

VII  
A BRIEF ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLICAL DATA  
REGARDING THE ROLE OF WOMAN

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**Creation of Woman—Her Status**

Two passages in the opening chapters of Genesis deal with the origin of woman. The first forms a part of the sublime summarization of Creation; the second is found in the supplementary account which supplies the details of her creation (Gen 1:26-28; 2: 18-24).<sup>1</sup>

In the first statement the divine determination to create the human race is stated: “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image [*selem*], after our likeness [*demûth*]; and let them have dominion. . .’” The resultant act of creation is then summarized: “So God created man in his own image [*selem*], in the image [*selem*] of God he created him; male [*zakar*] and female [*negebah*] he created them.”

The term “man” [*adam*] is being used in its generic sense. Moses first observes the creation of the human order, and then notes that mankind was created in two sexes—male and female. It is significant to observe that both *sexes* are said to be created “in the image of God.” Whatever the implications of the phrase, both sexes were created reflecting that divine “image.”

In the supplementary account of the creation it is explained that the two sexes were not created at the same moment, nor in the same manner. The male (later called Adam) was created first. “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7).

Later Moses records the divine intention to make a companion for Adam. “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a *helper fit for him* [*ezer kenegdô*].’” Again, after the naming of the creatures by Adam, the statement is made: “But for the man there was not found a *helper fit for him* [*ezer kenegdô*]” (Gen 2:18, 20).

The Lexicons list *ezer* as meaning “help,” “succor” or in a concrete sense “one who helps,” “helper.”<sup>2</sup> *Neged* with the preposition *ke* is defined as meaning, “according to what is in front of = corresponding to.” The meaning of Gen 2:18 is thus rendered, “I will make him . . . a help *corresponding to* him, i.e. equal and adequate to himself.”<sup>3</sup> Or, in this context the phrase may be defined to mean “as his counterpart” with the extended sense of “fitting him, suiting him.”<sup>4</sup>

The LXX reading for Gen 2:18 is *boēthon katfauton*. *Kata* used in comparisons is given the sense of “corresponding with, after the fashion of.”<sup>5</sup> Thus the phrase may read, “A helper corresponding with him,” or “after the fashion of him,” In vs. 20 the phrase is *boēthos homoios autō*. The basic meaning of *homoios* is “like,” “similar.” It can also have the meaning “of the same nature.”<sup>6</sup> It can also have the extended meaning, “of the same rank or station.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The RSV is cited throughout.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Boston, 1907); Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Lexicon In Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden, 1958).

<sup>3</sup>Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

<sup>4</sup>Koehler and Baumgartner.

<sup>5</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* 9<sup>th</sup> rev. ed., (Oxford, 1940 [1958]).

<sup>6</sup>William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. (Chicago, 1952).

<sup>7</sup>Liddell and Scott.

The simple sense of “like” seems adequate for the context, although the latter meaning could easily apply. The Lord designed to make a helper for the man—like him, or similar to him. After viewing the creatures brought before him and after naming them, Adam senses that there are none similar to himself, of the same kind of nature. There were certainly none of his rank and station in the creation.

At this point of realization and loneliness “the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman [*lišshahah*], because she was taken out of Man [*lišh*]” (Gen 2:21-23).

Inspiration does not disclose the reason why the woman was created in this manner rather than in the manner by which the man was created. The first man was formed from the dust; the woman was derived in part from the man and “built” [*banah*] into a person. On the basis of this brief record some observations may be made:

**1. The woman is of the same flesh and substance as the man.** She is neither inferior nor superior in substance. She is *homoios*—similar to man. Adam acknowledges the woman to be “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen 2:23).

**2. Woman is man’s counterpart.** The unique manner of creating the woman would underscore the true kinship she was to have with man. Generically speaking, man is in two sexes; hence, he is incomplete without the woman. The two complement each other to make the whole. Woman is the essential complement or counterpart to the man. No doubt this particular manner of creation was designed also to undergird the unity of the marriage bond (“they become one flesh” [Gen 2:24]).

**3. Equality is implied.** Equality of person is suggested by the portion of the man’s body which was used in the creation of the woman. She is derived neither from his foot nor from his head, but from his side.<sup>8</sup>

**4. Her name implies an equality.** Adam’s statement upon receiving the woman indicates that he recognized her as a true complement to himself. “This at last [*zo’th happa’am*]” or “now at length” seems to be an allusion to his previous survey and naming of the animals, at which time Adam realized there were none similar to himself. “Now at length” the Lord has presented another being whom he recognizes as being fully of his kind. Doubtless being informed by the Creator of her origin, Adam promptly names her “Woman,” “because she was taken out of Man” (Gen 2:23).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>“God himself gave Adam a companion. He provided ‘an help meet for him.’—a helper corresponding to him,—one who was fitted to be his companion, and who could be one with him in love and sympathy. Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self; showing the close union and the affectionate attachment that should exist in this relation.”—PP 46.

<sup>9</sup>The Hebrew words for “man” and “woman” [*ish*, *ishshah*] appear to have different etymologies, but reflect (whatever was the first man’s language) Adam’s understanding of the origin of the woman. The term *ishshah*, as far as kinship of sound is concerned, is a feminizing of *ish* (man), and carries the sense of “she-man” or “female-man.” The English term “woman” has a similar sense, being a contraction of the Anglo-Saxon “wombman,” that is, “the man with the womb.” (*The Pulpit Commentary*, exposition on Gen 1:23; Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible Containing: the Old and New Testaments . . . With a Commentary and Critical Notes* [New York, n.d.], vol. 1, exposition on Gen 1:23.) The sense of the term thus not only states the derivation of woman (*gunē ex andros*, 1 Cor 11:8), but it also may imply equality. Woman is the female aspect of man in the generic sense; he is the male aspect.

Inasmuch as the woman was created in “the image of God,” of the same substance as man, to be his counterpart, it may be concluded that the Creation account clearly indicates the divine intention that woman was to be viewed on an equality with the man.

There are, however, other factors in the account that suggest that a certain relationship was to be sustained between the two.

**1. The priority of Creation.** Adam was created first, Eve second (1 Tim 2:13).

**2. Dependence.** A certain degree of dependence of the woman upon the man is implied. The woman was made from the man. She is presented to the man. She is named by the man.

**3. Purpose of Creation.** The scripture record is that God purposed to make man “a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18).<sup>10</sup>

In the light of all the facts pertaining to the creation of woman, care must be taken not to read into these three points dealing with relationships more than the Creator intended. Priority of creation may indicate a certain headship of man in the relationship between the two sexes even before the entrance of sin. (Cf. 1 Cor 11:3.) There is also a certain relationship of dependence set forth as Eve is entrusted to Adam. However, neither the headship nor the dependence aspects of the relationship should be construed to indicate inferiority on the part of the woman. Difference of function does not necessarily indicate inferiority of being as some might infer. Neither is superior nor inferior to the other, for both are made in the image of God, and each has a given role to fulfill in the Creator’s purpose.

Nor is woman’s role as “helper” to be misconstrued to mean that she was intended merely as the slave or plaything of the man. Rather it is to be understood that man is in a sense incomplete. He is lacking a counterpart. Woman fills that need and enables man to fill the Creator’s objectives for the race. “She is the kind of help man needs, agreeing with him mentally, physically, spiritually. She is not an inferior being.”<sup>11</sup> The apostle Paul, while recognizing a certain headship of the man, states the necessary, mutual, interdependence of both. “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God” (1 Cor 11: 11-12).

### **Effects of Sin and Judgment on Woman’s Status**

The third chapter of Genesis records the entrance of sin into the earth. Eve was deceived into partaking of the forbidden fruit, and in turn became Satan’s agent to tempt Adam also to sin. Whereas Eve was deceived, Adam knew what he was doing, though neither scarcely could conceive the enormous consequences that would issue from their actions (Cf. 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Tim 2: 14).

The judgment that was pronounced by the Creator upon the woman was as follows: “To the woman he said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you’” (Gen 3: 16). Two of the phrases are pertinent to this study: (1) “your desire [*teshûgah*] shall be for your husband,” and (2) “he shall rule [*mashal*] over you.”

*Teshugah* is defined as “impulse, urge,” or “longing.”<sup>12</sup> It occurs three times in the OT. In addition to the passage under consideration it is used to describe the passion of a figurative beast

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Paul: “Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Cor 11:9).

<sup>11</sup>H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus, OH, 1942), p. 130.

<sup>12</sup>Koehler and Baumgartner; Brown, Driver, and Briggs.

about to spring upon its prey (Gen 4:7). Last, it is used to describe the yearning of a man for a woman: “I am my beloved’s, and his desire [*teshûgah*] is for me” (Cant 7:10).

