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WOMAN IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION

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

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

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

Women's Liberation Comments and the Beginnings of a Response

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

1 Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (1970), see pp. 51-54.
2 I Peter 3: 15.
3 Phyllis Trible, "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLI/1 (March 1973), p. 31.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

10 I Timothy 2: 14.

11 Jaroslav Pelikan (ed.), *Luther's Works, Vol. I. Lectures on Genesis* (1958), p. 116. Luther exhibits some interesting contradictions in his view of female status; notice the tension in the following statements:
(*a*) "it (referring to the female sex) is inferior to the male sex" (p. 69, comment on Genesis 1: 27.)
(*b*) "Eve was in no respect inferior to Adam, whether you count the qualities of the body or those of the mind" (p. 115, comment on Genesis 2: 18).
(*c*) "Satan sees that Adam is the more excellent . . ." (p. 151, comment on Genesis 3: 1).

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

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

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

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

16 Trible, *art. cit.*

17 *Ibid.*

Genesis 1 - 3[18]

Genesis One[19] gives us a theological overview of the whole created order. Although the account is rich in its full content, for our purposes it is necessary only to notice that the Lord God created 'man' or the *'ādām*, which term in Hebrew means human being and embodies the idea of both maleness and femaleness together. The *'ādām* was created in God's own image, after God's own likeness (Genesis 1: 26), and God said,

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

After consulting in his person, God did this, and the Scripture goes on to elaborate, ". . . in the image of God he created him, male[20] and female[21] created he them" (Genesis 1: 27). God blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion —together as the *'ādām* (verse 28). To the end of chapter one, although we are not told anything about the relationship between the male and female, there is certainly no hint whatsoever that one is in any way subordinate to the other. We are told only of *their* relationship to the rest of creation, that of stewardship under God and dominion over it; and that both male and female are created in the image and likeness of *'elōhîm*, God.

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

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

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

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

20 The Hebrew word for "male" is *zākār*.

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

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

Although woman is made from the same stuff[23] as the man, built up from his side,[24] her first and primal contact is with her Maker! Woman herself knew God before she knew her counterpart, the man. We read that "The LORD God . . . brought her to the man" (Gen. 2: 22). Woman, having been taken from man's side, does not in any way depend on the man for her relationship to God.

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

> This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
> She shall be called Woman (*'ishshâ*)
> Because she was taken out of Man (*'îsh*).

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

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

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

23 "Bone of my bones" means "my very own self".

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

25 Trible, *art. cit.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

33 Bailey, *art. cit.*

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

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

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

Paul and Women and the Church

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

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

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

I Timothy 2: 9-15

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

35 Luke 14: 4 is the exception; and the verb form is used as Jesus silences those who question him regarding his healing on the Sabbath.
36 G. Abbot-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (1964 edition), p. 227.
37 Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (E.T. 1972), p. 37.
38 *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I Corinthians 11: 2-16

Another behavioural injunction is given to the Corinthian church in a passage which reveals more of Paul's thoughts on the relationship between husbands and wives[44] in the church. Paul has just commended the Corinthians for holding fast the traditions that he delivered to them or the essentials of the Faith (verse 2). Could he be commending them for holding to our "large themes and truths" before he moves on to a matter of a different order? It is fairly certain that it is not so much the actual veil that Paul is concerned about here as the implications of its removal in a public gathering.[45] Scholars are not agreed on customs concerning the head covering of women in first century Corinth. However, we do know that Corinth did have a considerable number of pagan cult priestesses and a far-flung reputation for licentious living. It is possible that in a new Christian church which offered so much in terms of spiritual and personal liberty the women embracing this new religion would have to take care

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

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

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

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

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

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

God→ Christ→ Man→ Woman

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

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

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

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

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

47 Nor woman of man.

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

49 *Ibid.*

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

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

I Corinthians 14 and Pauline Principles

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

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

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

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

The same commentator also points out that in Paul's day "to have asked

50 Ellicott, *op. cit.*, p. 328.
51 Abbott-Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 405, 406.
52 Marsh, P. *art. cit.*, p. 407.
53 *Ibid.*
54 *Ibid.*

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

55 *Ibid.*
56 *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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