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Editorial

This number of ERT addresses the challenging issue of God's purpose for women in mission in the Church and in the world and the agony of the millions of women, especially in the non-western world, who are marginalised and oppressed. For some evangelicals the debate is limited to the issue of the ordination of women and the man-woman relationship in the exegesis of passages in Genesis and in Paul's letters. However, radical feminist theologies, as with all liberation theologies, are challenging the Church to rethink her traditional hermeneutical methods and to relate the image of women in the Church to their role in society. The issues of the God-given human dignity, self-identity and diversity of roles of women in the decision-making processes go to the heart of the nature of the Gospel of redemption itself. Today the whole Church—Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox—is struggling to correlate the creational issues of subordination and submission with the redemptive issues of freedom, mutuality and equality.

But this is also a frustrating number of ERT. Although it addresses a number of important issues including inclusive language, hermeneutical principles and practices, the role of ordained women in the Church and women as missionaries in social service and the founding and nurturing of churches, space precludes discussion on several other areas of debate. Perhaps our readership would welcome responses to issues including women and the image of God, the analogy of marriage to Christ and the Church, the harmonising of key texts of Scripture, a critique of feminist theologies and the Church as the whole people of God, ordained and lay (if this distinction is valid), as salt and light. Exposure to cases of team ministries being pioneered in some local churches and dioceses/conferences, could be an inspiration for all. A beginning will be made in the next number of ERT, 'The Gospel Witness in the Market Place'. [p. 292](#)

Inclusive Language: Right or Wrong?

Peter Toon

Reprinted with permission from The Christian Challenge March 1991

The well known English Evangelical theologian, Peter Toon, gives a balanced and precise introduction to the issues relating to the use of inclusive language in the liturgies of the Church. He discusses the long term consequences of the use of inclusive language for Godhead, as distinct from its use in human relations.

Twenty years ago in the United States and only ten years ago in the United Kingdom virtually nothing was heard inside the churches concerning the adoption of inclusive language in public worship. Now it is a major and divisive topic.

The reason for wanting non-excluding or inclusive language is that traditional generic language is seen by some as no longer acceptable. That is, the use of the male pronoun and noun understood as meaning both male and female—e.g. 'Dearly beloved brethren', 'honour all men', 'love the brotherhood' and 'mankind'—is viewed as being sexist, reflecting male domination and being hurtful to those who are conscious that male and

female have a common dignity and are truly equal. Many testimonies concerning this felt hurt have been made by women and men over the last decade. We must hear and seek to understand this pain.

IS INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE TO BE ENCOURAGED?

Yes and no! In principle there is nothing wrong with inclusive language and it may be welcomed, for it does make us all conscious of what we claim to believe—that both male and female human beings are made in the image and after the likeness of God and that in Christ female and male have equal access to and standing before the eternal and holy God. However, a real difficulty of bringing in inclusive language is that it can mean the loss of the beauty of language, especially in translations from old texts. Yet much of this can be overcome with skill and patience.

I must say, however, that this practice is wrong if it becomes a dogma or an obsession: that is, if it is implemented in such a way as to eliminate the traditional language where the generic sense is taken for [p.293](#) granted. Think of all the hymns, devotional classics, and liturgies which make use of the generic principle, using 'he' for 'he/she' and 'man' for 'man and woman.' We cannot cut ourselves off from the treasures of the past for we need their wisdom and inspiration. Thus, perhaps we need to learn to function, and function happily, with both good new liturgies, hymns and devotional books using inclusive language and the older classic ones with their generic language. Surely we do not have to attempt to rewrite the older ones and thereby spoil their quality.

WHO IS CALLING FOR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE?

I think we all agree that it comes from both women and men who we may call 'active feminists,' and they are supported by what may be termed 'passive egalitarian opinion'. That is, they want the full integrity, value and rights of women to be established in all areas of life. Most feminists hold that what must be first recognised and then removed in order to achieve genuine equality is patriarchy—men ruling society. They hold that God has revealed to the Church through the insights of modern culture that women are the full and true equals of men in all areas of life. Thus, the domination of society, family and church by men must be removed in order for true equality to be possible. Inclusive language in the church services is one way of indicating and moving towards this equality, for it makes women to be recognised as truly there as equals before God in the fellowship and worship of the Church. Women, it is said, are and must be recognised as truly human!

SHOULD INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE APPLY TO THE GODHEAD?

Most 'active feminists' answer 'Yes.' This is because they believe that to use inclusive language for human beings is only the beginning of reform needed. We are all much aware that the contents of the Bible and Christian tradition present the Godhead primarily through masculine names and images: God is 'Lord,' 'Father,' 'King,' 'Bridegroom,' and 'Son' and is a 'He.' Feminists usually explain this dominance of male images of God in terms of the Bible being written by men and thus primarily the record of male experience of God in a male-dominated society. Thus, they go on to insist that it is no good merely achieving inclusive language for humanity, for that will mean [P.294](#) little in practice if patriarchy is still confirmed and undergirded by the way in which people address God.

Various proposals have been made in order to seek to minimize the dominance of male images for God which remain there within sacred Scripture even after the boldest

attempts to translate the Bible according to inclusivist principles. *One* is to add to the male images some female ones. Thus instead of praying 'Our Father ...' we are asked to pray 'Our Father and our Mother, hallowed be your name.' *A second* is to substitute non-excluding terms for God for the male images. Thus instead of 'Our Father ...' we are asked to pray 'Our Parent ...' and instead of the trinitarian 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' we are asked to say 'Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.' *A third approach* is to address God only as 'God' and use images ('Father' in particular) as descriptions of deity rather than names of deity. For example, 'Loving God, mother and father of us all....' This seems to be a subtle way of solving the difficulty for it suggests that there is no qualitative difference between all names, titles, images and descriptions of God found in the Bible. Then, *fourthly* there are all kinds of combinations of these three approaches.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE FOR GOD?

Much is wrong with it, although what is wrong will not be apparent immediately. Where this mixture of male and female images for God is used by a people who have been well schooled in the traditional ways of thinking about God (the one Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit), then it will probably serve as a novelty which may help them affirm the equality of the feminine in humanity. But whether this earthly purpose for the modern way of addressing the eternal, holy God is justifiable is another matter: however, because it is (at best) only playing with words upon the basis of (one hopes) a sure foundation then it will probably (I hope) do little doctrinal and spiritual harm to the people who use such inclusive language for God.

However, where it is taken up by people who have no grounding in traditional Christian doctrine and discourse, then it is sure to become the door into all kinds of errors, problems, misunderstandings and heresies. I am not saying that it will not help to produce religion, perhaps interesting and dynamic religion: rather I am saying that it will help to produce a religion which cannot be called Christianity for it will be so different from that which has been called Christianity for the last 19 centuries. It will have a different doctrine and use different language than traditional, orthodox Christianity. The new religion may [p. 295](#) well be very successful numerically and socially but it will be called by sociologists a sect or a new religious movement.

WILL USE OF FEMININE IMAGES FOR GOD PRODUCE A NEW RELIGION?

The answer is that the name of God is more than a mere name: the name reveals the nature and character of God. 'Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name!' ([Psalm 103](#)). Change the name and you change the nature and character of God. To Moses, God revealed his name as 'LORD' (=Yahweh/Jehovah) and in the New Testament this name is filled out as 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (one LORD who is three Persons). Each of the three Persons is 'Lord' and thus the first Christian confession of faith was 'Jesus Christ is Lord.'

Anyone who carefully reads the four Gospels cannot but be impressed by the way in which Jesus is conceived, anointed, filled and guided by the Holy Spirit, and then how he addresses God as 'Father' out of a perfect unity, harmony and communion with Him. As he put it: 'no-one knows the Son except the Father and no-one knows the Father but the Son and any to whom the Son chooses to reveal him' ([Matthew 11:27](#)). In the Gospel of John the community and unity of the Father and the Son is a prominent theme and the Holy Spirit is presented as the One who is sent from the Father through the Son to the disciples.

If, in the face of this testimony, anyone claims and insists that Jesus only used the term 'Father' because it came naturally to him, living in a patriarchal society and thinking in terms of the headship of the father in the family, then she or he needs to realise what his claim implies. It implies that God's self-revelation in Jesus, the Incarnate Word, is seriously flawed since it is culturally conditioned at its very heart, in its very essence, within its centre—in the intimate relationship of Jesus. Son of God in human flesh, with 'God' in heaven. Certainly the apostles took the expressions 'Father' and 'Son' as being revealed by God and spoke of the fullness of time when 'God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law' and of their worshipping 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, 'the Spirit of Christ.'

If we begin to replace the term 'the Father' by 'the Mother' or refer to the first Person as 'Father and Mother' or 'Parent' then we begin to have conceptual problems not only with the relationship of the first and second Persons within the Trinity but also with the Incarnation of the second Person. The classic doctrine of the Trinity is that the Son is p. 296 eternally begotten of the Father (before all ages) and that the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father through the Son. The important qualifying word is 'eternally,' which not only tells us to reject the concept of the creation of the Son and Spirit by the Father in time but also causes us to interpret 'begets' and 'proceeds' in terms of relationships within a hierarchy of equal Persons.

However, if the first Person is called 'the Mother' then we place ourselves in utter confusion and we have to abandon any doctrine of a Trinity of equal Persons. If we think in terms of 'the Mother' giving birth at a specific time to her 'Son' then this makes 'the Mother' superior to 'the Son' and 'the Son' inferior in origin and time to 'the Mother.' Alternatively, if we think in terms of 'the Mother' eternally giving birth to 'the Son' then we realise that 'the Son' is never sufficiently freed from 'the Mother' in order to be himself, for he is never other than being born! In both cases we also run the risk of having to think of another divine Person to be 'the Father' of 'the Son.' Perhaps this is what modern writers have in mind when they begin prayers 'O God, Father and Mother of us all.' Some priests baptize 'in the name of God, Father, Mother, Son and Spirit.'

Further, we get into problems with the doctrine of creation, being tempted to think of creation, as God bringing forth the world as a woman brings forth her child. To go in this direction is to abandon the biblical teaching of creation *ex nihilo* (from nothing). And such a temptation is not remote, especially with the present emphasis upon the theme of creation in liturgy and the 'goddess' worship that has sprung up as an errant adjunct among members of some Christian churches. For example, 'A Litany of New Birth' begins 'O gracious God of life and birth. How you labour, how you suffer, to bring forth the new creation ...' What is here said of the new creation can easily be transferred to the old creation—and it has been in current trial liturgies in the U.S.

In fact, I doubt whether all those who are pressing for the adoption of inclusive language for deity have truly thought through the implications of what they want to introduce. Their only thoughts seem to be concerned with gaining an equality for the sexes in language for humanity and deity. If they get their way, and they are a very determined minority, there is little chance, as far as I can see, of any coherent doctrine of the Trinity surviving: at best we shall be into some kind of Unitarianism or Arianism where the Son and the Spirit are seen as created beings, rather than eternal, uncreated Persons. Further there is every chance of a repetition of that way of thinking about deity in Baalism which was roundly condemned by the prophets of Israel. A p. 297 minority, but a powerful minority, of those who push for inclusive language are 'monists': They do not believe that God is transcendent but only that he is immanent. God (he/she/it) is identified with the cosmos and so can be 'Earth Mother' or 'Our Father' or 'It'!

Even if we did not have all these theological problems to handle (but let us realise that we do and will have them) we still have the problem that the Bible, the historical liturgies, the vast majority of devotional books and hymns do not contain any examples of God being addressed (in contrast to being described) through feminine images. Though God is likened to a mother or to a mother bird several times in the Bible, God is never called 'Mother.' So in order to bring inclusivity to the sacred Scriptures, the liturgies and devotional books, there is a massive job of revision and excision, rewriting and rephrasing, creating and composing to be done. Or there is a massive job of producing new liturgies, services, hymns and books of prayers which are based wholly on inclusivist principles. Even if there were the people available to do this, can we be sure that there will be any consensus as to what ought to replace that which is being set aside?

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Not a few women who began by demanding inclusive language for deity have since realised that this cannot be achieved in Christianity, for its holy book, the Bible, is irredeemably patriarchal and Jesus himself accepted and commended a compassionate patriarchy. To rid the Bible of its patriarchy is to have very little of substance left! Thus they have left behind historic, orthodox Christianity in order to create new religions. It does not need much investigation and reflection to reveal that active feminism and historic, authentic Christianity cannot share the same bed: they cannot marry and they will not be fused.

A church which encourages the use of inclusive language for God in its public worship is on the way to becoming a sect, no better or worse than Jehovah's Witnesses or Christian Science. Certainly, the full use of inclusive language for God means a break away from the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church into sectarianism and schism. For a group which cannot wholeheartedly and without inhibition and hesitation pray 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name ...' is not a Christian group, however much it is religious and worthy. I believe that committed Christians should graciously but firmly oppose all moves to introduce inclusive language for deity into Christian discourse and worship, and should be careful and cautious even about the use of inclusive language for humanity.

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Inclusive Language in the New Revised Standard Version

Walter Harrelson

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An interesting and honest inside story on the revision of the RSV showing how the principles of inclusive language were applied to human sexuality and to a personal God.

I. GETTING STARTED

The committee responsible for producing the NRSV did not begin with a mandate to make the language inclusive. The decision was taken along the way, and in stages, as the work of the committee proceeded. Whether the initiative lay more within the committee than external to it, I am not able to say. The first formal statement on the subject is a sheet produced by the late George MacRae, S.J., containing guidelines for avoiding masculine language in cases in which it was clear that both men and women were intended. It was a modest statement indeed, and was soon outgrown, but it served us well for some sessions. I recall no extended discussion about avoiding masculine references to the deity, although the matter was reviewed as the draft common language lectionary was being produced, and the translation committee reaffirmed its decision not to attempt to eliminate masculine references to God.

But as the work proceeded, several committee members were quite unhappy with two matters. First, we had only one woman member of the committee, a fact that continued to trouble us. Efforts had been made in the 1970s, and perhaps earlier, to secure the assent of women scholars to serve on the committee, but without success. On one occasion, probably around 1980, committee members at a business session of the entire committee proposed that we invite *several* women scholars at once and see if we could secure acceptances in that way. The plan succeeded, and several women scholars joined the committee during the next few years. Their presence gave additional incentive to the effort to eliminate more of the masculine language than our draft translations had done to that point, although not all of the women scholars held identical positions on this matter. [p. 299](#)

The second concern was how much masculine language was being retained in our draft translations. Could we not eliminate more of it and still remain by our mandate to revise the RSV only where it was necessary to do so? What tactics were available that we might not yet have tried? The usual approach was taken: a small committee was appointed to take some particularly difficult texts and see what could be done to reduce or eliminate the masculine references. The texts chosen were [Exodus 21–23](#), the so-called Covenant Code, and [Joshua 20](#), one of the accounts of the establishment of cities of refuge. The committee did its work primarily by correspondence, with an exchange of drafts of the two passages. The proposed changes were not greatly different from what we now have in the NRSV, but when they were presented to the entire committee, it was clear that they were not acceptable at all. To eliminate the ‘his’ in such legislation as ‘Whoever strikes his father or his mother shall be put to death’ ([Exod. 21:15](#)) was considered too radical, and making the sentence plural clearly would not work. (Later, of course, we frequently introduced the plural.) And in any case, legal language, it was pointed out, is conventional, stereotyped language, well understood by the community to apply to all, but necessarily put in fixed, conventional terms. It would be bad precedent indeed to begin to modify the Bible’s legal language in such a way as was proposed. What we needed was greater precision in the use of this stereotypical language, a precision that was being helped along by the many specialist studies of ancient Near Eastern and biblical law. We would only introduce confusion when clarity was urgently needed.