Some have suggested that *teshugah* in the case of God’s judgment upon the woman was an implantation of a yearning or desire that the woman would have for the man “bordering upon disease”—a “morbid” yearning that she cannot banish from her nature, no matter how hard she may try to do so.<sup>13</sup>

Although the judgments pronounced on the pair are in one sense punishments, yet from another perspective they appear to have been designed to help mankind in the new situation of sin.<sup>14</sup> Sin is a divisive element tending to disunity and dissension. Faultfinding and rebellion between the pair and their posterity might have led to a division of the sexes which would have further perverted the Creation of God. It may be suggested that since the term *teshugah* is used in a healthy manner in the Song of Solomon, that the judgment on Eve (representing her sex) was in effect a strengthening of that desire (already present from the original Creation) to be in a bond of union with man. Regardless of what effects sin may have on the relationship of the sexes in the future, the two cannot separate to live apart independent of each other because of a deep, underlying attraction that continues to draw and to hold the two together.

“He shall rule over you.” *Mashal* consistently carries the sense of “rule,” “reign,” “have dominion over.” It is the term commonly used with reference to kings and those in position of authority. The rule may be benign or harsh depending upon the ruler; but the term itself does not imply harshness, but that of governing.

As has been previously observed, there was a certain headship accorded to man in the original creation. Now in the judgment on the first woman that headship is fixed. She is not thereby made inferior to the man, nor he superior, as far as their quality is concerned. Rather, the relationship between the two has been fixed. In this Judgment woman is placed under the care, protection, and government of the man. A certain right of independent action has been forfeited by Eve’s sin. Her status is now one of dependence; man is charged with her care. While, in a sense, this is a judgment, it would appear also to be a “confirmation and perpetuation of that authority which had been assigned to man at the creation,”<sup>15</sup> but which has now been made imperative in order to maintain a degree of harmony and stability between the sexes in the sin situation.<sup>16</sup>

Some may feel that this judgment which defines a relationship of headship to the man and dependence and submission to the woman is or was intended to be confined to the marital situation only, since it was in such a situation that the Judgment was given. Under inspiration the

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<sup>13</sup>So C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, comment on Genesis 3:16 (Grand Rapids, MI, 1949), vol. 1; Leupold, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup>For example, the judgment of hard work to wrest a living has proved an inestimable blessing to man in his sin state; whereas, idleness has been a curse (Gen 3:17-19).

<sup>15</sup>*The Pulpit Commentary*, exposition of Genesis 3:16.

<sup>16</sup>“In the creation, God had made her the equal of Adam. Had they remained obedient to God—in harmony with his great law of love—they would ever have been in harmony with each other; but sin had brought discord, and now their union could be maintained and harmony preserved only by submission on the part of the one or the other. Eve had been the first in transgression; and she had fallen into temptation by separating from her companion, contrary to the divine direction. It was by her solicitation that Adam sinned, and she was now placed in subjection to her husband. Had the principles enjoined in the law of God been cherished by the fallen race, this sentence, though growing out of the results of sin, would have proved a blessing to them; but man’s abuse of the supremacy thus given him, has too often rendered the lot of woman very bitter, and made her life a burden.”—PP 58-59.

apostle Paul, however, evidently understood the judgment to apply to womankind.<sup>17</sup> He states, “[They] should be subordinate, as even *the law* says” (1 Cor 14:34). To the best knowledge of this writer, the Mosaic codes do not make such a statement. The term “law” is probably referring to the books of Moses. Commentators generally agree that Paul is alluding to the divine judgment on Eve (Gen 3:16). The headship of the man and the dependence of the woman upon the man is the consistent point of view set forth in the Scriptures from this time on (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22-23; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

While the divine judgment placed woman in the care and government of man, such a relationship in no wise rendered her inferior. The arrangement was evidently designed to mitigate as far as possible the disruptive effects of sin. That the relationship has been abused none can deny. But abuse has not voided the divine decree defining this relationship. Where Christian principles have been cherished, woman’s sphere in human life has been a happy and useful one.<sup>18</sup> “Wherever its [Christianity’s] teachings and spirit prevail, she is made the loved companion, confidante and adviser of her husband.”<sup>19</sup>

### **Status of Woman in the Biblical Instruction**

In the role of parent equal honor is accorded the mother and the father. In the heart of the Decalogue is the fifth commandment. It heads the list of obligations to one’s fellowmen. Here is enshrined the Creator’s high regard for the mother. “Honor your father *and your mother*, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you” (Exod 20:12).<sup>20</sup>

In a later statement of instruction the Lord reverses the order of the parents. “Say to all the congregation of the people of Israel, You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy. Every one of you *shall revere his mother* and his father, and you shall keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19:2-3).<sup>21</sup>

Children are enjoined to listen to instruction from both parents. “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and *reject not your mother’s teaching*” (Prov 1:8; see also 6:20,). A curse is pronounced on unruly children who refuse to obey either parent. “The eye that mocks a father and *scorns to obey a mother* will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures” (Prov 30:17).

Both parents were to be respected even in their old age. “Hearken to your father who begot you; and *do not despise your mother when she is old*” (Prov 23:22).<sup>22</sup> Judgment is threatened for one who curses his parents. “If one curses his father *or his mother*, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness” (Prov 20:20). In the theocracy that judgment was death. “Whoever curses his father *or his mother* shall be put to death” (Exod 21:17; cf. Lev 20:9). Death might also be the penalty exacted upon an incorrigible offspring who refused to “obey the voice of his father *or the voice of his mother*” (Deut 21:18-21).

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<sup>17</sup>Some commentators interpret these Pauline passages to apply to the relation between a married woman and her husband rather than to women in general.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Paul’s counsel for the husband and wife (Eph 5:21-33).

<sup>19</sup>“Woman,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, (1915).

<sup>20</sup>This respect for both parents is reflected also in the NT. Cf. Eph 6:1-2; Col 3:20.

<sup>21</sup>One of the curses later recited by Israel in Canaan pertained to those who dishonored their parents (Deut 27:16).

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Jesus’ care of Mary at the cross (John 19:26-27).

It would seem that such a high regard for the position and instruction of the mother would engender in each generation of young people a high respect for womanhood in general among those who served God.

The women of Israel appear to have mingled freely with the men in the social gatherings of the nation. It was required of all males to appear before the Lord three times a year (Passover week, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles, see Exod 23:14-17; 34:23), yet the brief records indicate that wives, boys and girls, widows, orphans, and slaves of both sexes attended these festivals (Deut 16:11, 14; 1 Sam 1:1-2; Luke 2:41-42).

Israelite women were not to be kept in ignorance regarding their religious faith. Moses instructed that every seven years the priests were to publicly read the law at the Feast of Tabernacles to the assembled people—"men, women, and little ones, and the sojourner within your towns" (Deut 31:10-13). It is recorded of Ezra that he presented the law "before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding" (Neh 8:2-3).

Women were present at wedding festivities. Although it seems to have been the task of the groom to provide for the wedding feast, yet in the one instance recorded in the NT a woman freely acted on her own to have the supply of wine replenished (John 2:1-11).

It may be interred in the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that women moved about in public without face veils. Abraham feared that the Egyptians would observe Sarah's beauty. And the record is that "the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh" (Gen 12:14-15). When Eliezer met Rebekah beside a well in Haran, she was apparently without a veil, for the beauty of her features is referred to. She also appears to have traveled without a veil in Eliezer's caravan until she saw Isaac in the distance, at which time she discreetly veiled herself (Gen 24:15-16, 63-65). It may also be inferred that Rachel, as a shepherdess, was without a veil. Jacob publicly kissed her without shame in the presence of the other shepherds (Gen 29:9-11).

While the biblical picture of womanhood in Israel is a high one, it does not follow that in every department of life she functioned as a full equal. The overtones of headship and dependence carry throughout. However, it is not to be inferred that God thereby intended her demeaning or degradation. It may provide further insight to survey some of the civil and religious statutes as they related to women. These items are sometimes cited to prove that women were considered inferior.

## **Laws of Inheritance**

Women normally did not receive an inheritance—the possessions going upon the death of the father to the sons. However, if a father died and had no sons, his inheritance was "to pass to his daughter." If there were no daughters in the immediate family, the inheritance was to pass to a kinsman on the father's side (Num 27:6-11). On the surface this seems to imply a complete disregard for the man's widow and her care. If the disposal of the property belonging to Elimelech is typical, it may be inferred that in actual practice the property was held by the widow, and could have been *sold* to the husband's near kinsman (Ruth 4:3, 5). Job, who lived prior to the Mosaic legislation, chose to give an inheritance to each of his daughters as well as to his sons (Job 42:15).

## Divorce

In the Mosaic legislation permission was granted a man to divorce his wife (Deut 24:1-4). From this it has been inferred, “Her husband can repudiate her, but she cannot claim a divorce.”<sup>23</sup> However, actual practice may not have been so one-sided. Jesus referred to the possible divorce of a man *by his wife*. “And if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:12).<sup>24</sup>

## Punishments

In acts of adultery both the woman as well as the man were similarly punished (Lev 20:10-21; Deut 22:22-27). “Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death” (Lev 20:10).<sup>25</sup> Both men and women were punished by death if they attempted to practice spiritism (Lev 20:27).

