of the original recipients which were men and not women. Of course, nothing is made of the fact that the original recipients were members of a specific group of first-century Jews which no clergyman today claim to be.

Before ascending to Heaven, Jesus told His followers to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). This experience was to give them power to be His witnesses to then ends of the earth (1:8). It occurred on the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Pentecost, and Old Testament feast day which fell fifty days after Passover. Very much in line with its initiating of the spreading of the gospel around the world, the day was also known as the feast of harvest (Exodus 23:16) and the day of first fruits (Numbers 28:26). This outpouring of the Holy Spirit and birthing of worldwide evangelization inaugurated the New Testament church.

The Holy Spirit had been poured out in the Old Testament but only upon select individuals (usually ministers) to assist them in accomplishing specific tasks for God. The prophecy that Peter quoted promised a widespread outpouring for the future: “In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people’” (2:17). The “last days” is the time period between Christ’s ascension and Christ’s return, the era of the church. During this period all believers are to do God’s work; therefore, all believers are to be empowered by God’s Spirit. The same Spirit who rested upon Moses and Aaron and Joshua, the same Spirit who rested upon Elijah and Elisha and Isaiah is to rest upon every male and every female believer! He provides an empowering for ministry, certainly not an empowering for silence.

He provides an empowering to do the teaching and preaching assigned to the church in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15).

The apostle Paul in his appeal to the relation of God the Father to God the Son does not regard Christ's Sonship and resultant incarnation as implying His inferiority to the Father. Although Christ the Son's submission is expressed in the areas of action and of incarnation (the areas of service and of the accomplishment of salvation; cf. also 1Co 15:24-28), it is also an expression of the ontological relationship of preincarnate, submissive Sonship (cf., e.g., John 5:18-23, 30).

The ontological relationship analogous to that between man and woman, writes Paul, is that between Father and Son (I Cor. 11:3). That Christ submits as Son and as incarnate, i.e., because of certain ontological aspects, does not mean therefore that He is inferior to the Father, nor does it cast into doubt His deity. Likewise, that the woman submits as woman does not mean therefore that she is inferior or that her humanity as an image-bearer is threatened. In cases, one, because of His or her "ontological" and ordained role in relation to the other, acknowledges headship and submits. Just as no inferiority may be asserted or assumed for Christ in His submission, so also no inferiority may be justly made because her submission rests on her co created identify as woman in relation to man.

The author does not conclude his thesis of this burning issue of the role relationship of men and women without also discussing the kind of attitudes and interpersonal relationships that must exist within the structure God has ordered. The Bible, as vigorously as it establishes order in civil government, the church, and the family, always joins to its statements about authority and submission, the keynote of right attitude. Once it has established the authority structure or pattern, it usually warns those in authority against misusing that authority (cf. elders in the church [I Peter 5:3] and fathers in the home [Eph 6:4; Col 3:21]). The same

keynote must also be sounded in the role relationship that God has established between man and woman.

The backdrop for this affirmation is the corrosive effect of sin on interpersonal relationships in general and on that between a husband and wife in particular. It is noteworthy that Genesis 3 indicates that sin not only alienates human beings from God but also alienates men and women (Ge 3:16). Sin accounts for much of the hostility and antagonism between the sexes now, men and women either misuse or rebel against their particular role in relation to one another in marriage and the church. The New Testament description of one's responsibilities and obligations in marriage affirms vigorously the husband-wife relationship as that of head and helper, it asks each partner to be what he or she is least likely to be (Eph 5:22ff., Col 3:18-19; 1Pe 3:1-7). To the husband as authority figure comes the vigorous admonition to love (as Christ loves the church), not to be bitter, and to honour his wife. To the wife as the under-authority figure comes the vigorous admonition to respect her husband and to submit ("as to the Lord" and as the church submits to Christ) "in everything." The tendency for the one in authority, affected by sin, is to be callous and overweening, disregarding the person and feelings of the one under his authority, but the New Testament requires just the opposite of husbands: "...love with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honour as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1Pe 3:7). The tendency for one under authority, affected by sin, is to be sullen and disrespectful, complying as little as possible, but the New Testament requires just the opposite of the wife: "... let the wife see to it that she respect her husband" (Eph 5:33; cf. 5:22-23; 1Pe 3:4,6).