The same was said about the revision of the cities-of-refuge text. There, the draft had proposed that we use ‘the slayer’ and ‘the victim,’ and the like, in place of using the pronoun ‘he’ so often. It seemed to the drafters of the proposal that these changes made

things much clearer, for they identified the parties much more precisely. But the time was not ripe for such a change, and the draft proposals were voted down. The full committee indicated its desire not to try to make the legal language of the Bible sex-inclusive, although I believe no formal vote to that effect was taken.

Thereafter, the several groups working on the Hebrew Bible, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament simply worked out their own approaches, sharing them over meals and in general discussion with other groups, and a consensus built up over the remaining years that we could and must eliminate masculine language that was not clearly intended to refer only to males. A number of strategies were devised for doing so, and the result is reflected in the NRSV. The two small [p. 300](#) editorial committees that went through the entire text (one for the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha and one for the New Testament) were charged to catch the remaining omissions that could be cared for and to smooth out, to the extent possible, the varied practices of the several groups.

II. THE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE POLICY

The policy that developed over the last decade of the committee's life finally came to have the assent of all members, in my judgement. That policy was quite simple: the committee should remove all masculine language in referring to human beings apart from those texts that clearly referred to men. In order to do so, the committee adopted a number of agreed conventions, chief among them the use of the plural instead of the singular, even in some instances in which the committee believed that only males were involved ('My child' for 'My son' in Proverbs, for example). It was agreed that we would not use 'persons' or 'people,' unless no alternative could be found. We would use 'one' or 'someone' as necessary, but sparingly. When a Psalmist was referring to an enemy, we would retain the 'he' or 'his,' since otherwise we would be losing the vivid, personal force of the psalm. Certain critical texts, such as those that employed 'son of man' for humankind, were at first handled on an ad hoc basis, but as the work proceeded those, too, began to be eliminated. Ezekiel's many references to the prophet as 'son of man' (Hebrew *ben 'adam*) were translated 'O mortal' or 'mortal,' a happy solution, we thought, since Ezekiel is clearly stressing the prophet's humanity in contrast with God's transcendent glory and authority.

Daniel's 'son of man' was treated differently, since there the Aramaic 'one like a human being,' which was the translation adopted, clearly means just that. The New Testament references, however, retain Son of Man.

Have the translators been consistent in their application of the policy? They have been quite successful, on the whole, with the result that readers now have a largely inclusive-language translation that can easily be made more inclusive even as one reads from the lectern or pulpit. Let me illustrate and make some comments about particularly troublesome cases.

[Psalm 8](#) is a quite good instance of the principle of making texts inclusive by the use of the plural pronoun. I begin with [v.3](#):

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established, [p. 301](#)
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour ...

It is unmistakable that these plurals express more clearly, for contemporary English readers, the sense of the Hebrew text than singular pronouns would express that sense. And in this instance the use of the plural for the Hebrew terms *'enosh* and *ben 'adam* just as well renders the meaning as would 'man' and 'son of man,' unless one is interpreting the psalm to have reference to Israel's divinized earthly king, as some scholars still do.

The problem of how to quote this text in the New Testament is solved by simply using the language for 'man' and 'son of man' that had been used in the Hebrew text. The Greek is given in footnotes, along with an additional note to the effect that the terms 'man' and 'son of man' in the Hebrew text refer to all humankind. I wonder, today, if we could not have made that footnote clearer, since we do not in fact have 'man' and 'son of man' in the translation of the Hebrew psalm!

Another good example of the committee's practice, involving more change, occurs in the translation of [Psalm 41](#). There we decided to translate some direct speech as indirect speech so as to make the text inclusive. Instead of translating, 'My enemies say in malice, "When will he (i.e., the Psalmist) die, and his name perish?"' we translate, 'My enemies wonder in malice when I will die, and my name perish.' And again, in v.8, we have, 'They think that a deadly thing has fastened on me, that I will not rise again from where I lie,' for the direct quotation, 'They say, "A deadly thing has fastened on him; he will not rise again from where he lies."' Such a change could be criticized for diminishing the concreteness and vividness of the Psalmist's language, but I believe that little has been lost in our rendering.

But we were not able to make all the language inclusive (and neither were our colleagues who translated the New Testament). In the translation of [Psalm 109](#), for example, we finally agreed that we would have to let some masculine references remain, since otherwise the Psalmist's enemy could not adequately be depicted in contrast to the Psalmist. Note v.6, where we have introduced the words, 'They say,' in order to make it clear that it is the Psalmist's accuser who calls down the terrible curse on the Psalmist, not the other way around (vv. 7-19). The Psalmist's prayer resumes at verse 20, where the language is once more inclusive. But the Psalmist has been *necessarily* identified as male, it would appear, though we *could* have translated, 'They call for p. 302 a wicked person to be appointed against me; /for an accuser to stand on my right.' /When I am tried, let me be found guilty ..., and so on—following the device used in [Psalm 41](#).

The fact is that we tried that approach, but the farther we proceeded, the more complicated matters got. See, for example, v. 17: 'I loved to curse, they said; let curses come on me,' It was too much, with the result that we gave up on [Psalm 109](#) and left the Psalmist identified as masculine.

One happy discovery was that [Psalm 131](#) is translated in such a way as to suggest that the author is a woman, not a man. See especially v.2 which now reads at the end: '... my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.' This is surely a precise translation of the Hebrew, and following upon the preceding line, '... like a weaned child with its mother ...,' strongly suggests that a mother is speaking.

Colleagues in the New Testament committee gave up, it seems evident, on texts such as [Mt. 7:24-27](#), probably because they too saw that concreteness and vividness would also be damaged there. They read, '... like a wise man who built his house upon a rock,' and '... like a foolish man who built his house on sand.' In this case, moreover, the builder is so likely to have been male that one might argue that it would have been inappropriate to eliminate the masculine reference. The same may be true of [Mt. 5:25](#), where the text still reads, 'Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him ...' I would have preferred there to see, however, '... while the two of you are on the way to court....'

III. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE THAT WORKS PARTICULARLY WELL

Let me now offer some instances of inclusive language that in my judgement the translators have handled particularly well. In the New Testament, I single out several instances from 1 Cor. and elsewhere that I think are praiseworthy. Beginning at [1:10](#) and throughout the epistle, 'brothers' has very often become 'brothers and sisters,' with a note that indicates that the Greek reads 'brothers.' Other instances of 'brothers' in the Greek need to be translated otherwise. For example, in [1 Cor. 14:26](#), 'my brothers' becomes 'my friends,' as it does in [14:39](#). But in [6:6](#), 'brother' and 'brothers' have become '... a believer goes to court against a believer.' The changes for the sake of inclusiveness once again give us more precise and accurate translations than would the mere rendering of the normal meaning of the Greek.

In other places, both the New Testament and the Old Testament committees have rendered 'brother' by 'neighbour' or 'kin,' a good [p. 303](#) solution in many instances, although there are distinct Hebrew and Greek words for 'neighbour,' and readers could suppose, were there not a note, that the Hebrew or Greek has the usual word for 'neighbour.' Numerous instances of this kind of inclusive translation occur. See, for example, [Mt. 7:3](#), '... the speck in your neighbor's eye,' and [Lev. 19:17](#), 'You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin.' When 'kin' or 'kinsfolk' is chosen for 'brother' or 'brothers,' frequently no note is given.

For 'man' or 'men,' many different solutions are found. In [1 Cor. 1:25](#), NRSV reads, 'For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.' [Gen. 9:6](#) reads, 'Whoever sheds the blood of human,/by a human shall that person's blood be shed;/for in his own image/God made humankind.' That limps quite a bit poetically, though the committee trying to revise that little poem worked hours on it—but at that point we had not quite hit our stride in discovering inclusive language. The use of 'others' is often a successful solution; see [Mt. 6:1](#), 'Beware of practising your piety before others....' We also use 'one' and 'anyone' very frequently.

In [Acts 2](#) it would have been possible to have treated [2:14](#) in the way that [2:22](#) is treated, reading the first passage 'You that are Judeans' instead of 'Men of Judea,' just as [2:22](#) is read—'You that are Israelites.' Similarly, in [Gen. 2:7](#), we could have read '... then the LORD God formed a man ...' instead of 'then the LORD God formed man.' I fear that there may be a considerable number of other instances in which we simply overlooked places where the text could have been made inclusive.

The Sermon on the Mount also has excellent instances of inclusivity. See, for example, [Mt. 6:24](#):

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

The saying about the rich ([Mt. 19:23–24](#)) is also handled well:

Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

IV. REMAINING PROBLEMS

But problems clearly remain. Have we adequately addressed the language that gives trouble and offence to others who take exception [P. 304](#) to certain forms of reference? We have eliminated 'dumb' in favour of 'speechless' or the like, and we have rarely used the term 'leper' but have referred to persons with 'a leprous disease,' with a note indicating

that several kinds of skin disease are covered by the biblical term often translated 'leprosy.' But we probably are on the threshold of new forms of reference to persons with handicapping conditions, and it will be wise now to begin to collect references that can be used in a forthcoming revision.

More critical are such terms for the deity as 'Lord,' which the NRSV has put in small capital letters when the personal name for the deity, YHWH, appears in the text. We did not consider long enough, perhaps, the question whether there might be a more suitable term than 'Lord' for the Tetragrammaton. We did briefly consider the term chosen by James Moffatt in his translation of the Bible, 'the Eternal,' but there was no real support for its adoption. We talked of using 'the Sovereign,' but that seemed no more suitable than 'the Lord.' We needed 'the Creator' for those occurrences of just that term in the Hebrew. Finally, since we found no better alternative for 'the Lord,' we let that familiar term stand.

We were in agreement that we should not eliminate all the personal pronouns for the deity, though we did find that often we could reduce the number of such pronouns by simply eliminating those that seemed unnecessary. I find that readers are actually in a rather good position with the NRSV to make such adjustments in public reading as they think appropriate, now that the unnecessary masculine references to human beings have been so widely removed. It is a genuine pleasure, as I have had occasion to discover, to be able to read the lessons appointed for the day in such a way as to eliminate entirely masculine references to the deity, and to do so without having had to retranslate or reproduce the biblical lessons. With only a little practice and with nothing but the NRSV in hand, we can hear an English rendering of the NRSV lessons from Tanakh and Psalter, from Epistle and Gospel, that is genuinely inclusive.

The NRSV has its flaws. Numerous readings are not what one or more of the translators would have preferred. No doubt there are mistakes, instances of lack of consistency, infelicities of expression, and perhaps some howlers. But on the basis of my re-examination of considerable portions of the text I would judge that it is by far our most inclusive Bible, the one best suited for public reading among all the newer translations, and (as will be indicated elsewhere in this issue) our most accurate available English Bible. That is a very great deal indeed, and we have the translators, and our Princeton Seminary colleague Bruce Metzger in particular, to thank for this achievement.

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Feminist Hermeneutics and Evangelical Biblical Interpretation

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The author gives us a helpful analysis of contemporary feminist hermeneutics, as hermeneutics from the 'underside' of the neglected and oppressed and their challenge to traditional evangelical hermeneutics. In arguing for an evangelical feminist Biblical hermeneutic, he attempts to reconcile the cultural conditioning of both the author and the interpreter with the authority of Scripture. Not all will accept either the assumptions or conclusions of this article, but all of us must admit that our experiences do influence our interpretation of Scripture.

Hermeneutics is at the forefront of discussion today and is recognized as one of the most important and significant subjects about which we can talk together. Hermeneutics is intriguing and fascinating. Think of the fact that conservative evangelical Susan Foh can say that Jesus treated women with the utmost respect and that what Jesus did with and for women ought to change once and for all how we look at women. On the other hand Mary Daly, a 'left-wing' post-Christian feminist, says that Jesus did a lot with and for women and that what Jesus did ought to change forever how we look at women. How is it that Foh and Daly can say the same things about Jesus and women but after that be so different?¹ Or consider the new book recently published by John Robbins—a book that attacks the 'liberalism' of George McKnight, James Hurley and Susan Foh! Even within the hallowed circles of evangelicalism the hermeneutical issues are at the very foundation of our mutual concerns.²

My intent in this paper is to attempt to do two things. (1) I would like to give a relatively brief analysis of contemporary feminist hermeneutics and attempt fairly, I trust, to categorize feminist hermeneutics into seven typologies. (2) I hope to engage in some genuine and serious [p. 306](#) dialogue between the strengths and challenges of feminist hermeneutics and traditional evangelical Biblical interpretation with respect to our own hermeneutical struggles and disputes with specific references to numerous NT texts and the issues involved in their interpretation.

I. ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS

There have already been significant discussions analysing feminist hermeneutics carried out by feminist women scholars. I would particularly like to celebrate Carolyn Osiek, Phyllis Trible, Mary Ann Tolbert, Bernadette Brooten and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza as some of the scholars who have written at length with insight, perception and persuasion and with disturbing questions on the whole issue of feminist hermeneutics.³ If one has not read these persons, I commend them for the expansion of one's hermeneutical horizon.

¹ S. T. Foh, *Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint 1980) esp. 90–94; M. Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (2d ed.; New York: Harper, 1975) esp. 79–80.

² W. Robbins, *Scripture Twisting in the Seminaries, Part 1: Feminism* (Jefferson: Trinity Foundation, 1985).

³ C. Osiek, *Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist, 1986) esp. 25–43; 'The Feminist and the Bible: Hermeneutical Alternatives,' in *Feminist Perspectives on Biblical Scholarship* (ed. A. Y. Collins; SBL Biblical Scholarship in North America 10; Chico: Scholars, 1985) 93–105; P. Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Overtures to Biblical Theology 13; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) esp. 1–7; M. A. Tolbert, 'Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics,' *Semeia* 28 (1983) 113–126; B. J. Brooten, 'Early Christian Women and Their Cultural Context: Issues of Method in Historical Reconstruction,' in *Feminist Perspectives* (ed. Collins) 65–91; E. S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) esp. 3–95; *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: 1984); see also L. M. Russell, *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985).

Within evangelicalism there has been very little written on the question of feminist hermeneutics. Willard Swartley, F.F. Bruce, Alan Padgett⁴ and a few others⁵ have made forays into the area of feminist hermeneutics. Most evangelical writers in this area are men,⁶ and most of them have directed what they have had to say, for the most part, against the evangelical 'anti-feminists.' The literature here is growing and searching. It is important and deserves our attention.

I would define feminist hermeneutics, like all liberationist hermeneutics, as a hermeneutic from the 'underside,' the neglected and the oppressed. Thus, in agreement with Tolbert, feminist hermeneutics can be defined as a reading of the biblical text in the light of the oppressive structures of patriarchal society.