## Slavery

Sometimes the following portion of the Mosaic code is cited to show a woman’s inferior status in the Israelite economy.<sup>26</sup> “When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do.” This seems to indicate that the father had absolute control over a daughter and could sell her into perpetual slavery on a whim, if he so chose. It is not questioned that parents had authority over their children. But in actual practice parents in financial distress could and did sell *sons* as well as daughters (Neh 5:5, 8). It is doubtful that Hebrew parents sold either their daughters or their sons unless dire circumstances forced them to do so for survival.

The law cited, however, is not dealing with true slavery. In this instance the daughter is “sold” to become either the wife (probably a secondary wife) of the owner or the wife of his son.

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<sup>23</sup>Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel* (New York, 1961), p. 39.

<sup>24</sup>In some instances a husband was never permitted to divorce his wife (Deut 22:28-29). Rabbinical Judaism permitted a girl who was betrothed in her minority (up to 12 years and one day) the right of refusal. Before two witnesses she could adjure the contract and be freed of either her betrothal or her marriage state without the need of a bill of divorce. (The Mishnah, *Yebamoth*, 13.1, tr. Herbert Danby [London, 1933], p. 237; Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ* [Grand Rapids, MI, 1953], p. 144.)

A wife also had the right of insisting on being divorced by her husband if he was afflicted with boils or leprosy or was engaged in the livelihood of tanner or coppersmith. (The Mishnah, *Kethuboth* 7.10, tr. Herbert Danby, p. 255.) In addition to these instances Edersheim notes that divorce was obligatory if either party became heretical or ceased to profess Judaism. (Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 158.)

According to the Mishnah, a “woman may write her own bill of divorce.” “The woman herself may bring her own bill of divorce, save only that she must say, ‘It was written in my presence and it was signed in my presence.’” (*The Mishnah*, Gittin 2.5, 7, tr. Herbert Danby, pp. 308-9.) If the wife might write out her own bill and present it, it may be inferred that she might at times have initiated the moves to have her husband give her a bill of divorce.

Josephus records the instance in which Salome, the sister of Herod the Great, sent her husband a bill of divorce “and dissolved her marriage with him.” He notes, “this was not according to the Jewish laws: for with us it is lawful for a husband to do so; but a wife, if she departs from her husband, cannot of herself be married to another, unless her former husband put her away.” (*Antiquities*, XV. 7.10, *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, tr. William Whiston, [London, n.d.], pp. 410-11.) Perhaps Josephus states general custom. It is evident from the Mishnah citations that there were situations in which a wife might cause her marriage to be dissolved.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Jesus’ prevention of a miscarriage of justice with regard to the woman taken in adultery. The other guilty party was purposely kept from the scene in an attempt to entangle Jesus in answering to His ruin or discredit (John 8:1-11).

<sup>26</sup>O. J. Baab, “Woman,” *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (New York), vol. 4.

It she did not please the “buyer,” he might let her be redeemed by another Hebrew, but he was forbidden to sell her to foreigners. If he gave her as a wife to his son, he was “to deal with her as with a daughter.” If he chose to keep her for himself and yet marry another, he was ordered to “not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights.” “And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.” Thus, if the owner did not fulfill his obligations, the woman became a free woman, and the father was not required to refund the money for which she was “sold” (Exod 21:7-11).

With regard to arranging for a marriage of a son, the records indicate that the father usually led out in securing a bride.<sup>27</sup> In the absence of the father, the mother might do so.<sup>28</sup> Naomi sought to provide a husband for her daughter-in-law (Ruth 3:1-2). It would also appear that the father might choose to whom he would give his daughter in marriage (Josh 15:16-17; 1 Sam 18:17). However, it does not follow that this indicated an arbitrary exercise of authority. The will of the daughter also appears to have been consulted. Rebekah is asked by her family, ““Will you go with this man?’ She said, ‘I will go’” (Gen 24:58).<sup>29</sup>

## General Worship

It was but natural for the husband as head of the home to be also the priest of the family and thus to lead out in the worship of the family. As far as the records go, it would appear that in the patriarchal and Mosaic periods the husband offered the required sacrifices, but not the wives.<sup>30</sup> Women attended the festivals and ate of the sacrificial meals.<sup>31</sup> It was customary for women to worship and to pray at the sanctuary, and to support the temple with gifts.<sup>32</sup>

## Ritual Purification After Childbirth

According to the ritual laws a woman who gave birth was ritually unclean and spent a period of 40 days in a state of uncleanness if she gave birth to a boy and twice that long (80 days) if she gave birth to a girl (Lev 12:1-8). Some cite this custom as evidence of the inferior status of women in Israel—that daughters were less desirable than sons.<sup>33</sup>

The birth of a son was considered a cause of great rejoicing (Jer 20:15; Job 3:3),<sup>34</sup> but it does not follow that the birth of a girl was a sad event among God’s people. No doubt the fact that the son would carry on the family line, and the hope that some son would be the Messiah affected the picture. But a happy family of boys and girls was prized. David prayed, “May our

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<sup>27</sup>So Abraham and Judah (Gen 24; 38:6).

<sup>28</sup>Hagar secured a wife for her son (Gen 21:21).

<sup>29</sup>“ . . . the woman had, in case of betrothal or marriage, to give her own free and expressed consent, without which a union was invalid.” (Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 143.)

<sup>30</sup>Noah, Gen 8:20; Abraham, Gen 12:7-8; Jacob, Gen 35:1; Job, Job 1:5.

<sup>31</sup>Hannah, 1 Sam 1:3-5; ct. Lev 7:11-15; Deut 16:1-15.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Hannah, 1Sam 1:9-19; the widow and her coins, Luke 21:1-4. Solomon’s temple contained two courts—a “great court” for the worshipers and an inner court for the priests (2 Chr 4:9). This being the case, men and women must have worshiped the Lord together in this court. The later temple constructed by Herod had four courts: the court of the Gentiles, the court of the women, the court of men, and the court of the priests. Women could approach no nearer the altar of burnt offering and the sacred apartments than the court of the women. Does this fact reflect rabbinical restriction on an earlier freedom enjoyed by Israelite women? (Siegfried H. Horn, “Temple,” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*.)

<sup>33</sup>Baah.

<sup>34</sup>Cf. Hannah’s longing for a son (1 Sam 1:11).



sons in their youth be like plants full grown, our daughters like corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace” (Ps 144:12).

The inspired pen recorded of Job’s daughters born after his affliction, “In all the land there were no women so fair as Job’s daughters.” So proud was he of them that he “gave them inheritance among their brothers” (Job 42:15). When the women of Bethlehem rejoiced with Naomi over the birth of Obed, they did not fail to remind her of the value of Ruth, her daughter-in-law. She “is more to you than seven sons” (Ruth 4:15).

The ritual law does not state the reasons for the varying length of time in the purifying period. We do not know the “whys” and “wherefores” of many aspects of the ritual. But in this instance it is not necessary to construe that it reflects the attitude of the Israelites toward their offspring. Nor does it reflect the divine attitude, for both sexes were created in the image of God, and both are the recipients of the same grace (Gen 1:26; 3:15; 1 Pet 3:7).<sup>35</sup>

In concluding these first three sections of this survey a few observations and comments are in order:

1. It would appear that God created the woman to be an equal with the man, although there was to be a headship on his part.

2. Judgment due to the sin situation has confirmed that headship of the man and the dependence of the woman. For her best good and for the best ends of the race this was to be a governing relationship of loving care and protection. The woman was not thus inferior nor the husband superior. But this relationship would enable the race to come as close as it could in reaching the divine ideals. True love for the woman would have rendered her lot a happy one.

3. We may infer that the sinning of both men and women has resulted in the degradation at times of the woman at the hands of the man. Polygamy and divorce were a part of this degradation.

4. The Mosaic instruction regarding the role of woman preserves to a large degree God’s ideal for her place in life. The OT ideal shows woman to be highly honored and respected and enjoying a wide freedom of action and usefulness.

5. In considering the Mosaic instruction and the OT picture of woman two points must be kept in mind:

A. When the Mosaic instruction is given (fifteenth century B.C.) there is an accommodation of the divine instruction to the deep-seated social customs of the surrounding cultures. There is an adaptation of the divine will. For example, slavery, a well-established social institution is not abolished, but the condition of the slave is somewhat mitigated. We may infer that there is a similar accommodation to custom with respect to the role of woman.

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<sup>35</sup>One explanation for the unequal time for purification is as follows: “The reason why the duration of the mother’s uncleanness is twice as long at a girl’s birth as at a boy’s would appear to be that the uncleanness attached to the child as well as to the mother, but as the boy was placed in a state of ceremonial purity at once by the act of circumcision, which took place on the eighth day, he thereupon ceased to be unclean, and the mother’s uncleanness alone remained; whereas in the case of a girl, both mother and child were unclean during the period that the former was ‘in the blood of her purifying,’ and therefore that period had to be doubly long. See Luke ii. 20 [sic; Luke 2:22], where the right reading is, ‘When the days of *their* purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished.’ For eight days the infant Saviour submitted to legal uncleanness in ‘fulfilling all righteousness’ (Matt. iii. 15), and therefore the whole forty days were spoken of as ‘the days of *their* purification’” (*Pulpit Commentary*, exposition on Leviticus 12:5).