But even these words and truths must be set in their wider context, and that context is the mutual submission that all Christians –men and women, husbands and wives –must render to each other under the headship of and in respect for the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 5:21: "... be

subject to one another in the fear of Christ”, cf. 1Co 11:11-12: “However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman”). The setting for all role relationships is that we must submit to one another as joint-heirs of the grace of life. Even in exercising his function as leader of others in the church, and elder or bishop must serve others. Even in exercising his headship over his wife, the husband must submit to and honour her as a joint-heir of the grace of life, and equal by both creation and redemption (again cf. 1Pe 3:7). Elders and husbands are heads not because they are inherently superior –for they exercise their functions among and with equals –but because they have been called by God to their tasks.

It is this combined keynote of submission and equality in exercising leadership that I fear has been lost not only in the secular women’s liberation movement but also on the part of the more strident voices within the Christian community. And to do so is to fall into the infighting for the places of honour and authority that the disciples of Jesus did (cf. Mt 20:20-28 and parallels). (Parenthetically, Jesus’ concept of servanthood renders groundless the charge that an appeal to submission is but an echo of authoritarianism and some more opiates for the people). In His reply to His disciples, Jesus does not deny that some are called to positions of leadership; He does attempt to deal with the root sin of pride, arrogance, and self-righteousness. The model for all Christians, and especially for those in positions of leadership or headship, is Jesus Himself:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Mt. 20:25-28).

The author concluded that back to creation, there are signs in the Scripture to suggest that God does intend women and men to be true partners in God’s mission. The creation story in Genesis chapter one affirms both male and female human beings were created in the image

of God (Ge 1:27). The version of creation in Genesis chapter two does make a distinction between man and woman, but the point of that distinction is that human creation is incomplete unless human beings exist in community. For God's mission and ministry gender is no restriction intended to limit significance or breadth of dimension in living for or serving Christ: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams" (Ac 2:17).

Now what is the barrier which hinders the ordination of women and women accepted in leadership position in so many minds? The first line of argument against women's ordination is usually biblical. Text such as 1Co 14:34-35 ('women should be silent in the church') or 1Ti 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9 (the office of bishop, elder, deacon should be held by one who is the 'husband of one wife') are lifted up as prohibiting women's from position of leadership and so forth.

Certainly, the church cannot ignore text such as these, but we should look at them in the light of the whole of Scripture. We must balance our consideration of them with biblical evidence that women did indeed serve as leaders in the community of faith: from Deborah and Huldah, to Phoebe, Priscilla and others. We should note that the Gospels and even Paul's letters are full of women who break out of traditional and accepted roles, and affirmed for it. Also through Church history women did not keep silent but faithfully bore witness to Jesus Christ in varieties of ways.

We must reckon with biblical witness that God constantly calls into service those whom we human beings have every reason (including 'religious reasons') to reject: from Deborah the woman to Jacob the scoundrel; from Matthew the tax collector to Paul the persecutor of Christians. In particular, we must balance human requirements for church with the clear affirmation that it is God's Holy Spirit which creates the church that calls people

(male and female) into it, and endows them with gifts for the upbuilding of the church as the Spirit wills.

The Assemblies of God have been blessed and must continue to be blessed by the ministry of God's gifted and commissioned daughters. To the degree that we are convinced of our Pentecostal distinctive— that it is God who divinely calls and supernaturally anoints for ministry. We must continue to be open to the full use of women's gifts in ministry and spiritual leadership. As we look on the field ripe for harvest, may we not be guilty of sending away any of the reapers God calls. Let us entrust to these women of God that sickle, and with our sincerest blessing thrust them out into the whitened field.

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