I would like to divide feminist hermeneutics into seven typologies. One should understand that these are not exclusive typologies. In fact, most practitioners of feminist hermeneutics engage in many of these typologies at the same time. For analysis, however, I think it is helpful to understand some of the dynamics and the issues that are raised in these different typologies.

1. *Jewish feminist biblical hermeneutics.* I will not treat this in any depth, nor will I attempt to nuance the differences among Jewish feminist hermeneutical positions. But I think it is very important for those of us who are Christian scholars to realize that the question of biblical feminist hermeneutics is discussed outside of the Christian Church within Judaism. Although there are many similarities between Jewish and Christian feminist hermeneutics, the differences are rather significant: the canon, the varying concepts on definitions of what constitutes a structured theology, the alternate exegetical traditions that shape the way texts are read, and the significance of the rabbinic tradition (which in Jewish feminist hermeneutics is as important as the Bible) or the discussion of how to put together the tradition. Jewish feminist biblical interpretation also raises for Christians the fundamental issue often located in the Christian observation that Jesus had a liberated or redemptive view of women. Jewish feminist thinkers want to ask: 'Is Christian feminism simply a new form of anti-Semitism? Is it a way for Christians to triumph on the question of women at the expense of Judaism? Can Christians blame Jews for the evils of patriarchy, androcentrism and misogyny?' These are not comfortable questions but are questions that need some reflection.

2. *The radical hermeneutic that rejects the Bible as hopelessly oppressive of women, patriarchal and misogynist to the core.* One should note that this hermeneutic did not arise from non-Christians. The strongest proponents of this hermeneutical stance are persons who at one time in their lives were deeply traditional, very conservative Christians. The experience of these women led them to a radicalization of their own stance to reject the Bible as hopelessly oppressive. p. 308

⁴ W. M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Issues in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale/Kitchener: Herald, 1983); F. F. Bruce, 'Women in the Church: A Biblical Survey,' *Christian Brethren Review* 33 (1983) 7-14; A. Padgett, 'Feminism in First Corinthians: A Dialogue with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza,' *EvQ* 58 (1986) 121-132.

⁵ Cf. eg. *Women and the Bible* (ed. A. Mickelson: Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986).

⁶ Note, however, the emerging work of R. H. Finger, 'The Bible and Christian Feminism,' *Daughters of Sarah* 13/3 (May/June 1987) 5-12; 'Is the Word of God a Word for Women?', *Update* 11/3 (Fall 1987) 1-4, 15 (the first article in a series on 'Models of Biblical Interpretation'); *Understanding Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's Feminist Theology* (thesis; Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987).

3. *The hermeneutic of documenting the case against women in the Biblical tradition.* In other words, it is the exposure of patriarchy, androcentrism and misogyny in the Biblical tradition. This hermeneutic does not find negative things in all places or on all levels in the Bible. But it does seek to identify those places in the biblical text where a patriarchal structure or an androcentric point of view, or even a misogynist point of view, has in one way or another shaped the story, shaped the text or influenced the assumptions behind the text.

4. *The hermeneutic of the prophetic, liberating tradition.* This is probably, in some ways, the foundation feminist hermeneutic. It identifies the biblical call for liberation of the oppressed as the norm by which the rest of the biblical data is evaluated for its authority. The biblical data says, for example, that women are persons of value. This is illustrated in how Jesus treats women and by Paul's statement in [Gal. 3:28](#). This then becomes the biblical call for the liberation of the oppressed, and it becomes the norm by which other texts are read. Often this particular typology is called developing a canon within a canon, although I think the issue is far more complex than that simple label would suggest.

5. *The hermeneutic of the remnant or of retrieval.* This is the hermeneutic that attempts to discern critiques of patriarchy from within. It seeks to find and expose the countercultural impulses within the text. These are texts that have been overlooked or distorted and that, when recovered or seen correctly, become texts of hope and of affirmation for women. For example, finding a person like Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia, Mary or Persus, or finding a way to read a text like [Gal 3:28](#) or [1 Cor 11:2-6](#) to show the participation of women in ministry, are examples of how the hermeneutic of retrieval has sought to read the Bible and find in it those texts that affirm positively the place of women in the Christian Church.

6. *The hermeneutic of recounting tales of terror in memoriam.* This particular hermeneutic has probably been expressed most clearly by Phyllis Trible.⁷ The idea of this hermeneutic is to recount tales of terror from the Bible, such as the unnamed woman in [Judges 19-20](#) who is raped and then cut into pieces and her flesh scattered. To tell such a tale of terror is a way of providing a context in which abused women and their abusers can remember, repent and pray that it never happen [p. 309](#) again. It is not unlike the hermeneutics of many black people in America who have told the stories of slavery and oppression as a way of building a shared memory, as terrorizing as it is, for group solidarity and of building a concept of the terror and the prayer that it never happen again.

7. *The hermeneutic of the reconstruction of biblical history.* This hermeneutic intends to take the hints that are found in the Bible, through the hermeneutic of retrieval, for example, and in the socio-historical analysis of women's history in the ancient Near East and in the Greco-Roman culture, to reconstruct a view of Christian history in which women are seen to have a place. It is within this seventh perspective, the reconstruction of women's history, that the most prominent of the feminist hermeneutical thinkers has come onto the scene and into prominence: Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, especially through her book *In Memory of Her* (the title of which is so beautifully and powerfully based on [Mark 14:9](#), one of Jesus' statements not often observed). In this book and in her

⁷ See note 3.

subsequent work Fiorenza has developed her hermeneutic of reconstruction in great detail.⁸

Fiorenza makes it very clear that the point of departure is not the Bible as normative authority. Rather, women's experience and their struggle for liberation becomes the locus of authority. The canon is not the Bible but the struggle. The Bible becomes a prototype, or what she calls a formative root model, from which examples and insights are taken that explain one's struggle to find one's place and to find solidarity with those women that are recounted in the biblical religion. Fiorenza stresses with power and pointedness the fact that all interpretation of the Bible has been skewed and that all interpretation of the Bible has come from an advocacy point of view, whether that advocacy happens to be patriarchal or feminist or, I might add, black, Asian, Reformed, Wesleyan, liberal or evangelical. Fiorenza wants to argue in reconstructing her feminist hermeneutic that everyone has an advocacy position in the interpretation of the Bible. She wants to make clear what hers is and challenges all others to do the same.

In presenting her position, Fiorenza develops what she calls a four-stage hermeneutic: (1) the hermeneutic of suspicion, which questions all androcentric and patriarchal texts; (2) the hermeneutic of proclamation, p. 310 which takes the texts that are supportive of women and proclaims them; (3) the hermeneutic of remembrance, the retrieval or recalling of those things that will be a word of hope to women; (4) the hermeneutic of creative actualization, by which she means to take what one can learn from the Bible as a feminist thinker and then recreate or reenvision what it means to be a women in the Christian tradition today.

Fiorenza's position is a fairly radical approach to feminist hermeneutics from an evangelical perspective. It challenges many things that are true of the evangelical commitment to biblical interpretation, not the least of which is the question of biblical authority itself, but also the entire received and often unquestioned understanding of hermeneutical process and hermeneutical stance.

II. DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF FEMINIST HERMENEUTICS AND EVANGELICAL BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

I would like now to focus on the strengths and challenges, with recognition of the weaknesses, of feminist hermeneutics in confrontation or dialogue with and in relationship to traditional evangelical biblical interpretation and its own internal hermeneutical struggles and disputes. I would like also to elaborate the dialogue with reference to some specific NT texts.

Allow me to begin with a few personal or autobiographical remarks. I grew up in a church in which I believed that the only true believers were the people that belonged to my denomination. I knew that all others (or nearly so) were damned. I also learned that women should never teach or preach. When I went to Wheaton College, reputed to be a bastion of evangelical strength, my pastor knew that I had already started to leave the faith. Wheaton College was a wonderful experience for me because it was a place that taught me to reexamine what I believed without destroying my faith. In that context, first on the question of dispensationalism and second on the interrelationship of the synoptic gospels, my professors said things that were different from things that I had ever heard

⁸ See note 3 for *In Memory of Her*, 'Emerging Issues in Feminist Biblical Interpretation,' in *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity* (ed. J. L. Weidman; San Francisco: Harper, 1984) 33-54, reprinted as 'Women-Church: The Hermeneutical Center of Feminist Biblical Interpretation,' in *Bread Not Stone* 1-22.

before. Out of that process I became passionate about hermeneutics and knew that my own personal quest would have to be how to read the NT. Sometime after college, in seminary, a little over twenty years ago, I realized that probably no question was more pressing to me as a reader of the Bible committed to its authority than the question of what the Bible said about women. I knew that somehow something was a problem. Thus for the last twenty-two years I have devoted myself to the exegesis and study of [p.311](#) the question of women and ministry in the NT. I have taught courses, I have lectured all over about this subject, and I have tried to involve myself with integrity in learning what I can from the lexica and the grammars and all the other things that we celebrate. And it has been a wonderful feast and a very enriching and growing experience for me, and I think—if I may be permitted to say it—even a beneficial experience for others.

I think I have come to realize, however, that some of the traditional exegetical questions, whether it be the meaning of *kephalē* or the precise background of [1 Cor 11:2-16](#) or whether [14:34-35](#) is an interpolation, are not the deepest questions that actually confront me as a believer. Rather, it is the hermeneutical questions with which I had begun to struggle even in college that seem to me to be the deeper questions of faith. In particular, I have found feminist hermeneutics to be the most stunning challenge—more stunning than black theology or than liberation theology from Latin America—to the evangelical myth of objective hermeneutics and interpretation. The quest on which most of us have been impelled, grounded very deeply in the fact that we believe that the Bible is in fact the Word of God sufficient for faith and practice, is that it is possible for believers to understand what God wants us to understand. Further, most of us are heirs of the North Atlantic intellectual tradition. We have come to believe the myth of interpretive objectivity. Of course we know that there are disagreements, but the quest is clear and our individual convictions are clear.

Now, however, I feel that I have come to understand for myself, along with many others, that in fact objective interpretation and objective hermeneutic is a myth. I would therefore like to try to identify five observations that for me are rooted in my own struggle with feminist hermeneutics and the impact I think it has upon me and upon others when it comes to struggling with the question of evangelical biblical interpretation.

1. *The locus-of-authority issue.* The Fiorenza hermeneutic is different from and a rejection of the classic locus-of-authority view included in the evangelical tradition. And yet a very prominent evangelical woman recently said to me, ‘Fiorenza is correcting something. I can feel it.’ I think that is right. What Fiorenza is correcting, probing, distorting or questioning is the fact that we have too often denied that our own experience is tied deeply to how we interpret the text. We have too often assumed that because the locus of authority is stated theologically and historically as belonging to the text in the Bible itself somehow our experience never gets in the way. [p.312](#)

Consider the questions of charismatic experience, or footwashing, or baptism, or church polity, or whether we are Reformed or Wesleyan, or how we feel about the questions of evangelism and social justice, ordination or no ordination, Church and state, pacifism or just war. These are questions on which all of us are heirs as evangelicals of differing viewpoints that are believed to be deeply Biblical and exegetically defensible. We have just agreed to live with the differences and not to face the fact that all such interpretation is related very much to the reality that, although the locus of authority may be in the text, it is never experienced anywhere but in actual individuals and communities. Individuals, or communities and traditions made up of individuals, are the only interpreters.

It might be useful to distinguish between authority and normativeness. Authoritative texts, I would posit, can have degrees of normativeness, which can be related to situational

differences in which the authority functions, to different parts of a text, or to the way the text can be read in different settings at different times. The text can be authoritative but not necessarily normative in the same way in all times and places. I think this is an important recognition for us to make. 'Greet one another with a holy kiss' is enjoined on us five times in the NT ([Rom 16:16](#); [1 Cor 16:20](#); [2 Cor 13:12](#); [1 Thess 5:26](#); [1 Pet 5:16](#)), but we do not take it as a biblical injunction that actually controls our liturgical life. We say it is an authoritative text that is not normative for us because we believe the ground of application has shifted.

Authoritative texts do require interpretation. That admission alone is a significant one for evangelical biblical understanding to make. The texts are not automatically clear. In practice, then, I would conclude that, although I continue to believe it is theologically, philosophically and methodologically important and historically valid to affirm that the locus of authority is in the text, such a position is an abstraction that has no significance apart from the reality that the locus of meaning for all of us as actually experienced or practised is found in individual interpreters, communities of faith, or ecclesiastical and theological traditions.

2. *The recognition of the conditioned character of interpreters and the text to be interpreted.* I once wrote that all interpretation is socially located, individually skewed and ecclesiastically and theologically conditioned,⁹ and I would still affirm that, as the previous observation p. 313 illustrates. Once one realizes this—and all of us really do; it is just difficult to admit it sentence after sentence in our interpretation—the realization also comes that the persons who wrote the biblical texts, the human authors, were also persons who were socially located, individually skewed and theologically conditioned. One reason why biblical authors wrote with different levels of vocabulary and different turns of phrase, to mention the simpler things, is due to their different cultural conditioning.

The Christian Bible was actually produced in cultural, historical and social settings, and every document in the Bible is shaped and touched by the setting in which it was produced. That is the reality of divine revelation. It is the constant difficulty of our evangelical tradition that we have usually eliminated docetism from our Christology but we never have quite succeeded in eliminating it from our view of the Bible. There is always the fond hope that somehow the Bible has not been touched by the culture in which it was produced. Cultural factors do not minimize biblical authority. Their recognition is simply the way that it is. The cultural realities are there both in us and in the texts we interpret.

3. *The power of patriarchy, androcentrism and misogyny and the questions of God's intention in biblical texts.* Mary Daly, in the second edition of *The Church and the Second Sex*, did a very clever thing. Ten years after the first edition she pretended, as it were, that she had discovered this book written ten years earlier by someone named Mary Daly and wrote a new introduction to the book wondering what this woman ten years prior had said. She then critiqued herself and showed her own shifts in opinion. There is one chapter in her book that she can not find anything wrong with: the chapter on the early Church fathers. She says: 'This women ten years ago said the Church Fathers were patriarchal, androcentric and misogynist and neither I nor any scholar in the last ten years has been able to come up with one piece of evidence that changes that.' I know that the early Church fathers are not the Bible, but they are part of the cultural environment of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean world. They serve as an illustration of something that could be

⁹ D. M. Scholer, 'Unseasonable Thoughts on the State of Biblical Hermeneutics: Reflections of a New Testament Exegete,' *American Baptist Quarterly* 2 (1983) 134–141 (the specific statement is on p. 140).

documented all over the Mediterranean world about the patriarchal and androcentric nature of culture and the deeply misogynist strain that touched every aspect of the culture of the Mediterranean.

This bias has affected all of us, both women and men. We are probably prepared to admit the patriarchal and androcentric influences, at least on some occasions. It is very difficult, however, to admit the [p. 314](#) misogynist. But this patriarchal, androcentric, maybe sometimes even misogynist bias, along with the conditioned character of both texts and interpreters, brings us to some of the deepest and most disturbing questions of biblical interpretation that our evangelical tradition has too long ignored and that we must confront in order to have any integrity as those concerned for the interpretation of the Word of God. I might note, too, that feminist hermeneutics did not create these deep and disturbing issues and questions. They are in the text inherently. It is simply that hermeneutical sensitivity, often aided by feminist hermeneutics, enables us to see that such issues do in fact exist and need our attention. I would like to focus some of these deeper fundamental issues in the following texts.