B. The second point is similar. There is a certain accommodation of the instruction to “the hardness” of the human heart. Some things were permitted which were not necessarily endorsed. “From the beginning it was not so.”<sup>36</sup> We must recognize a certain “times of this ignorance” which would give way to a more perfect understanding as progressive revelation disclosed more clearly the perspectives of the divine heart and as the conscience of mankind would become more enlightened.<sup>37</sup> One authority comments significantly, “Every decline in her [woman’s] status in the Hebrew commonwealth was due to the incursion of foreign influence.”<sup>38</sup>

### **Roles Women Filled in Biblical Times**

The normal role of women in the history of the biblical records was naturally that which lay closest to her sex—that of wife and mother. The preparation of food for the family meals and the serving of it was a daily task,<sup>39</sup> also the care and early training of the children (1 Sam 1:22; 2:19; Ruth 4:16, etc.).<sup>40</sup> Another daily task usually devolving upon the woman was the drawing of water for the family needs (Gen 24:16; John 4:7).<sup>41</sup>

Although the headship of the husband was recognized by the wife,<sup>42</sup> yet in the godly household his headship was not one of stifling suppression. There was not only respect for her person and activities, but also considerable freedom and team approach to the family plans. It was Sarah who first proposed that Abraham marry her slave, Hagar. She also requested that Hagar and Ishmael be dismissed from the encampment (Gen 16:2; 21:10-12). The tender care of Elkanah for his childless wife is seen in his words to her: “Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?” (1 Sam 1:8).

When Nabal refused to furnish David’s troops with food, his wife Abigail did not hesitate to assume the reins of authority to avert the massacre she knew would result (1 Sam 25). The “wealthy woman” of Shunem regularly invited Elisha to stop at her house for entertainment whenever he was in the area. It was she who both invited him and proposed to her husband that they construct a room for the prophet, to which her husband consented (2 Kgs 4:8-10).

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<sup>36</sup>Part of Jesus’ statement pertaining to divorce in the OT (Matt 19:8).

<sup>37</sup>Eidersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 142.

<sup>38</sup>“Woman,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* (1915), 5:3101.

<sup>39</sup>Jesus referred to women “grinding at the mill” which was probably a daily task (Matt 24:41). For other instances of food preparation and serving see Gen 18:6; 27:14; Luke 10:38-42; John 12:2.

It must not be construed that men—at least in certain periods of biblical history—were ignorant of the culinary art or felt it was beneath their dignity to serve a meal. Abraham personally served his three guests with the food that Sarah and his servant had prepared (Gen 18:8). Jacob knew the art of making red pottage (Gen 25:29). Esau also knew how to prepare “savory food” which his father enjoyed (Gen 27:4, 31). Gideon prepared a meal for his angel visitor (Judg 6: 19). The Master Himself twice miraculously provided a meal for the multitudes which His disciples assisted in serving (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-9).

<sup>40</sup>Again it should be noted that the father was also deeply involved in the training of his family. God said of Abraham, “I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord . . .” (Gen 18:19). Paul indicated the characteristics of a godly father when he compared his manner of labor with that of a father: “for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God . . .” (1 Thess 2:11-12). The apostle also refers to the “discipline” that a worthy father will administer to his children when it is needed (Heb 12:9).

<sup>41</sup>Male servants might also perform this task (Luke 22:10).

<sup>42</sup>“So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (1 Pet 3:5-6).

Beyond the limits of the usual home duties women sometimes occupied other roles: (1) shepherding,<sup>43</sup> (2) exercising rulership as a judge,<sup>44</sup> (3) a position of leadership in the Exodus of Israel,<sup>45</sup> (4) gleaning in the fields,<sup>46</sup> (5) counseling,<sup>47</sup> (6) ruling as queens,<sup>48</sup> (7) construction workers,<sup>49</sup> (8) business (Prov 31:10-31).<sup>50</sup>

It should also be observed that the odes of Deborah, Hannah, and Mary of Nazareth indicate the degree of intellectual culture a woman of Israel might attain (Judg 5; 1 Sam 2:1-10; Luke 1:46-55).

While the men of Israel led out in the religious activities of the nation, the records indicate that women at times shared in this area of life to a considerable extent: (1) exercised the prophetic gift,<sup>51</sup> (2) contributed and helped prepare materials for the tabernacle,<sup>52</sup> (3) contributed

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<sup>43</sup>Usually a man's task, but sometimes performed by women. Rachel and the daughters of Jethro are examples (Gen 29:9; Exod 2:16-19).

<sup>44</sup>Deborah (Judg 4:4). Barak refused to fight without her presence.

<sup>45</sup>"I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam" (Mic 6:4).

<sup>46</sup>Ruth (Ruth 2:2, 7, 21-23).

<sup>47</sup>Wise woman of Tekoah employed by Joab to persuade David to bring Absalom back from exile (2 Sam 14). See also the actions of the wise woman of Abel which averted the destruction of her city (2 Sam 20:15-22).

<sup>48</sup>Athaliah by usurption in Judah (2 Kgs 11:1-3). Her mother, Jezebel, exercised considerable power in the northern kingdom although not sole ruler (1 Kgs 16:31-32; 2 Kgs 9:22). In other lands: the queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1); Candace, queen of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:27).

<sup>49</sup>Some women assisted in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem under the general supervision of Nehemiah. The record is, "Next to him Shallum the son of Hallohesh, ruler of half the district of Jerusalem, repaired, *he and his daughters*" (Neh 3:12).

<sup>50</sup>This ode in praise of the virtuous wife observes her business sense and ability (vss. 16, 24). Lydia, a Gentile "worshiper of God" and later a Christian convert, was a "seller of purple goods" (Acts 16:14).

<sup>51</sup>A number of women are listed as exercising this gift: Miriam (Exod 15:20), Deborah (Judg 4:4), Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14), Isaiah's wife (Isa 8:3), Anna (Luke 2:36), the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:9). Some women such as Noadiah are referred to as exercising a counterfeit prophetic gift (Neh 6:14; Ezek 13:17). Satan has also used some women as spirit mediums (1 Sam 28:7; Acts 16:16). In the time of Paul he implies that women might pray and prophesy in the public service (1 Cor 11:5).

It is sometimes suggested that God calls a woman to the prophetic office only if there are no suitable men available. This may be inferring more than the records indicate. Huldah was contemporary with Jeremiah and possibly with Habakkuk and Zephaniah. In the eighteenth year of his reign Josiah became acquainted with the contents of "the book of the law" which the high priest had recovered in the temple (2 Kgs 22:3, 8). At this time Jeremiah had been active for about five years, having begun his work in Josiah's thirteenth year (Jer 1:2). However, it was to Huldah that the king sent his deputies to "inquire of the Lord for me" (2 Kgs 22:12-20). Why did he not consult Jeremiah or possibly Zephaniah or Habakkuk?

Miriam the prophetess was associated in leadership with Moses and Aaron. She and Aaron could say, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" (Num 12:2). In these two instances of Miriam and Huldah we have women prophets functioning in association with and at the same time as men who also had the prophetic gift. Evidently they were called to the prophetic office because there was a need for their witness and not because there were no suitable men available at the time.

Women may have been recipients of other "spiritual gifts." Women were in the upper chamber when the Pentecostal outpouring occurred and believers spoke in languages other than their own (Acts 1:14). Peter declared that the miracle was a fulfillment of Joel's prediction that the spirit would be poured out on "your sons and your daughters" (Acts 2:17).

<sup>52</sup>"And they came, . . . and brought the Lord's offering to be used for the tent of meeting. . . . So they came, both men and women." "And all women who had ability spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun in blue and purple and scarlet stuff and fine twined linen; all the women whose hearts were moved with ability spun the goats' hair" (Exod 35:21-22, 25-26).

financial support to care for the personal needs of Jesus and the twelve,<sup>53</sup> (4) ministered to the needs of the stranger, the poor, and the sick<sup>54</sup> (the office of the deaconess may have been established in the apostolic age),<sup>55</sup> (5) made their homes available for religious meetings or for workers' headquarters,<sup>56</sup> (6) did Christian witnessing and instructing.<sup>57</sup>

A number of women among God's people gained considerable renown. In addition to some previously mentioned we may cite Jael whose memory as a "war heroine" was perpetuated in the Song of Deborah. (Judg 5:24.) Esther became a queen of the Persian ruler, Xerxes (Esth 2:17). The writer of Hebrew lists two women in the "Hall of Faith" as examples of persons exercising genuine faith—Sarah and Rahab (Heb 11:11, 31).

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<sup>53</sup>“Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, . . . and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means” (Luke 8:1-3; ct. Martha's hospitality, Luke 10:38-42).

<sup>54</sup>The outstanding example in the NT was Dorcas who “was full of good works and acts of charity” as was evidenced in part by the “coats and garments” which she had made for the unfortunate. To this writer's knowledge the resurrection of Dorcas and that of Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12) are the only two recorded in the apostolic age, after Christ's ascension.

The apostle Paul's guidelines for accepting a widow into the number cared for by the church indicates that Christian women were to be noted for this type of ministry: “And she must be well attested for her good deeds, as one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the feet of saints, relieved the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way” (1 Tim 5:10). The gracious hospitality of women has often benefited God's servants. Cf. the widow's care of Elijah (1 Kgs 17:8-24).

<sup>55</sup>Phoebe, a member of the church at Cenchreae, is referred to by Paul as “a deaconess [*diakonos*] of the church at Cenchreae” (Rom 16:1). This is the same term in the Greek for the office of “deacon” (1 Tim 3:8-13). If the apostle is not attesting a similar office for women, he is indicating that Phoebe was ministering in some capacity to the needs of the church. “She has been a helper of many and of myself as well” (Rom 16:2).

<sup>56</sup>The “house of Mary,” the mother of John Mark, seems to have been a natural center for believers in the early church. Immediately upon his miraculous release from prison Peter went to this home and found believers gathered there praying for him. Lydia urges Paul and his company to stay in her home while they evangelize Philippi: “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” Luke adds, “And she prevailed upon us” (Acts 16:15). Priscilla and Aquila made their home a church center (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:3-5).

<sup>57</sup>Chief among the witnessing women of the NT is Priscilla. She and her husband were effective in bringing the learned Apollos to Christ. “They took him and expounded to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:24-26). Paul addressed this couple as “my fellow workers in Christ Jesus [*tous sunergous mou en Xristō Iēsou*], . . . to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks” (Rom 16:3-4). In the same list of greetings to the church at Rome he notes two other women, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who are designated as “those workers in the Lord [*tas kopiōsas en kuriō*]” (Rom 16:12).

In counseling Titus Paul advises him to bid the older women “to teach what is good [*kalodidaskalos* (adj.), teaching what is good; (n.), teacher of virtue].” Furthermore, they are to “train [*sōphronizō*, literally to bring someone to his senses, but simply: encourage, advise, urge] the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God may not be discredited” (Titus 2:3-5).

In his epistle to the Philippians Paul refers to two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who had “labored side by side with me [*sunēthlēsan moi*] in the gospel.” Arndt and Gingrich render the phrase, “they fought at my side in (spreading) the gospel” (Phil 4:3).

While these references do not indicate that women in the Christian church were addressing congregations in preaching services, they do indicate that they were not restricted from witnessing to the truths of the gospel and in helping those in the congregation to make practical application of those truths to the daily life. They could be and were in a very real sense “workers in the Lord.” Social status need not prevent witnessing. It ought not to be forgotten that a little slave girl was basically instrumental in the winning of Naaman, “commander of the army of the king of Syria,” to the worship of the true God (2 Kgs 5).

In Paul's labors he was often successful in winning "leading women," and "Greek women of high standing" who were found attending the synagogues (Acts 17:4, 12). There is no reason to think that these new converts lost their positions of influence when they entered the Christian community. The apostles did not hesitate to preach the gospel to women. The visionary "man of Macedonia" resolved himself in the first instance into a group of "women who had come together" on a river bank for prayer. Paul's first convert in Europe was a woman—Lydia, "a seller of purple goods" (Acts 16:9-15). It was also the restoration of a demon-possessed slave girl that resulted in his imprisonment and the subsequent conversion of the jailer and his household (Acts 16:16-34).

Chloe was evidently a prominent woman in the Corinthian church. It was a report to Paul by members of her household ("Chloe's people") which prompted the apostle to write his first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor 1:11). It is possible that one of the NT epistles was addressed to a Christian lady.<sup>58</sup>

The figurative use of the term woman is well known in Scripture. Cities and nations are referred to as women.<sup>59</sup> In a religious sense the convert is described as being "betrothed" to Christ, presented to Him "as a pure bride to her . . . husband" (2 Cor 11:2; cf. Hos 2:19). The bond between the follower of God and his Lord is compared and illustrated by the bond of marriage (Isa 54:5; Jer 3:14; Eph 5:22-33). Sarah and Hagar are allegorized by Paul as standing for the two covenants—one of faith, and one of works (Gal 4:21-31). In apocalyptic prophecy the symbol of a woman is used to represent the church in either her purity or her fallen condition, or in one instance as a personification of evil (Rev 12; 17; Zech 5:5-11).

In summary we may say that the records indicate that women were often held in high esteem, and that there was considerable freedom of action among them. According to their abilities and God's leading they appear able to function happily in their homes as respected companions of their husband, and yet do not seem to be restricted from expanding their role of activities beyond the immediate household tasks to other endeavors in both the secular and religious areas of life.

It may be surmised that if the role of any woman among God's people was severely limited, it was due to a limited amount of natural ability on her part, the influences of a changing culture on God's people, or the development of restricting rabbinical views. The ideal as set forth in woman's creation and even in the relationship designed by God subsequent to the Fall permitted a wide fulfillment of her person in everyday life, evidenced by the roles women occupied in both secular and religious areas of life.

### **Jesus' Relationship With Women**

In setting up the Harmony of the Gospels the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* lists 179 different items pertaining to the life of our Lord! The first 17 of the items cover the incarnation through His youth and young manhood, leaving a balance of 162 items or incidents

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<sup>58</sup>The epistle of 2 John. The *prima facie* evidence is that its recipient was a Christian woman. However, scholarship debates whether the epistle is addressed to a single individual or to a "corporate personality," that is, a church group. "The question must be treated as an open one." (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles of John* (Old Tappan, NJ, 1907), p. 137.

<sup>59</sup>For example, the nation of Judah is designated the "daughter of Zion" (Jer 6:2, 23). The kingdom of Babylon is characterized as "virgin daughter of Babylon," "daughter of the Chaldeans" (Isa 47:1). Samaria and Sodom are viewed as "elder" and "younger" sisters of Jerusalem (Ezek 16:46). Jerusalem is noted as "your mother" (Isa 50:1), and the New Jerusalem as both "our mother" and as the "Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Gal 4:26; Rev 21:9).

extending from the ministry of John through the close of the Gospel records. Of these 162 items, 18, or a little more than 11 percent, depict the Master's ministry in relationship with women. If items were eliminated from the list which did not involve people the percentage of those that involved women would be somewhat larger.<sup>60</sup> A similar relationship is seen in the Master's parables. The same source lists 40 parables, 4 of which (10 percent) have women as part of their subject matter.<sup>61</sup>

Christ's first miracle was performed at a wedding festivity which He honored with His presence. It came in response to the faith of His mother (John 2:1-11). In the Gospel of John, Christ's first verbal declaration in plain terms that He was the Messiah was made to a woman—a Samaritan, one of the Saviour's earliest converts (John 4:25-26). He did not hesitate to break rabbinical convention to converse openly with her in public (see John 4:27).<sup>62</sup>

The Master's first resurrection miracle was prompted by His compassion for a widow who sorrowfully proceeded with the body of her dead son to his grave. "Do not weep," were His tender words to her before He raised the young man to life and to her arms (Luke 7:11-17).<sup>63</sup>

The Gospels record the healing of several women by the Saviour.<sup>64</sup>

The Saviour had a care for the mothers who in the interest of their children had sought His blessing for them. He was "indignant" with the disciples who thought the Master should not be bothered with such (Mark 10:13-16). One of the greatest incidents in the life of Jesus which illustrated His tenderness with sinners was His dealing with the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11).

The question as to how the Master and His disciples maintained themselves during the years of His ministry appears to be answered by Luke's record that certain women (some of whom were in high positions of influence) provided for Him and His party.<sup>65</sup>

The major incident in the life of Jesus by which He evidently intended to demonstrate to the twelve that the gospel of salvation was for all nations and not for the Jew alone concerned the pagan woman of Phoenicia and her devil-possessed daughter (Matt 15:21-25).<sup>66</sup>

It is a poor widow's love offering of "two copper coins" that is noticed and commented upon by the Master as illustrating the true spirit of giving (Mark 12:41-44).

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<sup>60</sup>5 BC 196-97.

<sup>61</sup>5 BC 205-6.

<sup>62</sup>An ancient Jewish work (*Aboth R. N. 2* [ld] cited in Strack and Billerbeck, 2:438) advises: "Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no, not with his own wife" (cited in 5BC 941, comment on John 4:27). Christ's conversation with a woman was "contrary to all Judaeian notions of a Rabbi" (Alfred Edersheim, *Jesus the Messiah*, one-volume abridged ed. [Grand Rapids, MI, p. 93].