[1 Cor 11:2-16](#). Here we meet the issues regarding women's headcovering, in which the *kephalē* debate comes to the fore. Some of us have spent a lot of time on the lexical history of *kephalē*. But the issues in [1 Cor 11:2-16](#), I submit, are much deeper and much more difficult than *kephalē*.¹⁰

Why was Paul so exercised in the first place about women having their heads covered? What would lead Paul to bring forth five arguments as to why women ought to cover their heads (the *kephalē* argument, the creation argument, the nature argument, the practice of the churches argument, and the presence of the angels argument)? Why so much energy for women to have their heads covered? These are pressing questions—especially when virtually all of us have decided in practice that it is not relevant advice.

Paul's concern suggests that there is an issue of sexuality here, however defined, that must have been at stake. In this context I find it significant that Paul uses this argument: 'For a man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of man' ([11:7](#)). It seems to me that we have given almost no attention to the fact that Paul here fails to mention that woman was also created in the image of God. We know that Paul knows [Gen 1:27](#), because we can see the grammatical nuance of the LXX in [Gal 3:28](#) in his use of *kai* between 'male' and 'female.' But the argument in [1 Cor 11:7](#) required stating only that man was in the image of God. This is a selectivity that in first-century Judaism comes very close to a denial of a woman's status and worth. Why does Paul do this? For androcentric cultural reasons it is important that women have their heads covered— [p. 315](#) important enough to stress that man is made in the image of God and not to mention that woman is too. I think Paul repents a little in [1 Cor 11:11-12](#). I interpret the strong *plēn* and argument here to be his own attempt to clarify that whatever he had said in support of women's headcovering should not be misconstrued to deny the mutual interdependence, even equality, of women and men.

[Eph 5:24](#). The text states: 'As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives be subject in everything to their husbands.' To what extent are we prepared for the 'in everything'? Do we understand what 'in everything' meant in first-century Mediterranean society?

One of my parabolic stories relates to the time when I was speaking in a very conservative church in northern Vermont. I had been invited to give my views on women in ministry (to be corrected the next weekend by another speaker!). I shared my views and, when I finished, the first question came from a man seated in the front row. He stood

¹⁰ See the news report on the 1986 ETS annual meeting, at which this paper was presented, in *Christianity Today* 31/1 (January 16, 1987) 44-45, in which the extensive *kephalē* debate at that meeting is featured.

with his enormous Bible and said, 'Sir, I am disturbed to hear that you do not believe the Bible.' I said, 'I am very sorry; I thought I made it very clear that I did believe the Bible.' He said, 'Let me read the text to you: "As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject to their husbands."' And he sat down. Notice that he did not say 'in everything' in reading the text. I was a visitor, so I decided to risk all and said, 'Sir, it is clear that you respect the Bible.' He said, 'I certainly do.' I said, 'I am really shocked and disappointed that with the text in front of you, you left out two words. You left out 'in everything.' And I know why you left them out. You do not really believe it.' He jumped to his feet and said, 'You know, you are right.' We then had for the next hour and a half a most fascinating hermeneutical discussion with a group of lay persons in a very conservative church about their marriages and what that text meant.

I would like now to go back to the first century. In the Mediterranean world of the first century the general overwhelming perception about women was that they were inferior, that they ought to stay at home, that they ought to be submissive, that they ought to be silent, that they ought never to speak in public, and that they should have no role of leadership of any kind. Wives were to be subject to their husbands 'in everything.'

In general, the ancient Greco-Roman Mediterranean society was structured basically as follows. The average age of a man at marriage was thirty, but the average age of a woman was eighteen or less at marriage. When a man married he was already a man of the world who knew how to live in society. He was a person who could function socially and economically. When a woman married she was still a girl [p. 316](#) who had never even been allowed to answer a knock at the front door of her home. A typical woman bore a child about every two years or thirty months through her childbearing years. She was always 'barefoot and pregnant' and at home. She bore a child as soon as the previous one was weaned. Although many of them died, that was her lot. Further, women generally had no education beyond the domestic arts.

Now if the above description is at all typical of the structure of a family of ordinary people in the Roman empire, given also the view of women as inferior, hear again the text in [Eph 5:24](#): 'Let wives be subject in everything to their husbands.' The point I want to make is this: I do not think that most of us have been honest as evangelical interpreters with the highly patriarchal, androcentric character of such texts. We have not struggled with what it means to read such a text and then live it out with theological integrity in our own lives. I have many evangelical friends who privately will say that they have a marriage of mutual equality but publicly would always say that the wife is subject to the husband in everything. That is what one is supposed to say if one is devoted to the Bible in the evangelical tradition.

My question in this observation is this: Can we learn to read these texts—[Revelation 14](#), [1 Timothy 5](#), [1 Corinthians 11](#), and [Ephesians 5](#)—with a kind of integrity that understands what the texts are in their patriarchal and androcentric, even misogynist, contexts and then move with hermeneutical consistency to appropriate these texts for life today? Such hermeneutical integrity is needed over against 'interpretations' that pick and choose inconsistently from such texts or ignore them altogether.

4. *Starting points and the balance of texts.*¹¹ There is a commonly accepted hermeneutical agenda that says clearer texts should interpret less clear texts. I think it is a good principle. The problem is, however, that assumptions have been made as to which are the clearer texts in our tradition.

¹¹ My comments here are closely related to my larger treatment of these issues in '1 Timothy 2:9-15 and the Place of Women in the Church's Ministry,' in *Women, Authority and the Bible* (ed. Mickelsen) 193-219, esp. 212-218.

For example, ‘everybody’ knows that 1 Tim: [2:11–12](#) is the ‘clear’ text through which all other texts on women in the Church are to be read. However, is it ‘clear’ whether one should start with [Heb 6:4–6](#) or [Rom 8:28–39](#) in discussing the security of the believer? Which text is the window through which one views the other texts? Do not our [p. 317](#) theological traditions tend to select our windows for us? The point that seems important to me is that there is nothing internal to the canon, the authoritative Word, that tells us with which text to begin.

On the issues of women in the Church it is just as plausible to start with [Gal 3:28](#) as a clear text as it is to start with [1 Tim 2:11–12](#). In fact I would be willing to argue that [Gal 3:28](#) is far more clear when one recognizes (1) that the three pairs are traditional in the Greek philosophical tradition and in Judaism, (2) how they functioned socially within the Roman empire, and (3) how Paul acted out the Jew/Greek dichotomy even as documented in [Galatians 2](#). We have a rather clear idea of what Paul meant that ‘in Christ there was neither Jew nor Greek’ and why he took that theological dictum so seriously at a personal, social, practical, church-membership level. [1 Timothy 2](#), on the other hand, is replete with difficulties, such as the absolute adornment statements ([2:9–10](#)) and the notoriously difficult ‘salvation by childbearing’ at the conclusion of the paragraph ([2:15](#)). These difficulties are too often obviated by ignoring them or relativizing them. Rather, they are part of the immediate context and paragraph of [2:11–12](#). That injunction cannot be considered any clearer than its context. Actually [1 Tim 2:11–12](#) is a far more difficult, less clear text than [Gal 3:28](#). But my point really is not necessarily to opt for [Galatians 3](#) at this point. What I want to stress is that from a hermeneutical point of view the question of where one enters the discussion is really an open question to which no canonical text speaks with clarity.

There is also the question of the balance of texts. How do we put it all together? Again, a commonly accepted hermeneutical dictum is that any viewpoint that claims to be biblical should be inclusive of all texts that speak to a question. We want to do that when we are talking about Church polity, baptism, eternal security, or the nature of inspiration. But somehow, on the question of women in the Bible, so often in the history of the evangelical movement only [1 Timothy 2](#) has been discussed. Jesus and women, women in [Romans 16](#) and [Philippians 4](#) and [Gal 3:28](#) have been dismissed or ignored. My hermeneutical appeal is that we must learn to include all relevant texts in a genuine balance if we are to have integrity in the claim to be biblical.

The matter of balance also applies to the consistent use of different texts from the same document. For example, considerable attention is given by many to [1 Tim 2:11–12](#) and its supposed normative character understood as excluding women from authoritative speech or leadership in the Church. Most of these same authors, however, totally [p. 318](#) neglect [5:3–16](#), not even mentioning any consideration of its possible normative character. Such inconsistency in use and application of texts from the same NT document is an affront to the hermeneutical principle of balance.

5. The deepest motivating factors in the whole discussion of women and ministry in the NT and in the Church today are not grammatical, lexical, exegetical, historical, or even hermeneutical in the traditional sense. Rather, there are three profound realities underlying the whole issue today. It is time to recognize, to admit and to begin to deal with these realities.

The first of these realities is the personal issues of sexuality, power and personal identity. It is one thing for a person in power (generally males in evangelicalism) to tell the powerless (generally females in evangelicalism) to be content. It is another for the powerless to begin to speak. Questions of sexuality and personal identity are threatening issues for many. This is especially true when we face the patriarchal and androcentric,

even misogynist, character of our own traditions. If women have been viewed—and they have in our traditions—as sex objects, temptations, distractions and those responsible for sin, especially sexual sins, then a man’s personal identity is threatened when he must accept and respect a woman as an equal and as a colleague. The male tradition, suppression and unwillingness to talk of incest, rape and abuse of women as it has occurred in the Church only deepens the threat level.

The second reality relates to the issues of partnership between men and women in professional and lay ministries and the personal and institutional management of role reversals and new role expectations. Our inability to engage in partnership in ministry is not an indictment of or argument against women in ministry. Rather, it is an indictment of male dominance and insecurity. Men today too often accept the dictum of Cato’s speech against the repeal of Oppian law in 198 B.C.: “The moment women begin to be our equals, they will be our superiors.”¹² Not too long ago in a debate in which I was a participant a theologian said to me, ‘If there is equal access to ministry by both men and women, the world will soon return to barbarism.’

The argument that equality of persons can be wholly and absolutely affirmed with distinctions in role differentiation is a sound one. We attempt to observe this in clergy-lay, dean-faculty and other such p. 319 relationships. However, the argument is called into the deepest question and suspicion when all role differentiation is tied to gender and that especially at the ultimate/highest/final levels of authority.

The third of these realities is those issues that relate to the understanding of the personal nature and imaging of God. God is not a sexual being. He is not a male or a female. Persons created in God’s image were created as male and female. God’s ‘maleness’ has no more essential or substantive reality than God’s ‘righthandedness.’ We have not yet seen the level of threat there is to all—but especially to men—in coping with such a God.

III. CONCLUSION

The five observations detailed in the preceding section lead me to be committed to an evangelical feminist biblical hermeneutic. Such a commitment involves certain realities and understandings.

First, such a hermeneutic commits one to the biblical affirmation of the equal partnership of women and men in the ministry of the Church.¹³ It is my deepest conviction that the full evidence of Scripture, with all proper hermeneutical awareness of contexts and settings, and an understanding of balance and consistency in interpretation mean that we must rethink some of our traditions and affirm with clarity and conviction the biblical basis for the full participation of both women and men in the ministries of the Church.

Second, such a hermeneutic identifies patriarchal and sexist texts and assumptions behind texts in the Bible and understands them as limited texts and assumptions. These limitations reflect the historical-cultural realities from and in which biblical texts arose. These limitations must be understood as fully as possible within the larger intentions of the author(s) and through the canonical balance of texts and the overarching themes of the gospel and the work of God in both men and women.

Third, such limited texts need not be ignored, excluded or polemicized against. Rather, they should be interpreted from a particular vantage point—the dual commitments to the

¹² Livy *History* 34.1–3.

¹³ See D. M. Scholer, *A Biblical Basis for Equal Partnership: Women and Men in the Ministry of the Church* (Women in Ministry 2; New York: The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of American Baptist Churches, 1986).

equal dignity and equality of men and women and to Scriptural authority. This dual [p. 320](#) commitment has a long and honourable history in the Church, as has been carefully argued and presented within our circles.¹⁴

Finally, one must recognize that an evangelical feminist biblical hermeneutic is attacked from two sides. The conservative nonfeminist evangelicals tend to see the position outlined in this paper not only as quite wrong but so wrong as to suggest that it constitutes denial of Scriptural authority. On the other hand, the nonevangelical feminists tend to see the position outlined here as not taking seriously, or seriously enough, the patriarchal and sexist nature of much of Scripture and/or as naively optimistic (or even self-serving) in its interpretation of the difficult texts as limited. In spite of these risks, I believe that the Biblical data and hermeneutical integrity¹⁵ require such an approach as indicated here.

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Wives and Women's Ministry (1 Timothy 2:11–15)

Paul W. Barnett

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The author's imaginative assumption that the women in this text were wealthy influential wives adds a new dimension to the exegesis of this key passage. By interpreting the text in the context of the preceding and following textual contexts, the author gives fresh insights on this perplexing passage. His call for women to be part of a pastoral team has been advocated by others, including John Stott. Another article in this issue of ERT highlights the complications of the roles of husbands and wives where both are ordained ministers in the same local church. It would be interesting to be able to compare today's situation with that of Aquila and Priscilla ... Or was it Priscilla and Aquila!

I. CONTEXT

1) Immediate Context: The Church Gathering (2:1–10)

The passage is set in a context where Paul is instructing Timothy about the public meeting of the church. The local church is to look out from itself to general concerns. We note the

¹⁴ Cf. e.g. N. A. Hardesty, *Women Called to Witness: Evangelical Feminism in the 19th Century* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984); J. Hassey, *No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry Around the Turn of the Century* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986); R. A. Tucker and W. Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); Scholer, '1 Timothy 2:9–15' 216–218.

threefold 'all' in verses [1-6](#) as Paul exhorts that 'supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanks-givings be made for all men ... because God our Saviour ... desires all men to be saved ... [through the] one mediator ... Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all'. When the apostle writes, further, 'I desire then that in every place the men should pray' (v.[8](#)), it is clear that he is referring not just to congregational life in Ephesus but to church life everywhere.

Paul's teaching about church life in this passage is not narrowly parochial but universal in its application—it relates to 'all men' in 'every place'. This does not mean, however, that his words might not have been stimulated by circumstances in Ephesus, nor that they might have particular application there (cf. [1:3](#)). p. 322

2. The Social Context: Wealthy/Educated Women in the Church (2:9-10)

The passage about the need for modest dress of women/wives ([1:9-10](#)) belongs to the same universal paraenesis since it is introduced by *hōsautōs* (=likewise), though it is not so rendered in recent translations. That the exhortation is general in character is further strengthened by the similarity of Paul's words used here, with those of Peter's in another place.

[1 Tim. 2:9](#)

[1 Pet. 3:2-3](#)

I also want women to dress modestly, withYour beauty should not come from outward decency and propriety, not with *braided hair*adornment, such as *braided hair* and the or *gold* or pearls or *expensive clothes*. wearing of *gold* jewellery and *fine clothes*.

The references in both passages to braided hair, gold [jewellery] and fine/expensive clothes cannot be coincidental. Clearly these restrictions apply to Christian women in both the Pauline and the Petrine churches; they are not local and particular in application but universal and general.