<sup>63</sup>The second resurrection was that of the daughter of Jairus (Luke 8:41-42, 49-55). His crowning miracle was the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11).

<sup>64</sup>Peter's mother-in-law (Matt 8:14-17); the invalid who had a hemorrhage for 12 years (Matt 9:20-22); the woman who had been in a crippled condition for 18 years (Luke 13:10-17).

<sup>65</sup>"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, *and also some women* who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, *who provided for them out of their means*" (Luke 8:1-3). Martha's example is probably typical: Now as they went on their way, he entered a village; and a woman named Martha received him into her house . . ." (Luke 10:38-42). From the previous reference it would appear that some of these ladies at times traveled with the group that attended the Saviour.

<sup>66</sup>The other occasions of His ministry to non-Jews were: the Samaritan woman and others of her nation (these persons were partly Jewish [John 4:5-42; Luke 17:11-19]), the Roman centurion (he built the Jews a synagogue, and the request for his servant's healing was presented by the Jewish elders [Luke 7:1-10]), the demoniacs of Gergesa (Matt 8:28-34, the Greeks who asked to see Jesus near the close of His life (John 12:20).

A grateful Saviour acknowledges Mary's gift and promises that the act will never be forgotten. "She has done a beautiful thing to me . . . Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her" (Matt 26:6-13).<sup>67</sup>

The Saviour's great heart encompassed the whole of mankind. None lay outside the circle of His love because of their sex or status. When He was informed that His mother and brothers desired to see Him, He replied pointing to His followers: "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12:46-50).

One of Christ's last acts was to entrust the keeping of His mother to His disciple John. In spite of the physical pain and the mental anguish He was enduring on the cross, He showed His tender concern for her future welfare (John 19:25-27).

Some of the women "who had come with him from Galilee" watched as Jesus was tenderly removed from the cross and laid in the tomb. They "saw the tomb, and how his body was laid." Reluctantly they left their precious Lord to prepare further embalming materials for returning after the Sabbath (Luke 23:55-56).

It was to these women that Christ first appeared upon His resurrection. He disclosed Himself first to Mary Magdalene near the garden tomb (John 20:11-18). A short time later He was seen by the other women whose worship He fully accepted. "And behold, Jesus met them and said, 'Hail!' And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me'" (Matt 28:5-10; cf. Luke 24:2.2-23). It is interesting to note that the first proclaimers of the risen Saviour, the first to attest the great truth of the resurrection of the Son of God, were women!

From the foregoing data it is evident that the Master had a high respect and a tender regard for womanhood. He does not regard them as inferior persons. They are in all respects the equal recipients of His grace—whether Jew or Gentile. He who conversed with the brilliant Nicodemus and others did not consider it beneath His dignity to converse with the spiritually hungry Mary "who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching." He gently rebuked the perturbed Martha: "You are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

It would appear that He did not hesitate to break rabbinical custom to speak openly in public with them in ministering to their needs. His dealing with the Samaritan woman has remained throughout the Christian era as the classic model for Christian soul winning. He accepted their physical care of His needs and those of His disciples. To the extent that they were able, He appears to have permitted them to be associated with Him in His labors and travels.

### **The Apostle Paul and Women**

Some who read the inspired writings of the apostle Paul in a casual manner may feel that he had little respect or concern for women—if not plain antagonism. Before examining certain passages which may suggest such concepts, it would be appropriate to observe the nature of the apostle's personal relationships with women.

His own treatment of women may be inferred from his counsel to Timothy on this point: "Treat . . . older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity" (1 Tim 5:1-2).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>"And as He went down into the darkness of His great trial, He carried with Him the memory of that deed, an earnest of the love that would be His from His redeemed ones forever."—DA 560.

<sup>68</sup>He refers to Phoebe as "our sister Phoebe" (Rom 16:1).

Such counsel indicates the respect, appreciation, and love that the apostle had for womanhood in general, and for Christian women in particular.

As noted earlier, the apostle never hesitated to labor for the salvation of the women whom he met. His first labors in Europe were among a group of women who met for prayer on a riverbank. From this group he baptized Lydia (Acts 16:13-15). The record of Acts specifically notes that among his converts in Thessalonica and Berea were “leading women” and “Greek women of high standing as well as men” (Acts 17:4, 12). His success at Athens was small; only a few believed. Two of this group were designated by name, one of whom was a woman by the name of Damaris (Acts 17:32). Chloe was one of his prominent converts in Corinth (1 Cor 1:11). We may infer that Eunice, the mother of Timothy, and possibly Lois, his grandmother, were also converts of Paul in Lystra (Acts 14:6-7; 16:1). He commends to Timothy their sincere faith in God and their careful transmission of it to Timothy (2 Tim 1:5).

Some women were associated at times with the apostle in labor. We are not informed, however, just what they did. One couple already mentioned (see n. 57) Aquila and Priscilla met Paul on his first trip to Corinth. On the two recorded occasions on which he sends them greetings he reverses the natural order (husband-wife) and places her name first (wife-husband), which may indicate that the apostle recognized her as the more active one in Christian service or the more capable. Both are equally referred to as “my fellow workers.” “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks; greet also the church in their house” (Rom 16:3-5; see also 2 Tim 4:19).

Another woman whose faithful service he evidently admired was Phoebe (see n. 55), who probably was entrusted with the delivery of his epistle to the Romans. He commends her to the church at Rome and asks that they assist her in her personal errand, noting also her assistance to himself and others. He said, “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself” (Rom 16:1-2).

Two other women who at one time had worked with him were Euodia and Syntyche (see n. 57). Friction had evidently developed between these two Christian ladies. In his epistle to the Philippians Paul begs them to come to an agreement and requests a fellow worker in Philippi, “help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel.” He includes them with others as “my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Phil 4:2-3).

One evidence of the apostle’s warm-hearted associations with both men and women is seen in his characteristic greetings in his epistles. The chief example is found in the closing chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Twenty-six specific persons are sent greetings (most of whom he calls by name) together with general greetings to members of two families. Of the twenty-six specific persons, seven are women (Rom 16:3, 6, 12-13, 15). The apostle’s comment regarding some of them is revealing of his Christian affection and appreciation:

1. “Greet *Prisca* and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life. . . .”
2. “Greet *Mary*, who has worked hard among you.”<sup>69</sup>
- 3-4. “Greet those workers in the Lord, *Tryphaena* and Tryphosa.”
5. “Greet Rufus, . . . also *his mother* an mine.”
- 6-7. “Greet . . . *Julia*, Nerus and *his sister*.”

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<sup>69</sup>Textual evidence is stronger for *humas* (you) than for *hēmas* (us); the latter is the Greek text for the KJV, “Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.”



The epistle to Philemon is also addressed to “Apphia our sister” as well as to Philemon and Archippus. Apphia may have been the wife of Philemon, but this can only be conjectured (Phil 2). In Paul’s last letter before his martyrdom two women are listed in his greetings. Priscilla (Prisca) heads a list of three persons to whom he sends greetings. Claudia, a Christian woman, is one of four listed who send their greetings to Timothy (2 Tim 4:19-21).

Evidence from the records clearly indicates that the apostle did not hate or despise women. To the contrary, his personal relations among them were in all respects exemplary of Christian kindness and consideration. He labored for their salvation as did his Master, and considered them equal to men as candidates for salvation.<sup>70</sup> He had many friends among them, some of whom were associated with him in his gospel work, and he welcomed their considerate care of his personal needs (cf. “his mother *and mine*”).

### **Paul’s Teaching Regarding Women**

Paul recognizes the relation between man and woman which God had fixed subsequent to the Fall. The man is to exercise headship, govern, care for, and protect the woman—his trust. The woman is dependent upon his care, and is to be submissive to the governing authority (1 Cor 11:3; 14:34).<sup>71</sup>

In terms of husband-wife relationships the apostle sought to elevate the position of Christian wives. Wives were to respect their husbands and be submissive to their headship. But this was a voluntary submission, for they were to submit just as the church chooses to be submissive to the will of Christ. Husbands are instructed to care for and love their wives in the same manner as Jesus who loved the church, even dying for it. If followed, such counsel would inevitably have improved the status of any woman to a position of consideration, respect, and genuine companionship as an equal, and yet withal, subject to a gracious headship which would enable a given family to attain as close as possible to God’s ideal in a world of sin (Eph 5:22-33).

Counsel is also given by the apostle regarding women’s dress and their general activities in the home, church, and community (1 Tim 2:9-10; 5:11-14; Titus 2:3-5). Church leaders are instructed in the manner they are to care for Christian women who are widows (1 Tim 5:1-16).

### **Paul’s Teaching Regarding Women in a Public Role in the Church**

Two statements by the apostle on the matter of Christian women speaking in public services of the assembled congregation or functioning in administration have caused considerable concern as to the proper role of the modern woman in the church. The following are the apostle’s two basic statements on these points:

1. “As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak [*ou gar epitrepetai autais lalein*, literally—it is not being permitted to them to speak], but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful [*aischron*] for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor 14:33-35).

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<sup>70</sup>His great declaration on this point is in Galatians: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise” (Gal 3:28-29). This evidently was general apostolic teaching for the apostle Peter notes that men and women are “joint heirs of the grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7).

<sup>71</sup>Cf. the statement of Peter (1 Pet 3: 1-7; Eph 5:22-23) about husbands and wives.

2. “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit [*epitrepō*] no woman to teach [*didaskēin*] or to have authority [*authentein*, have authority, domineer over someone] over men [*andros*]; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:11-14).

There is general agreement among the commentators that the apostle is dealing with the matter of women speaking in the general assembly of the church. Considering the confused condition in the Corinthian church, one might be inclined to view Paul’s sharp command in the Corinthian epistle as limited to that congregation. But his statement to Timothy some years later indicates that neither he nor church custom permitted women, as a general course, to address the members of the congregation in a public manner, nor to audibly voice questions in the service.

Because women have filled useful roles in the church in different periods of the Christian era subsequent to the apostolic age, and have at times spoken in services of the church with the evidence of God’s blessing in souls brought to Christ, such counsel by the apostle seems difficult to understand. Commentators take two positions with regard to it: (1) Regardless of what Christian women may do at present, this apostolic counsel is permanent and good for all time.<sup>72</sup> (2) The counsel is not permanent, but was directed to the general culture in view of the attitudes toward women in Paul’s time. Time and place must be considered.<sup>73</sup>

With respect to this latter position it would be in order to sketch the cultural viewpoint of Paul’s day toward women. The modern historian, Will Durant, commenting on Paul’s Instruction observes, “This was the Judaic and Greek view of woman, not the Roman.”<sup>74</sup> A statement by Thucydides who lived in the fifth century B.C., Greece’s golden age, is repeated by Plutarch (d. A.D. 120) with apparent approval: “The name of a decent woman, like her person, should be shut up in the house.”<sup>75</sup> Commentators also believe that Paul’s rule enjoining silence upon women in

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<sup>72</sup>“No rule in the New Testament is more positive than this; and however plausible may be the reasons which may be urged for disregarding it, and for suffering women to take part in conducting public worship, yet the authority of the apostle Paul is positive, and his meaning cannot be mistaken” (Albert Barnes, *Notes Explanatory and Practical on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* [New York, 1868], p. 294).

Lenski argues that one cannot say that “what Paul wrote was well enough for his time and age which assigned a different position to women than does ours. If woman is now assigned a different position, this is done, not by God, but by man, and by man in contradiction to God. The claim that the sexes are equal collides with the simple fact that God did not make them equal, and no amount of human claiming can remove or alter the divine fact” (R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* [Columbus, OR, 1946], pp. 616-17).

<sup>73</sup>“Paul evidently meant this to be a general rule, and one which ought to be normally observed; for he repeats it in 1 Tim. ii.11, 12. At the same time, it is fair to interpret it as a rule made with special reference to time and circumstances, and obviously admitting of exceptions in both dispensations” (*The Pulpit Commentary*, exposition on 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35).

“One can hardly imagine in the light of his own teaching, far less in that of the subsequent development of the church, that these lines could possibly represent the great apostle’s final judgment on the place that devoted women should take in the life of the Church” (*The Interpreter’s Bible*, exposition on 1 Corinthians 14:34, 35).

“Further, it goes without saying that the reason for this (partial) silence imposed on women must be sought solely in a concern not to violate the rules of propriety that were generally observed at the time. We are, then, here in the realm of the relative. Calvin was well aware of this. It is permissible to suppose that in our own day, when women enjoy all rights and shock no one by speaking in public, the restriction enjoined by the Apostle no longer has the same force” (Jean Héring, *The First Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians* [London, 1962], pp. 154-55). The same author cites Calvin on 1 Cor 14:35: “. . . it is part of the prudent reader to consider, that the things of which he here treats are intermediate and indifferent, in which there is nothing unlawful, but what is at variance with propriety and edification” (*Comm.*, E Tr., p. 469, cited in Hering, p. 110).

<sup>74</sup>Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ* (New York, 1944), p. 597.

<sup>75</sup>Plutarch, citing Thucydides, cited by Will Durant in *The Life of Greece*, p. 305.

the public assembly was “a rule taken over from the synagogue.”<sup>76</sup> If so, we are probably observing the effect upon Jewish society (the context in which the Christian church emerged) of some of the strictures of rabbinical Judaism.<sup>77</sup>

### **Paul’s Counsel a Matter of Advisability**

The apostle’s clearest statement on the equality of the sexes seems to suggest that his counsel on women speaking in the congregation was advisable because of the cultural situation of his time. First his statement, and then a brief analysis of it: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

Here is a manifest declaration of equality insofar as divine redemption is concerned. Three pairs of classes are set forth—Jew and Greek, slave and free, man and woman. None stands above another. All are upon the same plane—sinners in need of grace. All are equally loved of God and may equally share in His love. There are no restrictions because of birth, status, or sex. This is the apostolic echo of John 3:16.

However, it is evident from the records of the NT that the implications of such a perspective could not always be realized in that age because of certain deep-seated social institutions and viewpoints held by the society at that time. The successful promulgation of the gospel message necessitated certain expedient approaches so that its onward progress might not be hindered and honest hearts turned away who might have been saved. Let us examine the statement more closely.

**1. Jew-Greek.** While the apostle could truly say, “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek” (Rom 10:12), for all practical purposes he had to act as though there were. He had to take cognizance of the feeling and gulf which existed between the two classes.

Recall his repeated phrase in Romans, “to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (1:6; 2:9-10). It would appear that his strategy was to present the gospel first in the synagogues to the Jews and their Gentile converts, and then later to the raw pagans. On two occasions when expelled from the synagogue he is recorded as speaking thus: “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46).<sup>78</sup>

While we may be sure that the apostle never hesitated to share his faith with any honest inquirer, it would not have been the part of wisdom to have begun his formal work in any city with raw Gentiles, and then later to have tried to reach his Jewish kinsmen. Such a procedure would have cut him off from many a Jewish mind. Although he recognized all men as potential recipients of God’s grace, the exigencies of the situation dictated that for the best progress of the Gospel the Jew should be sought for first, then the Gentile.

**2. Slave-free.** The saving gospel of Christ was not withheld from the slave. But here again the master doubtless had the first opportunity to hear the gospel message. But more than that is the fact that the apostles did not carry out all the implications of the gospel in a direct attack

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<sup>76</sup>Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, comment on 1 Corinthians 14:34, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1914), p. 325.

<sup>77</sup>Adam Clarke asserts that the Rabbis taught that “A woman should know nothing but the use of her distaff,” and cites a certain Rabbi Eliezer as saying, “Let the words of the law be burned, rather than they should be delivered to women” (*Bammidbar Rabba*, sec. 9, fol. 204, cited in Clarke, 6:278).

<sup>78</sup>Spoken in the synagogue in Antioch (Pisidia). To the Jews of Corinth he said, “Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles” (Acts 18:6).

upon the institution of slavery. Christian masters are not instructed to release their slaves. The Christian slave is instructed to be content with his lot. (Of course, if freedom was granted, he was to take it [1 Cor 7:20-24].) Christian slaves were instructed: “Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ” (Col 3:22-25; cf. Eph 6:5-8; 1 Pet 2:18-25; 1 Tim 6:1-2).<sup>79</sup> Masters who are Christians are instructed to treat their slaves fairly, and to treat them as they would treat Christ (Col 4:1; Eph 8:9).

In time past some have construed these statements to mean that the apostle upheld the institution of slavery. But nothing could be further from the spirit of the gospel Paul preached. He himself makes it clear that the situation of the times required this approach to slavery which he and the other apostles were taking. “Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of an honor, *so that the name of God and the teaching may not be defamed*” (1 Tim 6:1).

To have made a frontal attack upon such a deep-seated institution would have caused many noble minds to have written Christianity off as a deeply subversive movement, harmful to human society and human welfare. For the sake of the gospel’s outreach, lest it be unnecessarily hindered, it was best to seek to secure the personal salvation of both master and slave, but not to attack the institution of slavery. However, the oblique approach in which Christian masters and slaves were encouraged to love and treat one another as they would Christ tended toward the eventual freedom of the slave and the abolition of the custom.

**Male-female.** While recognizing the biblical principle of headship on the part of the man, the apostle never hesitated to offer personal salvation to the woman. However, the customs that the society of that day imposed upon woman—her wearing a head covering (some versions say a veil) in public places, her silence in the general assembly, her secondary position in general—the apostle did not attack frontally. Just as the slave is counseled to be submissive to his social lot, so the woman is encouraged to submit with good grace to her situation (2 Cor 11:3-16; 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

On the other hand the application of the teachings of Christ to both men and women could not fail (if obeyed) in elevating the women of the church to a position of respect, consideration, and Christian equality. Note some of Paul’s statements: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, . . . Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. . . . Let each one of you love his wife as himself” (Eph 5:21-33; cf. Col 3:19). While these words concern married women, the spirit of such instruction would teach similar respect for womanhood in general.