This is not to deny, however, that there may have been specific reasons for Paul to remind Ephesian readers (through Timothy) of this teaching. What is evident is that the exhortation arose in the broad context of early Christianity, even though its application here may perhaps be local. P. B. Payne's suggestion that the ban on elaborate appearance was conditioned by cultic prostitution at the temple of Artemis in Ephesus, apart from being quite speculative, is contradicted by Peter's almost identical words, written as they are, to a general readership (see endnote 9).

The women in question are wealthy; of that there can be no doubt, given the nature of the apostolic restrictions on their extravagant clothing, their elaborate hairsyles and their opulent jewellery. Only the wealthy could afford these luxuries. In regard to Peter's sphere of ministry, we know of two women who would probably have been of at least moderate means—Mary hostess of the Jerusalem Church ([Acts 12:12-13](#)) and the wife of Cornelius ([Acts 10:1-2](#)). Doubtless Peter would come to know other women of the middle and upper classes in the course of his extensive travels, especially when he came to sophisticated Greco-Roman cities like Corinth and Rome.

Paul must have met many wealthy women in the course of his ministry to the elegant cities of Macedonia, Archaea and Asia—in p. 323 particular Corinth and Ephesus which were among the largest and most significant cities in the world of the time. Indeed, the New Testament specifically states that wealthy women were among those converted through his ministry ([Acts 16:15](#); [17:4](#), [12](#), [34](#)). Some at least among these appear to have

provided patronage and protection for the apostle ([Acts 16:15](#); [Rom. 16:2](#)), perhaps occasioning the ill-repute Paul appears to be answering in [1 Thess. 2:3–5](#). That there were some at least among Corinthians who were ‘influential ... of noble birth’ ([1 Cor. 1:26](#)) and that he had friends who were *Asiarchs* (=leading citizens of Proconsular Asia—[Acts 19:31](#)) is clear evidence that Paul had extensive exposure to the rich and famous among the cities where he ministered. He knew about the ways wealthy women dressed, decorated their hair and adorned themselves with jewellery. He, like Peter, must have had opportunity to observe other aspects of their lifestyles as for example their levels of education and the nature of their relationships with their spouses.

It has long been known that the great women of Rome in early Roman Imperial society were wealthy and politically powerful in their own right, especially those who belonged to the Julio-Claudian family. (Under Roman law, neither marriage nor divorce meant the transfer of the woman’s property/wealth to their husbands.)

It is now becoming clear that numbers of women in the Greek and Asian cities in which Paul lived were also famous in their own right as patronesses of the arts.¹

The most predominant citizen of Proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the leading city (if not the capital, which was probably Pergamum) was the *Archiereus* of the Imperial Cult. This person presided at the annual *Koinon Asians*, the representative council of the province, and also officiated at the numerous public festivals of the Cult of Rome. Inscriptional evidence reveals, quite remarkably, the existence of no less than fifteen *archieieiai* over a period of two centuries and that these women high priests often held this high and prestigious office in their own right, quite independently of their husbands. Frequently their status derived from a distinguished father.² p. 324

The widespread modern belief that all women in antiquity were invariably eclipsed by men and that Paul is reinforcing a chauvinist status quo appears not to be well founded.

In fact the exhortations to wealthy women by Paul and Peter suggests that the opposite was the case. Is it because *wealthy* women customarily dress and decorate themselves expensively that they are now enjoined by Paul and Peter, as Christian women, to do so modestly and circumspectly? Paul’s exhortation may be directed, in the first instance, to these women *praying* in church in modest, unflamboyant clothing. The *hōsautōs gynaikas* ... of v.9, following injunctions to men praying could be understood in that way and indeed was so understood by Chrysostom.³ To be sure, women/wives prayed in church according to [1 Cor. 11:5](#).

Is it because *wealthy* women often expressed themselves elsewhere (e.g. in philosophic discourse in private salons) that Paul, for his part, calls for Christian women/wives to limit themselves in speaking in the public meeting of the church? It is taken for granted that a wealthy woman in Graeco-Roman society was an educated woman, capable of reading, writing and speaking. It should not be unnoticed that both apostles exhort these (wealthy/educated) women to be *submissive*. Peter enjoins wives’ submissiveness (*hypotassomenai*—[1 Peter. 3:15](#)), to their own husbands in terms of their

¹ See, for example, R. Kearsley, ‘Women in Public Life in the Roman East: Iunia Theodora, Claudia Metrodora and Phoibe, Benefactress of Paul’, *Ancient Society* (Macquarie University) 15 (1985), 124–137. Cf. D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor*. (Princeton, 1950), 1518 n.50; R. MacMullen, ‘Women in Public Life in the Roman Empire’, *Historia* 29 (1980), 213–228.

² See R. A. Kearsley, ‘Asiarchs, Archiereis, and the Archiereiai of Asia’, *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 27 (1986), 183–192.

³ Quoted R. Y. K. Fung, ‘Ministry in the New Testament’ in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, Ed. D. A. Carson (Exeter, 1987), 197.

lives (3:2) whereas Paul writes ‘a woman should learn in ... full submission’ (*en pasē hypotagē*—1 Tim: 2.11).

It is suggested, therefore, that the reference to women’s dress, hairstyle and jewellery points to a social context which bears on the exegesis of [1 Tim. 2:11–15](#). It was by no means a narrow or local context since it appears in the writings of both Peter and Paul. In Paul’s case the paraenesis occurs as part of a generalized passage about the conduct of prayer within the churches. The presence in the churches of wealthy, therefore educated and articulate, women called for some comment. Now that they were Christians, how were such women to relate to their husbands at home? How were they to relate to their husbands in public life and in the church? How were they to present themselves in dress and adornment in public? How were they to conduct themselves in the public life of the church? [1 Pet. 3:1–7](#) and [1 Tim. 2:9–15](#) provide some answers to those questions.

This does not mean, however, that the teaching in these Petrine/ Pauline passages is thereby limited in application to wealthy/educated p. 325 women. The presence of wealthy women in church was a historical catalyst which raised the more general question. Problems posed by women from this socio-educational background created the need to address these questions in broader ways, as relating not merely to wealthy women, but to women and wives in general. This Paul does in the passage under discussion, which we will now look at in more detail.

II. EXEGESIS

This text consists of three parts:

- a. A positive statement: [how] a wife/woman should learn
- b. A negative statement: a wife/woman should not teach
- c. The reason for (*gar*) this positive/negative statement.

Parts (a) and (b), the positive and negative statements, occur in chiasmic form (A.B. B.A.) as follows:

A *gynē en hēsychiā manthanetō en pasē hypotagē*
B *didaskēin de gynaiki ouk epitrepō*
B *oude authentein andros*
A *all’ einai en hēsychiā*

(a) [How] a wife/woman should learn

What is meant by *gynē* While *gynē* can mean woman or wife the latter meaning is to be preferred given the reference to childbearing in v.15. Thus the passage appears to be directed to *married* women in the first instance, despite the preference of the translations for the more general word. Although surprising to us today, it is probable that women then were naturally thought of as wives/mothers and that to be unmarried/childless was regarded as a state of womanhood, which was in some way qualified. The same applies also to men who were naturally thought of as husbands and fathers. It was customary for parents to arrange marriages for both sons and daughters while they were still infants.

So much attention has been focused on the negative statement (b), not permitting a woman to teach, that the positive statement has been ignored. Yet it is clear that Paul encourages the wife to ‘learn’, the content of which must refer to the learning of Christian doctrine in the public teaching in church. The importance of women learning goes back to Jesus, who, it will be remembered, commended Mary for desiring to be taught by him, in contrast with the busily domestic p. 326 Martha ([Lk. 10:38–41](#)). This was a new thing and

must be seen against the background of Judaism where it was forbidden that women should learn the Torah. In the Talmud is written: ‘may the words of the Torah be burned rather than be handed over to a woman’ (*y. Sota* 8, 10a). Women were not even permitted to say the Benediction after a meal (*m. ber.* 7.2). That Christian women were encouraged to learn was a new departure.

Her learning, however, was to be characterized by two attitudes. (i) *En hēsychiā* as used elsewhere by Paul indicates that the meaning is ‘in quietness’ rather than ‘in silence’ ([1 Thess. 4:11](#); [2 Thess. 3:12](#); [1 Tim. 2:2](#)).

This phrase must be important since it is repeated as the fourth line in the chiasmus. It implies a spirit of receptivity, a contentment of spirit, an absence of clamour and disputation. The phrase is probably connected with the one following.

(ii) To whom is the woman to be *en pasē hypotagē*, her husband or the teacher of the church? The injunction that wives be subject to husbands by the apostles Paul (*hypotassēssthai*—[Eph. 5:22](#); [Col. 3:18](#); [Tit. 2:5](#)) and Peter ([1 Pet. 3:1–6](#)) point to the husband as the object of her submission. The context of the passage, however, suggests that it is to the teacher from whom she ‘learns ... the sound doctrine’ in the church, that she is to be subject (cf. [1 Tim. 1:10](#)). Who is this teacher? According to the very next passage in the letter Paul states that the *episkopos* is to be ‘able to teach’ (*didaktikos*—[3:2](#)). In all probability, therefore, the one[s] from whom the wife/woman learns in quietness and full submission is the teacher of the sound doctrine in the church, the *episkopos*.

Why was it necessary for Paul to write in this way? Was it because wealthy/educated women may have proved disruptive to the order of the congregation? Was there a particular problem where the *episkopoi* were of relatively poorer means and of lesser education and ability? If such were the teachers from whom the women learned, then it must have been seen as appropriate to enjoin quietness and full submission.

(b) A wife/woman should not teach

Paul’s ‘I do not permit’, which appears in the present tense, should not be taken to mean his merely personal preference given on this one occasion and which readers other than the original Ephesians could regard as optional.⁴ p. 327

What then does Paul mean by ‘to teach’ (*didaskēin*)? This is an activity in which Paul was engaged; he is ‘a ... teacher of the nations’ ([1 Tim. 2:7](#); cf. [2 Tim. 1:11](#)). His delegate and co-worker Timothy is encouraged to ‘command and teach’ ([1 Tim. 4:11](#); cf. [6:2](#); [2 Tim. 4:1](#)). Paul instructs Timothy, ‘The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to *teach* others’ ([2 Tim. 2:2](#)).

That the *presbyteros-episkopos* is in mind here is clear from Paul’s words to another delegate, Titus: ‘appoint *presbyteroi* in every town (in Crete) as I directed you ... an *episkopos* must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been *taught* so that he can encourage others by *sound doctrine* ...’ ([Tit. 2:5, 9](#)). According to the passage following our crucial text, an *episkopos must (dei)* ... be a skilful teacher (*didaktikos*).

The view of J. P. Meier⁵ that the *episkopos* was a *presbyteros* who over a period of time was established as of proven capability in ‘preaching and teaching’, and therefore worthy of ‘double honour’ (= honorarium, *diplēs timēs*—5:17) is attractive. It is noteworthy that both references to *episkopos* in the Pastorals are in the singular and both relate to the role

⁴ For the technical discussion of the meaning of *epitrepō* (=I permit) and the significance of the present tense see D. J. Moo, ‘The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2.11–15: A Rejoinder’, *Trinity Journal* 2 BS (1981), 199–200.

⁵ J. P. Meier, ‘PRESBYTEROS in the Pastoral Epistles’, *CBO* 35/3 (1973), 325ff.

of teacher of the faith. It could be argued that the most appropriate synonym for *episkopos* in these letters is *didaktikos* ('=skilled teacher'; cf. [2 Tim. 2:24](#)).

It appears that 'to teach' refers to the teaching office in the congregation as exercised by one or more elders who were duly recognised as *episkopos*. Our passage does not permit a wife/woman to exercise this ministry. The passage immediately following asserts that the *episkopos/didaktikos* is a man ('a husband ... *his* family ... *his* children'). The negative prohibition against a wife/woman followed by the positive description relating to a man appear to be strong grounds for a wife/woman not occupying the office of teacher to the church.

This restriction, however, is not absolute. Women are encouraged to teach the faith to other women ([Tit. 2:3-4](#)) and, by inference, to children ([2 Tim. 1:5](#); [3:15](#)). It should be noted that the apostle, neither here nor elsewhere, withdraws his approval of women prophesying (cf. [1 Cor. 11:5](#)). Thirty years later there is reference to a 'prophetess' (*prophētis*) in nearby Thyatira. That she is spoken of negatively by John is not because she was a prophetess *per se* but that she was a *false* prophetess ([Rev. 2:20](#)). Paul's remarks to Timothy in this passage appear to be stimulated by the desire of some (wealthy/educated?) p. 328 women to occupy the office of *episkopos/didaktikos* in the congregation.

The third line of the chiasmus contains the word *authentēin*, about which so much has been written. A measure of its significance is that *New Testament Studies* has published two articles on the meaning of this word in the 1980s, one by G. W. Knight (1984) and the other by L. Wilshire (1988).⁶ Wilshire's study is of particular importance in that it makes use of the now available database resources of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (University of California). The TLG is well advanced and when completed will contain approximately 63 million words from about 3000 authors spanning the thousand years beginning from the time of Homer 600 BC.

Using the references to *authentēin* in the major lexicons Knight investigated a dozen or so occurrences from antiquity and concluded that 'the broad concept of "authority" is present everywhere' (p. 150). The resources of the TLG, however, enabled Wilshire to investigate more than three hundred usages. What does Wilshire find in relation to the use and meaning of *authentēin* in [1 Tim. 2:12](#)?

Wilshire finds against Knight that 'there is no recognised meaning of this term. Indeed it is a time of a multiplicity of meanings ... several meanings of the word are in circulation' (pp. 124, 130). In the epoch roughly contemporaneous with Paul *authentēin* is used by some authors to mean 'murder/murderer' and by others to mean 'to have authority'. He notes that Christian writers Eusebius and Chrysostom always use the word to denote 'authority over'. What, then, is Wilshire's conclusion? With due caution this scholar suggests that Paul's meaning should be determined by the word's use in context in [1 Tim. 2](#). That is, it is the notion of 'authority' which is in the apostle's mind. Moreover, he concludes that 'One must always take seriously interpretations within the traditions of the church' (131). In other words, Wilshire, while rejecting Knight's generalizations based on the small sample available to him, nonetheless appears to have reached the same conclusion, though this is implied rather than stated outright.

From my point of view, since *authentēin* cannot, in context, mean 'murder/murderer' it must therefore mean 'authority over' and this, surely, is confirmed by the interpretation consistently found in the Church Fathers.

⁶ G. W. Knight, 'AYTHENTEIO in reference to Women in 1 Timothy 2.12', *NTS* 30 (1984), 143-157. L. E. Wilshire, 'The TLG Computer and further reference to AYTHENTEIO in 1 Timothy 1.12', *NTS* 34 (1988), 120-134.

To what, then, does *authenthein* refer? Ronald Fung takes it to mean p.329 ‘any exercise of ecclesiastical authority over a man’.⁷ The chiasmic structure (A.B. B.A.) suggests otherwise. Since *hesychia* appears twice (A ... B) signifying synonymous parallelism it seems likely that *didaskein* ... *gynaiki ouk epitrepō* = *oude authenthein andros*. (The *oude* need not necessarily introduce a completely new thought—see [Gal. 1:12](#)). This means that ‘to teach’ (in the church) signifies ‘to exercise authority over’ the ones who are learning.⁸

Who then is the *andros* that the wife/woman is not to have authority over by teaching? The same ambiguity exists with *anēr* as with *gynē* which can mean woman or wife. Is *anēr* a male or a husband? If it is accepted that *gynē* (v. 11) = wife, it is consistent that *anēr* = husband in this passage. This would mean that, in the public life of the church, a wife should not exercise the teaching office of the *episkopos* to (= exercise authority over) her own husband or any other husband in the congregation.

This does not, however, prevent her from exercising a *ministry* to her husband and other husbands in the church. According to 1 Cot. 11 she may both pray and prophesy in the church, yet with her head covered indicating that she ‘honours’ her husband as her head (cf. vs. 4, 5). Praying/prophesying, however, are charismatic, not ‘official activities within the *sōma*. Wives/women were not discouraged from these ministries.

The position of the full-time, remunerated, *episkopos* ... *didaktikos*, however, was different. The very character of this office meant the exercise of a powerful ongoing authority over the gathered congregation, including over the husbands.

The flow of the apostle’s exposition is important. It must be kept in mind that our review passage is followed immediately by the *episkopos* passage. [1 Tim. 2:9-15](#) should be read with one eye on [3:1-7](#). If this is correct, Paul appears to be implying that the *episkopos*, as an *aner*/husband will be hindered in the management of ‘his own family’ ([3:4](#) cf. [3:12](#)) if, within the church, he is taught by (= subject to the authority of) a *gynē*/wife, whether his own or another’s. If in public he is under authority to a wife, his own or another’s, how can he exercise manage his household in private? And if he can’t manage his household how can he manage the church of God (see [3:4-5](#))?

This teaching does not relate narrowly to relationships between a p.330 would-be woman teacher and an *episkopos* within a church. The *episkopos* is more than a teacher; he is a role model to all married men with the church (see [3:1-7](#)). His moral uprightness, his stable marriage, his well-managed household are not just job-qualifications. He is to be an exemplar, a *typos*, whose lifestyle embodies behaviours which are to be imitated, and, in time to characterize every husband within the church in which he is a teacher. The home life of every family within the congregation is to be influenced by the carefully set example of the *episkopos*. (The concept of the minister as a role model to members of the congregation is, of course, often found within the New Testament as the frequent use of *typos* and *mimētēs* indicate.)

(c) Paul’s reason for (gar) this positive/negative statement (vs. 13-14)

Two reasons are given for the apostle’s ruling in vs. [11-12](#), both of them based on [Gen. 2-3](#).

(i) Man’s temporal priority over woman in [Gen. 2](#) is the first reason given why women should not exercise authority over men as teachers in the church.

A clear parallel exists between [1 Tim. 2](#) and [1 Cor. 11](#). Here the praying/prophesying woman must not dishonour her ‘head’ (i.e. her husband) by ministering with her head

⁷ Fung, 200.

⁸ C. Blomberg, ‘Not Beyond What is Written’, *Criswell Theological Review* 2/2 (1988), 410-417.

uncovered. It is because man precedes woman in creation and because woman was taken from man that the man is to be regarded as her 'head'. Certainly husband and wife mutually depend on one another ([11:11](#)) just as, it is assumed, God and Christ mutually depend on one another. Nonetheless, God is the 'head' of Christ and the man is 'head' of the wife. The basis of this headship is derivation. Woman had her origin in man just as, it is implied, the incarnate Christ had his origin in God.

A wife/woman's assumption of the office of *episkopos* in the church would be to overturn the principle of headship and therefore jeopardise the God-ordained basis of husband-wife relationships within marriage. What is on view in the church in the person of the *episkopos* must strengthen, not weaken, marriages. It is submitted that Paul's use of [Gen. 2](#) in [1 Tim. 2:13](#) is similar to his use of that passage in [1 Cor. 11](#).

(ii) It may appear that Paul is disqualifying the woman from teaching because 'Eve ... the woman was deceived and became a transgressor' as if women are therefore more gullible or sinful. This, however, would be contrary to another passage where the entry of sin is attributed to Adam ([Rom. 5:12, 17](#)). Moreover, why then would [p. 331](#) women be permitted to teach other women or children or to pray/ prophesy?

More careful examination, however, suggests that what is advanced here is not a second reason stated negatively against Eve. Rather, it is a continuation of the first reason as the words in the original indicate: *Adam gar ... kai Adam ouk*. Adam was formed first and Adam was not deceived (That 'Eve ... was deceived and became a transgressor' is gratuitous and parenthetical). Paul's arguments are not based on some supposed doctrine of female credulity but purely on the text of [Gen. 2](#). A man should teach because Adam was created first and Adam was not deceived (first, but, as it were second). In other words the reason a man should teach are related to Adam—his primacy and his resistance to transgression, not on a supposedly low opinion of women.

What then of the very difficult [v.15](#) about whose meaning there have been many suggestions. No proposed solution is without difficulties. For example, the *teknogōnia* appears to be too general in meaning to describe the great act of childbearing through which the Messiah was born. Again, the salvation for which she aspires is, according to Pauline use elsewhere, too specifically eschatological to denote deliverance through the dangers of childbirth.

It seems clear that the apostle's words bear on the pastoral situation he is addressing in the present context, [1 Tim. 2:9–12](#). It should be noted that the noun 'woman' (or 'women') does not appear in the original text. The translators' uncertainty about whether to use the singular or plural is understandable given that the text reads '*she* shall be saved ... if *they* continue in faith etc'! My suggestion is that a chiasmic structure may be discerned here, as follows:

women ... to dress modestly with ... propriety (*sōphrosynēs*)
a woman should learn in quietness and full submission
she shall be saved
(if) they continue in ... propriety (*sōphrosynēs*).

It is probable that Paul is addressing problems associated with wealthy (and therefore *educated* women) in the church throughout this passage. He begins the first line with 'women ... in propriety'; he concludes in the fourth with 'they ... in propriety'. Is he not speaking to the same group? (Yet not in a way that would altogether exclude women not belonging to that socio-economic group.)

Since the middle lines address 'a woman ... she', it seems logical that 'she shall be saved' relates in the first instance to the 'woman [who] is [not] to teach or to have authority over a man'. This 'woman' [p. 332](#) is, in our view, an aspiring *episkopos*, a

remunerated teaching elder in the congregation. This implies her willingness or desire to turn from *teknogōnia* in order to fulfil the full-time role as teacher of the church. If this is a correct reading of the context, Paul is discouraging this attitude and arguing that a wife's role as a mother is paramount and should not be abandoned for the sake of the office of *episkopos*. Let such a woman understand that her path to salvation means accepting the role of Christian motherhood. Then, shifting to the plural in addressing wealthy wives/women in particular (but also wives/women in general), he adds that salvation is not arrived at merely by *teknogōnia* but only as they 'continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety', that is as they confirm their ongoing *Christian* commitment.

III. OTHER EXEGETICAL APPROACHES

Having proposed a particular exegesis of the passage we may briefly note some other views. Broadly speaking these fall into two classes. The first argues that there was a specific, historical, problem in the church at Ephesus. Thus, for example, it has been argued a heresy, or heresies, were entering the church at Ephesus through false teachers and these were influencing a number of women in the church.⁹ The very diversity of opinions as to the nature of the crisis in Ephesus warns us about the improbability of this approach.¹⁰

On this view, if we may for convenience state in general terms, Paul's teaching in [1 Tim. 2:11-15](#) is so conditioned by the crisis in the church at Ephesus that the passage has only limited application outside its original context. While there is evidence in the Pastorals for the activities of false teachers and indeed of their influence over some women it is doubtful that such data impinge on [1 Tim. 2:11-15](#) since the immediate context of that passage related to *all men ... in every place*. The passage is too general to be explained by such elaborate and specific reconstructions, which as we have noted differ from one another. It should be observed, moreover, that such reconstructions depend on combining the references of both First and Second [p.333 Timothy](#), as if directed to the same historical situation, an assumption which is to be doubted. First Timothy refers only once to wayward women, the younger widows ([5:15](#)). But there is nothing to connect these widows with the women addressed in [2:9-15](#).

The more common approach, the socio-cultural, suggests that Paul is merely repeating the [alleged] opinion of the day, namely that women were intellectually inferior and, accordingly, were to remain in silence in the church. As a result of the emancipation and liberation of women, through a long and painful process within history, however, Paul's views are now understood to be clearly anachronistic and should be dispensed with at this point. So the argument runs. It is, however, doubtful that all women in Graeco-Roman times were regarded as inferior. There is some evidence, at least, to the contrary.

The view proposed here is that Paul is addressing the general question of the role of women in the congregation as stimulated by the presence there of numbers of wealthy and presumably articulate women. As I see it, Paul's negative response is not in terms of a woman's inability to occupy the office of *episkopos* ... *didaktikos* (= bishop/teacher) but rather what effect this incumbency would have on marriages within the church and indeed on the value of the mothering role. Paul's concern is not superficially cultural but

⁹ P. B. Payne, 'Libertarian Women in Ephesus. A Response to Douglas J. Moo's Article "1 Timothy 2.11-15: Meaning 2 and Significance"', *Trinity Journal* 2 NS (1981), 185-190.

¹⁰ C. Kroeger, 'Ancient Heresies And a Strange Greek Verb', *The Reformed Journal* 29, (1979), 12-15. See also A. Padgett, 'The Pauline Rationale for Submission: Biblical Feminism and the *hina* Clauses of Tit. 2.1-10', *E.Q.* LIX/1 (1987), 39-52; 'Wealthy Women at Ephesus', *Interpretation* XLI/(1987), 19-31.

profoundly creational. What happens in the church must not overturn, deny or detract from the roles and relationships of men as husbands and fathers and women as wives and mothers which are rooted in the very creation of God.

IV. IMPLICATIONS

It hardly needs to be stated that the matter of women's ministry is deeply divisive within the Christian Community. If this passage is held to be applicable today, the implication would be that a woman may not be the principal teacher in the congregation. Paul appears to be concerned to hold in due equilibrium the delicate balance of husbands and wives within the families of the churches. The view taken here is that Paul's concerns are not purely cultural, to be confined in their application to his era.

However, not all congregations today are family churches. Many are youth congregations in schools and universities; many are single sex congregations in girls' schools and women's colleges, hospitals and prisons. Moreover, the team ministry is increasingly seen to be the way forward in our modern industrialized cities; the value of the mono-ministry is increasingly questioned. [p. 334](#)

If women prayed and prophesied in the churches, if they were encouraged to learn—as they are in this passage, if the older taught the younger, if they worked alongside Paul in the work of evangelism—then there is no good reason of exegesis or hermeneutics which would limit their ministries in those and related areas today. If [1 Tim. 2:11-15](#) restricts women from becoming the senior teacher to the family-congregation there appears to be no reason why they should be prevented from the whole range of pastoral, didactic or sacramental ministry under the leadership of the senior teacher in a team or in their own right in specialist, single sex congregations.¹²

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The Oppression of Asian Indigenous Women

Victoria Corpuz

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Asia has the largest number of indigenous people in the whole world. The total population of indigenous people in the world is 200 million and 150 million of these are found in

¹² 12. See also M. A. G. Kaykin, 'The Fading Vision? The Spirit and Freedom in the Pastoral Epistles', *EQ* LVII/4 (1985), 291-305. D. J. Moo, "'1 Timothy 2.11-15: Meaning and Significance"', *Trinity Journal*, 1/1 (1980), 62-83. C. D. Osburn, 'AYTHENTEIO (1 Tim. 2:12)'. *Restoration Quarterly* 25/1 (1982), 1-12. P. Perkins 'Women in the Bible and its World', *Interpretation*, (Jan. 1988), 33-44

around 20 countries in Asia. This fact is hardly known, however, even among the other indigenous peoples because it is very difficult for us to come out of our countries not only because of economic considerations but also because of increasing repression in many of our countries. India has a total of 60 million indigenous people, Burma has 11 million, and the Philippines 7 million. China would also have a huge number, but I don't have the data available. If women make up half the population, then there must be 75 million indigenous women living in Asia.

Almost all Asian countries, with the exception of Thailand, Nepal and Burma, have undergone histories of colonization not only by the Northern superpower countries but also by Asian nations like Japan, Indonesia and India. Many of those which are supposed to be independent have remained as neocolonies of more powerful nations. What is seen today as problems and issues of indigenous peoples are the result of the colonial experience. The imposition of foreign economic and political systems and alien world views has caused untold misery to the indigenous women and men. The extent of the devastation and dehumanization brought to the lands and lives of indigenous peoples can be better appreciated if viewed from the perspectives of indigenous women.

When the traditional subsistence economies of indigenous peoples were eroded by the capitalist market economy, the indigenous women were the ones who were directly marginalized. In Asia many indigenous women are pushed to sell their labour in agribusiness, become tenants, migrate to the cities and join the ranks of the urban poor or, if lucky, become one of the exploited factory workers. A recent development is the alarming increase in the rate of indigenous women who are forced to go overseas either to work as domestics or be victimized by sex trafficking syndicates. Many of those who become domestics have suffered from maltreatment from their employers. Countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh and Nepal have been exporting women overseas [p.336](#) and there is an increasing number of indigenous women being recruited into this system. Many indigenous communities in Asia have been converted by big business and international lending institutions into resource base areas where mining industries are set up. Open cut mining, which is highly destructive of the environment is being done in many indigenous communities. This method of mining has caused the displacement of small scale miners some of whom are women.

The Narmada Valley Project in India will displace more than 2 million people, the majority of whom are the Adivasi tribal people. This project is supported by the World Bank and it will flood 550,000 hectares of land if completed. In Sarawak, Malaysia, a [US\\$ 10 billion](#) dam project called the Bakun Hydro electric dam will displace 5,000 Dayak people from their lands. The displacement brought about to indigenous families has increased the burden of women, who often have to bear the brunt of social and economic dislocation.

Another cause of displacement is brought about by the presence of foreign military bases in ancestral homelands. Okinawa hosts 75% of all US military presence in Japan and these occupy 20% of the total land area of Okinawa. The two biggest US bases outside of American soil are found in the Philippines, and lands of the Aetas and Ibalois indigenous people were lost. The indigenous peoples who are around these bases end up as scavengers in the garbage areas within the base perimeters, or some women become prostitutes hoping that they may end up with American men. Some indigenous peoples, like those in West Papua and East Timor, are victims of the Transmigration Policy of the Indonesian government, which allows the non-indigenous segment of the population to move to the indigenous communities so that the 'backward' natives will assimilate the dominant culture. Militarization is increasing all over Asia, and in some areas paramilitary units are formed which replace the military in their dastardly acts. There have been

reports of indigenous women being raped and sexually harassed because the military has covertly approved such methods of dealing with rebellious peoples. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh reports of human rights violations, torture and rape are increasing everyday. There is an increasing number of refugees as a result of militarization.

The debt crisis has affected most of the Asian countries and the indigenous women feel very much the effects of this. Cuts in social services deprive indigenous women of their rights to health care. To earn foreign dollars for debt repayment, tourism has been developed with women as the main attraction. The commodification of indigenous women in Asia has worsened in the past few years. Thailand and Manila have earned the label of sex centres of the world.