As with the inequalities of the master-slave relationship in Paul’s time, so with the inequalities of the male-female relationship—wisdom did not dictate a direct attack on them. Paul seems to be thinking about the influence of Christian women in that society. “Bid the older women . . . to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, *that the word of God may not be discredited*” (Titus 2:3-5). The customs prevailing in his society likewise seems to be in his mind when he forbids Christian women to speak in the church. “*As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. . . . For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church*” (1 Cor 14:33-35). Shameful for whom? And why? The implications seem to be that such actions would be considered as bad taste and out of order by the society in general.

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<sup>79</sup>They are to “adorn the doctrine of God” by their exemplary lives (Titus 2:9-10).

Galatians 3:28 suggests that although God regards all as equal, it was advisable for cultural reasons of the times to give certain counsels, particularly regarding slaves and women. For that reason it may be suggested that the counsel forbidding women to speak in public assembly or to assume an administrative role in the church was advisable in Paul's time because of the circumstances of society at that time.

### **Paul's Reasons to Deny Women Public Speaking and Administration Roles**

If it is argued that the custom of the times prompted the inspired instruction that women should wear a head-covering ("veil"—RSV) in public, should not speak in church or aspire to administrative roles; and that such a breach in deep-seated customs would have brought reproach upon Christianity—it will immediately be countered that the apostle does not cite such reasons for his instruction. It is necessary then to examine his specific reasons, for it is true that he does not specifically state custom as his reason, though he seems at times to allude to it.

**1. Speaking.** "As in all the churches of the saints, . . . For *they are not permitted to speak* [*literally*, it is not being permitted to them to speak], but *should be subordinate*, as even the law says" (1 Cor 14).

**2. Teaching authority over men.** "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; . . . For *Adam was formed first, then Eve*; and *Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived* and became a transgressor" (1 Tim 2).

**3. Uncovered head.** "*The head of a woman is her husband . . . .* For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but *woman is the glory of man*. (For man was not made from woman, but *woman from man*. Neither was man created for woman, but *woman for man*" That is why a woman ought to have a veil [RSV margin: Greek (a symbol of) *authority*] on her head" (1 Cor 11).

Obviously there is nothing sinful in the public appearance of an unveiled woman. No condemnation was attached in earlier centuries as we have seen in references to Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel. There is nothing sinful in a woman's voice, nor does she necessarily lack ability to communicate in a public assembly or to administer a program in the church as efficiently as a man. The records give us several women functioning among God's people in the prophetic role. Deborah and, perhaps, Miriam certainly occupied administrative functions. We have no directive from God that these things are in themselves sinful.

If we hear Paul correctly, the real issue in his time seems to have been a rebellion or revolt against the constituted authority in the church. In 1 Cor 14 he states that "it is not being permitted to them to speak." The natural question is, *Who* is forbidding it? Who has established the custom "in all the churches" that a woman may not speak in the public assembly? While it is true that the apostle states in 1 Tim 2 that *he* did not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over men, it does not follow that he alone was the source of the custom. *Evidently, the practice was the considered opinion of church leadership.*

One of the points Paul makes is that the woman "should be subordinate, as even the law says." In this case, subordinate to whom? There is no direct command in the OT stating that women should be silent in the public worship of the congregation. Commentators generally hold that the "law" Paul is referring to is the statement in the Pentateuch regarding Eve's punishment: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." This judgment, as previously noted, confirmed the headship of the husband in the family to care for and to govern the members of the home. Paul's statement would imply that just as headship of the home had been

placed upon the man, so it was to be understood that man should occupy the role of headship in the church. Women were to recognize and respect this headship of the church as well as of the home.

In his statement to Timothy Paul's reasons are quite similar. It is a question of headship in the family and in the church. Adam was formed first which implies his headship. It was when Eve faced the serpent independent of Adam that she was deceived. Independence of properly constituted leadership can have disastrous results. The uncovered, or unveiled, head seems to be a challenge to the wisdom of the leadership that counseled it to be worn. Paul's final note on that particular problem was, "If anyone is disposed to be contentious [desires to go veiless], we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God" (1 Cor 11:16). That was how the general church leadership saw it.

In short, the picture seems to be this: The changing culture of the centuries and the development of rabbinical Judaism altered the role of women in society, so that in the early days of Christianity it is restricted in some areas of life. Christian women at that time could have brought the early church into disrepute by exercising their "Christian liberty" in matters not sinful in themselves—such as addressing mixed congregations or going into public meetings with uncovered heads.<sup>80</sup>

Christian leadership of the church, exercising its authority to guide the church, counsels the women of the church to cover their heads, to be silent in the congregations, and to be submissive to their husbands and church authority. Some, however, wish to flaunt the regulations laid down for the best good of the church, and the apostle is reaffirming the guidelines and calling for Christian submission to the leadership "as even the law says."

### **Summary and Conclusion**

There has been some attempt to summarize briefly each area of this subject as the investigation has proceeded. It is fitting now to bring these summaries together.

1. The Creation records indicate that God created the woman to be on equality with the man. Each complements the other, and this makes "man" in the full sense of the term. Both were made in "the image of God."

2. Even in the sinless state, however, there seems to have been a certain headship conferred on the man.

3. The judgment that fell on the sinning pair confirmed the headship of the man and the dependent position of the woman. This did not render the woman inferior. The headship of the man and the dependence of the woman was probably effected by the divine will in order to enable mankind to attain to a degree (in the sin situation) the ideals God had for the race.

4. The sins of mankind have often resulted in the degradation of woman over the centuries of time, although this did not have to be. God is not to be faulted for His judgment.

5. Mosaic instruction preserves to a large degree God's ideal for womanhood, but it may be inferred from the records that the divine instruction was adapted to the cultural situation of the times and the hardness of men's hearts. Progressive revelation would bring enlightenment regarding God's ideal.

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<sup>80</sup>They do seem, however, to be permitted to pray or prophesy publicly. Paul may have conceded this from the viewpoint of the direct control of the Holy Spirit which would be evidenced, at least with respect to prophesying (see Clarke, vol. 6, comment on 1 Cor 14:34-35; 11:5).

6. Women in biblical times exercised considerable freedom in their roles as wives and homemakers. They also occupied other roles beyond the home in both religious and secular fields. The exercise of the prophetic gift was the highest role that a woman in Bible times filled in the church. In secular lines it was that of a ruling judge or queen.

7. The Saviour showed no discrimination between the sexes. His miracles were often performed in behalf of women or their loved ones. He regarded them as persons to be redeemed, and disregarded rabbinical traditions that would have prevented Him from publicly addressing them. He often accepted their hospitality and assistance in aiding Him in His work.

8. The apostle Paul, like the Saviour, never hesitated to share the gospel with women, among whom he made many converts. He had many friends among them. Some of them also assisted him in his labors. He appreciated the considerate care that various women rendered him. The apostle gave various lines of instruction regarding the life and duties of Christian women.

9. The apostle, however, along with the leadership of the church in his time, did forbid Christian women to publicly address the assemblies of Christians, or to speak out in the assemblies, or to assume any role of leadership. This study suggests that the evidence derived from Gal 3:28 indicates that this church regulation was advisable for the onward progress of the gospel because of the view of women generally held by the society of that time. To have permitted Christian women to exercise such freedoms as going to public meetings without proper head coverings or assuming roles of leadership, would have brought unnecessary reproach upon the movement.

10. It is suggested by this study that the real issue involved was not that the fact or acts of speaking and leadership were sinful in themselves, but rather that partially liberated Christian women were challenging the leadership of the church and its judgment.

Just as man was given headship of the home, so he was to exercise headship in the corporate worship of the congregation. Christ gave authority to the church. The leadership (as it sought to oversee the church in harmony with Christ's will) was to be respected and obeyed. Its best judgment in those circumstances was that women should be silent in the churches, and it was becoming for Christian women to accept the judgment of the leadership and for the sake of the gospel not to exercise what some of them would have considered to be their Christian liberty.

11. If the foregoing study is a correct analysis of the situation, then it would follow that a change in time and place—a change in society's perspective regarding the role of woman—would make it possible for the leadership of the church to use the resources of its women on a wider scale.

The constituency of the church is never in its proper place to challenge the good Judgment or the leadership which has resulted from a full session of the church in deliberative thought. Today education is being made available to both sexes, and women are being highly trained and educated to fill many roles hitherto denied to them. There is a greater freedom for them to function in many areas of thought and action. Generally speaking, most cultures would no longer regard a woman as being out of place if she were to address congregations of Christians or even to assume some roles of administration. In a changing society the leadership of the church may well consider how it may now best utilize the vast potential for Christian action which lies in its women members. This reservoir of ability should move into action by directives from the leadership, and not by rebellious actions on the part of its membership.