Resistance and opposition to all these efforts to subjugate and dehumanize the indigenous peoples have been waged and there are still many which are ongoing. At present, the Naga and Mizo peoples of Nagaland are putting up a fight against the Indian government. The West Papuans are still struggling against the Indonesian government and military. The Cordillera peoples in the Northern Philippines and the Bangsa Moro in the Southern region are very much part of the national liberation movement being waged against neocolonialism. The Karens in Burma are also resisting the Burmese government which has consistently discriminated against them. The indigenous peoples in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh are also actively engaged in a resistance movement against the Bangladeshi government. The Tibetan peoples in China continue to assert their rights to self-determination. Indigenous women are actively involved in these resistance movements in varying degrees. They are very much victims of human rights violations brought about by militarization. Documentation of incidents of rape, sexual abuses and arbitrary detentions among the women is increasing.

The situation of Asian indigenous women has definitely worsened these past few years and there is an urgent need to look more deeply into how they are affected by such issues and what they are doing about it. There needs to be more support to the efforts of indigenous women in Asia to organize themselves. Many of our sisters are still in the early stages of organizing themselves as Women. It is because of this situation that the indigenous women in Asia would like very much to be a part of a broader network which can provide a venue wherein they can air all these issues and get further support for their struggles. p. 338

Women in Conflict: Latin American Version

Beatriz Zapata

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In 1992 Spain will have a great celebration. She will celebrate 500 years since the conquest of the West Indies, which opened the door to the Latin American Continent.

When the Spanish *conquistadores* arrived in our Latin countries, they admired the land and took for themselves much of the natural riches. However, they decided that of all the

discoveries they had found, the best was their beautiful, dark women. There is no doubt that the Latin woman has been profoundly influenced by this conquest. In many of the Latin countries, such as Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia and some parts of Mexico, which have a high percentage of ethnic groups, the Latin woman's behaviour is greatly influenced by these groups.

Vasconcelos, the great Latin American author, writes that the union of the Indian and Spanish races formed what he calls 'The Cosmic Race'. This union has helped all of Latin America to develop a singular character. In contrast with North America—The United States of America—we Latins have very little racial discrimination. We worry more about odour than about colour!

When the great *conquistadores* arrived in Latin lands, they felt an obligation to make their conquest a religious one, as well as political and geographical. They introduced the Indians to the influence of a Roman Catholic Christianity. Without a doubt, this influence also has modelled the Latin feminine mind at all levels, influencing her emotional, physical, mental and spiritual development.

All of these factors—the Indian background, the Spanish conquest, and the influence of the Roman Catholic church—have had an important part in the forming of the Latin woman. According to United Nations statistics, there are 220 million women in Latin America. 47% of the women of this continent belong to the work force. 110 million women are of child-bearing age.

CONFLICTING ROLES OF WOMEN IN LATIN AMERICA

The expectations that a woman has for her personal life, and for her role as wife and mother, have definitely come into conflict with each other. Part of this conflict comes from the lack of definition of her role as a woman. What the men expect from her is not what she knows she can give to her Latin world. The Latin woman believes in herself and has been waiting, for centuries, for the opportunity to show the world her great potential.

Since the early 50s, the Latin American woman has clearly been awakening to her potential—physically, intellectually and spiritually. Suddenly, she has realized that her neighbours, the women of North America, have gained much ground in every area of their lives as they fought for their rights. The Latin woman decided to follow their example. The first thing she did was to show the Latin world that she had an intellect worthy of notice. Also, she started to take part in the political aspect of her country and demanded that men respect and honour her.

Many of these changes were due to the influence of a positive and truthful Gospel. While the Roman Catholic church prohibited the use of contraceptives, in its ecclesiastical laws, evangelical voices were raised protecting the rights of the couple, and therefore of the woman. This helped to make her feel her worth as a mother and believe she should have the privilege of choosing her partner and children. When the political parties and the multinational companies began to accept women in their ranks, the Latin woman knew how to respond with honour to that challenge.

The Latin woman has definitely come a long way towards her acceptance and a true liberation from the oppression that she has suffered for centuries. In all the Latin countries, we are watching the awakening of a new woman—full of talent, ability, education, and above all, hope.

The evangelical Church has not been left behind in this revolution. Without fear, the Christian evangelical man, in many cases, has finally appropriated the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving honour to the woman in the church and in Christian organizations.

There is still much ground to cover on this issue but it is only fair to admit that great and definite steps have been taken to remedy the oppressive situation in which the woman has lived.

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ has transforming power.

PRESSURE POINTS FOR MARRIED AND SINGLE WOMAN

What are the incidental issues that the woman faces as she struggles to fulfil her role? Is her role changing in respect to marriage, family and work? **P. 340**

Most of the women are accustomed to work almost from infancy: carrying water pots on their heads, walking for miles to the market, working in the fields, side by side with their husbands, cooking, cleaning and now in modern times, managing and directing great companies. The Latin woman expects to cooperate as much as possible with the home budget. Unfortunately, on many occasions, this is due to the absence of her husband or his lack of responsibility in meeting the family expenses. The high incidence of alcoholism has become a curse in the home, as well as the idea that the man is master and lord and can have a wife plus other women, without even giving a thought to see if the needs of his family are satisfied.

In the face of these problems, the woman with courage stands up and supports the family. Most of our Latin homes are matriarchal. The children and even the husband have come to depend emotionally, materially and even financially on the work and strength of the mother and wife.

On the other hand, we must mention the increasing number of single women. One of the greatest needs in the evangelical church in Latin America is to develop a programme that can help to meet the needs of the increasing number of single women. There are very few evangelical churches and very few countries that have this kind of programme. Many people still think that the woman's main purpose in life is marriage. Since that is their way of thinking, that is the way they protect it. With this view they have only created a serious conflict in the expectations that a woman has of life. Since in our Latin culture we do not approve of nursing homes for the elderly, the single woman has to face her future responsibility to her parents and their need for support. If the family has other children, and they are married, everyone takes for granted that the single woman is the one who is responsible for her parents.

When we talk about the working woman, we must remember that the Latin woman does not necessarily work outside the home. She is so courageous that she thinks of creative ways of doing something in her home, to help the family's budget. The small industry is very common in the Latin home. In the front room she may set up a small store, knit, cook or make ceramics. Among the ethnic groups, she sits on the floor, spending hours weaving the beautiful tapestries which her husband will later sell in the market place.

Often the great expectation of the single woman who works outside the home is that when she marries, her husband will help her with responsibilities in the home, and together they will carry the load. Nothing may be further from the truth. When she marries, she may **p. 341** find an altogether different situation. There are very few Latin men who help bathe the children, care for them, cook, or clean the house. To the Latin man, to do that is to do work beneath himself. If the evangelical church could include in its discipleship programmes good, solid, Bible-centred and realistic pre-marital counselling, it would help to minimize the problems caused by this tradition.

The political violence in Latin countries has made a victim of the Latin woman. The future is not very promising. A woman expects to be happy, but she soon faces the absence

and even death of her husband. Since she has several children, she must leave them to go to work. All too frequently, because of her lack of schooling she is unable to find a good job and must rely on prostitution. In other cases, the need pressures her to become a beggar, to live in subhuman conditions, or to steal. Her priority is always the same: her children's welfare.

In Latin America, social standing is very important and social differences are well established. There is a strong emergent middle class. A woman who belongs to this emergent social class wants to prove to the world that she can outshine men in her job outside the home. Her personal frustrations in her marriage, or in staying single, press her into great effort in her work, often causing disintegration of her home. In some parts of the Latin world there is still a possibility of finding domestic help for the home. The mother finds it easy to leave the children under the care of the maids, and they become the ones who are educating the next generation.

THE IMPACT OF THE GOSPEL ON LATIN WOMEN

Among Christian evangelical women, it has been very encouraging to see the changing power of the Gospel. When they come to know Christ and his Word, they have become convinced that the Lord wants them to fulfil their ministry in the home. Many have made adjustments in their home budgets in order to dedicate themselves to homemaking. Of course, in most of these cases, the husband and father also knows Christ and is ready to obey his Word.

One of the great influences that the evangelical church could have on Latin governments is to demand that existing laws protecting women be enforced. Serious social injustices often give more protection to the man than to the woman. Not infrequently the man who has a mistress protects and supports her better than he does his own wife, the mother of his children.

The Latin woman is beginning to hope for better things in the future. She has always lived with hope. In many social circles women are [p. 342](#) already talking about retirement, a concept that was never mentioned before. Also, we are beginning to see women appointed to important public offices, serving in the community, and making their influence felt in many places. There are fewer situations of racial and salary discrimination now.

It is very encouraging to see the increasing number of evangelical women who wish to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and with his power, to be examples to the next generation. We do not fear the future; we want only to be treated with honour and dignity. There are many roles in which God is using Latin women. We need to encourage our pastors and leaders to include in their biblical teaching a solid instruction concerning man's role as a Christian husband and father. He should be taught his responsibility as head of the home. He needs to understand that he should minister to his wife and faithfully fulfil the priesthood God has entrusted to him.

Conflicting expectations? Maybe. Changing rules? Yes. But above all this, there is a sure and firm hope that God is using Latin women to accomplish great things, both personally and spiritually.

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Women in Revolution: The Philippine Version

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano

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FILIPINO WOMEN IN HISTORY

Our legends, pre-Spanish records and historical literature reveal that Filipino women had been on an equal footing with men as a matter of course and were in the forefront of many struggles. The creation account of man and woman in the legend of *Malakas* and *Maganda* (Strong and Beautiful) showed that both emerged from one bamboo tube simultaneously in partnership and togetherness, bettering at first glance the rib story in Genesis. Women in the pre-Spanish and early Philippines (before 1600) inherited property equally with their brothers. Women engaged in commerce as well as men and could enter into contracts and business arrangements without consulting their husbands. When married they could have babies only when they wanted and initiate divorce if they so chose. Women were central to the religious life of early Filipinos as priestesses though there were male priests as well.

But the three centuries of Spanish rule crushed that freedom and egalitarianism. The strong 'machismo' spirit of the Castilian culture prevailed. Now, the Filipina was put under the total control of men—father, brother, husband, priest, soldier, lover. She was domesticated in the convent where she was taught to pray, suffer, accept God's will and do intricate needlework in the process.

Towards the twilight of Spanish rule, one woman by the name of Gregoria de la Cruz carried the momentum of the revolutionary movement after her husband, Andres Bonifacio, the founder of the Philippine Revolution, was treacherously killed by a rival faction. And so the ascent of Corazon Aquino to the presidency, after the assassination of her very popular husband, has its models in our historical past. It really did not come as a total surprise at all.

FILIPINO WOMEN IN THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

Let us go back to EDSA and the revolutionary days of February 1986. On that nerve-wracking Monday, the 24th, which dawned with a teargas [P. 344](#) attack on the vigilantes by the Marcos men, the defection of low-flying Sikorsky helicopters from the Air Force, the false alarm of Marcos' departure and the massive turn-out of citizens on to the streets, I spoke to four women of differing stations, ages and circumstances, and they had only one answer to my question: 'Why are you here?'

A young mother who was suckling her child on the road embankment answered: 'I want my little one to grow up free. It's for her that I am here.' And we smiled and understood each other. At noontime, I sat next to a pudgy, middle-aged woman on the grassy spot under a miserable-looking coconut tree by the side of Gate 2 of Camp Aguinaldo. She told me she was a retired *comadrona*, a midwife from a town public hospital. And she was there along with a niece and two other women neighbours because she had made a vow two years ago to attend all cause-oriented rallies since Ninoy's

assassination. Now she wanted Marcos out. 'He has oppressed us long enough. Now, we will show him he cannot forever kick us around.'

By mid-afternoon, we edged our way closer to the other Camp across the thickly populated avenue. We sat on the street embankment along with countless others. To my right was a young college girl from central Philippines with her brother. Very politicized, extremely articulate, she foresaw a better country with the kind of struggle that we were in. 'We may die,' she expressed fearlessly. 'But that's the price of freedom.' To my left was a well-looking grandmother just helped by her maid to sit beside me. I smiled at her and said, 'You should be taking your siesta at home at this time.' She side glanced at me and in good humour glared: 'And miss a piece of the action? No, no, no. My whole family has been here since two days ago. My grandsons and granddaughters. If they are not afraid to lay down their lives for democracy, why should I? After all, I am already old.' I squeezed her hand resting on the cement. 'You are admirable, I agree with you,' I said.

During the revolution itself, the voice of hope, anguish and glory was a woman's, who almost single-handedly broadcast to millions of Filipinos through Radio Veritas events that were unfolding at EDSA and elsewhere. She practically pushed us to join the revolution from our sleepy town of some 60 kilometres or so away. And when the radio transmitters were put out of action by the Marcos hatchetmen, she continued from somewhere secret—inspiring, goading, appealing. June Keithley was also a heroine.

Finally, we find the icons and pictures of Mary, the Blessed Mother of the Catholic Church prominently hoisted up on the gate of the rebel [p.345](#) camp; held high to ward off oncoming tanks and soldiers like *talismans*; flapped against walls and jauntily carried about by devotees. 'Why the predominance of Mary's image?' asked one evangelical participant, belligerently, of a priest lecturer in a session on 'Theological Reflections on the Revolution'. The priest quietly and patiently explained the role of symbols in life and especially in religion. And although he acknowledged the possible abuse and misuse of symbols in the Catholic Faith, he also pointed out their benefits and advantages. 'Apparently,' he said, 'we, the Filipino people found in the symbol of Mary the spirit of grace, nurture, inner strength and all encompassing love. Now what soldier for instance, would kill his mother? And as we all know our revolution was almost bloodless. It was even winsome, festive and laughing. Only a woman's touch can do that.'

Now a woman's touch prevails in the highest seat of the land. Meanwhile, the rest of us have gone back to our usual work at home, in the office, in the field, in the classroom. And we find hardly any conflict between keeping vigil in the streets and wiping running noses. Or holding up placards against tortures and looting, and hanging clothes out to dry. Or throwing confetti out of office windows, and throwing out garbage. Filipino women, despite the prevailing impression existing in a 'machismo' society, intuitively know what they want and what they are able to do. They also know how to go about their business without aggression and the infringing of ethical propriety. I also feel that the 20-year iron rule of Marcos helped sharpen our sensibilities and goaded many of us to interest ourselves in causes, issues and principles. We were forced to look beyond our curtained windows to see the lives of others, the tragic fate of our nation, and were challenged to do something. And that golden opportunity to act and be counted, came in the last gasping years of the Marcos regime. Its crowning glory was the February revolution.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

But then we ask: From the biblical perspective, how should we regard this tremendous and growing power of women in our land? I am reminded of a woman judge in the Old Testament who is mentioned in this matter-of-fact way: 'Now Deborah, a prophetess, the

wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time' ([Judges 4:4](#)). The writer uses no condescending tone here. No effort to take special significance from the fact that the judge and the prophet was a woman. His is an objective, straightforward narration of fact. This seems to say that God, [P. 346](#) the Lord of history, takes it for granted that at some point in a people's life, women may rule and exercise power. And there is nothing extraordinary in this arrangement. Huldah, too, was a prophetess during the reign of kings in the Old Testament. Queen Esther did her part to save her own people, the Jews, in her exiled land in Persia. England in more modern times has been ruled by strong women, and has had Margaret Thatcher sitting on the Prime Minister's seat. Golda Meir of Israel was well-loved by her people. Prime Minister Bandaranaike had her time of leadership in her country, Sri Lanka. So did Indira Gandhi. And now Corazon Aquino of the Philippines. Scripture is explicit about husbands being heads of their wives, but nowhere does it mention that only men can be heads of their countries. That silence gives women a lot of divine and democratic space to expand their potential to leadership and to become world-class leaders.

Furthermore, the rise of female power can be regarded in general terms as an outworking of God's Kingdom values here on earth. Values of equality, of dignity of persons, of justice, of holistic development. For too long, women have been looked upon as mere appendages to the exploits and achievements of men. They have been relegated to the position of second class citizens whose main and sole domain is the hearth and the home. During the snap election campaign last year, the former dictator of the Philippines twitted the now President Corazon Aquino as only good for the bedroom. It was one of his greatest mistakes, which the women voters never forgot. Marcos considered Filipino womanhood so low in importance, yet himself lived under the thumb of his wife, Imelda.

And it is tragic that such thinking about women is still prevailing among people of Christian orientation and even among the most orthodox. We always seem conveniently to forget the affirmation of sexual equality of the 1st century Christians, as expressed by Paul in [Galatians 3:28](#).

There is neither Jew nor Greek;
There is neither slave or free;
There is neither male or female
for you are all one
in Christ Jesus.

I believe that the oneness of which Paul speaks is not a monochrome denial of racial, class or sexual differences but one of mutuality and sharing and respect regardless of colour, class standing and sex. In Christ, each of us is a person saved by grace in our own right. Each is [p. 347](#) endowed with divine gifts. Each has the potential to become what God wants us to be. If women are treated shabbily in the unredeemed world, in Christ they are raised up and placed again on the same plane as the men. Salvation does not mean only personal forgiveness and restoration of fellowship with God; salvation frees us from the straightjacket roles that sin-tainted human cultures have imposed upon us, so that we might be truly free to be and to *become*.

REFLECTING A YEAR LATER

As a Christian, I would say that the jubilant, forceful and winsome people's action, including female power, in the 1986 February revolution needs to be thankfully recognized and be given due honour. Besides that, the gains made by women in socio-economic and political involvement should be continually nurtured and directed towards

national development. The Revolution of 1986 has opened the eyes of Filipinos, and perhaps other peoples of the world, to the fact that it is possible to transcend our petty squabbings, factions, class and sexual prejudices and other dividing lines to a unity of spirit, heart and soul to bring about freedom and democracy in a troubled land.

In the Philippines, the women made a distinctive contribution towards bringing that about. From the baby girl suckling her mother's breast, to the midwife, to the high-society grandmother, to a girl peanut vendor, to the nun facing the tanks, to the resplendent icons of Mary, to the brave women of media and election computers, and to Corazon Aquino herself.

Dave and I retraced our steps to EDSA in February, 1987, exactly a year after the revolution. The women were there again, standing side by side with the men. The old and the young. Even the lame and the blind. All jubilantly and courteously jostling each other for vantage points to see the on-going parade. Again we melded together, became one happy family as a nation and as a people, no longer to oust a tyrant but to celebrate our newly-founded freedom and power. As a Christian and as a woman, it was both a sobering and exhilarating experience to me.

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano is a writer and poet from Silang, Cavite, the Philippines. p. 348

Indispensable But Marginalised: Women in the Australian Church

Rosamund Dalziell

Reprinted with permission from Zadok December 1990

The Australian church would not exist without women's participation and ministry, but their contribution has never received the recognition it deserves. Indeed women have been marginalised in many areas of the church's life. Declining church attendance by women as they enter the paid workforce must force the church to reassess its assumptions about women and its own future. Loss of female volunteers to the paid workforce is making the church aware of how much its activity has depended upon women. Women themselves are confronting the church by calling for equitable participation in decision-making, church structures, mission, workshop and in the ordained ministry. The World Council of Churches has acknowledged the problems faced by women in the church by launching the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, from 1988.

Women who have been misunderstood, marginalised or in some cases exploited by the church include women in the paid workforce, women working at home, women called to the ministry, missionaries, single women, and even women married to ministers or to candidates for ordination. Their opportunities for ministry have been restricted, their spiritual experience rejected, their voluntary work taken for granted and their right to participate in decision-making denied. The church is slowly changing, but more slowly

and painfully than wider society, which observes the struggle with irony, complacency or incomprehension.

WOMEN ARE TAKING INITIATIVES

Australian women in the church are becoming more articulate about their place in it and in calling for change. New women's organisations arose in the 1980s. The Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW), founded as a lobby group for women's ordination in the Anglican church, provides support for women seeking ordination and explores issues in feminist theology. Women and the Australian Church (WATAC) was formed within the Catholic Church at the **p. 349** initiative of superiors of religious orders—nuns in particular—to raise the consciousness of Catholic women about Christian feminist issues. MOW and WATAC hold regular joint conferences in conjunction with another new, Sydney-based group, Women-Church which publishes a journal of the same name. There are similar women's groups in the United Church. Women outside the church are becoming increasingly interested in spiritual issues: the National Women's Conference (Canberra, October 1990) included eight sessions on women's spirituality.

Women are publishing books which communicate their concerns to the wider church. Muriel Porter, church historian and journalist, gives a powerful and detailed analysis of the Anglican debate about women's ordination in *Women and the Church*,¹ also documenting the achievements of other protestant churches in this area, often overlooked. Barbara Field, an educator, presents the stories and thoughts of ten Anglican women deacons in *Fit for this Office: Women and Ordination*.² Margaret Ann Franklin and Ruth Sturmey Jones edited a series of women's and men's stories about the role of women in the church, in *Opening the Cage*.³ Janet Nelson and Linda Walter, in *Women of Spirit*, bring together feminist concerns and the church by looking at the question 'What is women's place?', with God, in Scripture, in the twentieth century, in the paid/unpaid workforce, in her body, in the church and in the ordained ministry.⁴ Eileen Diesendorf has examined the reasons why many intelligent and committed Christian women become disaffected, in her study *Why some bright women leave the church*.⁵

Women in the Uniting Church initiated a national conference on women, on the theme 'The Church Made Whole' (January 1990). The organisers, determined to publish the entire proceedings of this conference, did so in a book edited by Elizabeth Wood Ellem.⁶ Women in other denominations too are being heard. Merolyn Coombs **p. 350** wrote in *National Outlook* on the 'agony' over women's ordination among Seventh-day Adventists.⁷

¹ Porter, Muriel (1989) *Women in the Church: The Great Ordination Debate in Australia*, Penguin Australia.

² Field, Barbara (ed) (1989) *Fit for This Office—Women and Ordination*, Collins Dove, Melbourne.

³ Franklin, Margaret Ann and Sturmey Jones, Ruth (1987) *Opening the Cage: Stories of Church and Gender*, Allen & Unwin, Australia.

⁴ Nelson, Janet and Walter, Linda (1989) *Women of Spirit—Women's place in Church and society*, St. Mark's, Canberra.

⁵ Diesendorf, Eileen (undated) *Why Some Bright Women Leave the Church* (unpublished). (Summary by John Harris in *Zadok Perspectives*, March 1988.)

⁶ Ellem, E.W. (ed), *The Church Made Whole*, National Conference on Women in the United Church 1990, David Lovell, Melbourne.

⁷ Coombs, M. 'Seventh-Day Adventists Agonise over Women's Ordination', *National Outlook*, July 1990, pp.21-3.

Sharon Kirk presented a research paper on women and the church to the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship.⁸ The Australian Council of Churches publishes a national ecumenical women's journal, *Voices from the Silence*.

Women's communication skills are essential if their authentic voice is to be heard in the church. A recent Australian publication entitled *The Bible and Women's Ministry: An Australian Dialogue* does not include one woman among the eight contributors.⁹ This is not atypical of the way in which some male theologians debate theological issues about women while excluding women from the debate.

Women are now enrolling in theological colleges in increasing numbers. Churches will have to decide how to encourage the gifts of a significant number of theologically trained women among the laity. This trend is particularly striking, given the obstacles facing women who study theology. Few opportunities exist in Australia for women to study theology at universities, which would make them eligible for government tertiary allowances, and give them access to campus-based childcare. So women must organise childcare and negotiate class attendance and study times with their families. Women who are not candidates for the ordained ministry must pay their own fees and also accept that their studies are unlikely to lead to paid employment. It is significant that a number of women approach theology from a background of church history.

The laity as a group, both women and men, are disadvantaged by the *clericalisation* of theology in Australia. The absence of theology from university curricula has meant that theological education has been linked to the training of the clergy in exclusively male theological colleges. But this may be slowly changing: Flinders University has set an important precedent and recent changes in higher education could mean that all organisations offering theological qualifications at university level may need to create links with a tertiary institution. Such a development could be helpful to women. [p. 351](#)

WOMEN IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Legislation bans discrimination against women in most spheres of Australian society. Affirmative action, equal opportunity and inclusive language are widely accepted as normal. Much of this has simply passed the church by, sometimes through lack of attention, sometimes through deliberate resistance. The Uniting Church appears to be the only denomination that has attempted to come to grips with some of these issues. Nevertheless, the social changes are so profound that no woman, man, institution or denomination can remain unaffected by them.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Two contrasting theological frameworks are applied to women in the Australian Protestant churches. One approach emphasises Paul's teaching on church order and headship in the family as a basis for male authority in the church and for limiting women's ministry to particular areas. Restrictions on women's ministry and participation in leadership vary between and within denominations where this theology is influential. In its extreme manifestations, women are not permitted to preach, teach, take a leadership role in worship or church administration. But in general, women are still allowed to do

⁸ Kirk, Sharon (1987) *Women and the Church*, Christian Brethren Research Fellowship, Brisbane (unpublished).

⁹ Nichols, Alan (ed) (1990) *The Bible and Women's Ministry, an Australian Dialogue*, Acom Press, Canberra.

some of these things. The operative words are ‘permit’ and ‘allow’, which indicate that women themselves are not making the decisions which concern them. The last frontiers are preaching and ordination. This theological approach is usually characterised by a rejection of the feminist movement, and promotion of the stereotyped nuclear family as an ideal, with the wife as full-time home-maker.

The other theological approach takes as its foundation text [Galatians 3:28](#), ‘*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.*’

Men and women are considered to be equal in God’s eyes. The ordination of women is supported on the grounds that both male and female are needed to present the image of God to the world, because God transcends male and female and both are included in God’s nature and being.¹⁰ The use of inclusive language in liturgy, scripture and hymns is also advocated. [p. 352](#)

The Salvation Army maintains the principle of the spiritual headship of the man within the family while according equal training and standing to men and women as officers of the Corps. An Australian woman, Eva Burrows, held one of the two most senior positions in Australia, and is now head of the Salvation Army internationally.

WOMEN AND THE ORDAINED MINISTRY—THE ANGLICAN DEBATE

The Anglican debate about the ordination of women has been prolonged, public and painful.

Women with a strong sense of vocation to the priesthood have been confused and hurt when told that women are simply not *called*. This has been the conviction of many in the Anglican Church, despite the fact that women are ordained as ministers in other parts of the Anglican Communion, including New Zealand, Hong Kong, the United States and Canada, as well as in the Uniting Church of Australia. A majority of lay people and clergy support women’s ordination, but the form of the constitution of the Anglican Church of Australia makes change difficult to achieve and easily blocked by a minority.

Muriel Porter gives a full account of the ordination of women as deacons in dioceses throughout Australia and ends at the time of the death of David Penman, Archbishop of Melbourne and a strong advocate of women’s ordination. At that point the debate appeared to have come to a standstill. Women deacons had to endure seeing their male colleagues ordained as priests while they were not. Lay people who looked forward to women’s ordination became frustrated almost beyond endurance and some left the church.

On 31 August 1990, the Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Owen Dowling, announced his intentions to ordain women to the priesthood on 24 February 1991, in a full and carefully prepared statement covering all the main arguments and other considerations. The Synod received the bishop’s decision with a standing ovation and subsequent media coverage was extensive. Within days the Archbishop of Sydney, Donald Robinson, expressed his displeasure and also his intention to contest the legal validity of Owen Dowling’s decision.

During the next few weeks, one diocese after another—Bathurst, Tasmania, North Queensland and less expected, Adelaide—either cleared the way or made significant progress towards ordaining women to the priesthood.

¹⁰ Dowling, Owen. Presidential Address to the Thirty-Seventh Synod of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, Anglican Church of Australia, 31 August-2 September 1990.

Owen Dowling has stated that he will reluctantly await the answers p. 353 of the church's legal tribunal although he is concerned about the effects of legal wrangling on the church. Meanwhile, the church and over a hundred and fifty women deacons throughout Australia await the next development.

WOMEN AND MISSION

The self-sacrificing work of women in the church's welfare activities has always existed. Hundreds served faithfully in the Salvation Army and in home missions and charities of other churches such as the Sydney City Mission, the various Wesley Missions and St Vincent de Paul. In normal church life however, a women's ministry was limited to parish visiting, women's organisations such as Mothers' Union and Women's Guilds, and teaching Sunday School. Even deaconesses were severely restricted in their opportunities for public ministry. It is no wonder that so many turned to the mission field as the only real opportunity for active service.¹¹

Muriel Porter makes the point forcefully that the Australian church actually exported its women to serve overseas, while denying women opportunities for ministry in Australia. '*The major missionary efforts simply would not have been possible without them.*'¹² And even within missionary organisations, women's gifts were not always acknowledged nor were they always listened to or nurtured as one would expect.

Within Australia, women also played a crucial role in the establishment and work of the Bush Church Aid Society, which was set up to provide an evangelical ministry to people living in remote bush areas. Itinerant deaconesses conducted services, preached and provided practical caring. Women also worked as hostel sisters and nurses. In Australian missions such as the Australian Inland Mission, Aborigines Inland Mission and the United Aborigines Mission, the life and work of dedicated women like Annie Lock, Ruby Hyde and Delia Rutter have become legendary.

WHY EMPLOYED WOMEN ARE NOT AT CHURCH

Although the church in Australia needs to relate more effectively to the concerns of both women and men in the work-place, one cannot p. 354 assume that the reasons for men's disaffection apply equally to working women, or that the latter simply absorb the non-religious ethics of the workplace. Women whose qualifications and abilities are affirmed in a non-discriminatory way at work are more likely to perceive the discrepancies between changing social attitudes to women and the slow pace of change, or even resistance, in the church. For example, numbers of women have left the Anglican church because of its failure to endorse women's ministry by ordaining women as priests.

But the main reason may well be that women are just plain busy and value their weekends as family time. Numerous studies also show that in marriages where each partner works full-time the woman still carries out far more than 50 percent of the unpaid household work.

The church might do well to address changing patterns of work within the family and the roles and needs of family members. Women in full-time work are likely to have less time than men for church-related activities. *The Second Shift*, a recent publication about

¹¹ Judd, S. & Gable, K. (1987) *Sydney Anglicans, A History of the Diocese*, Anglican Information Office, Sydney p.217.

¹² Porter, p.53.

women's work, explains how many women now work two daily shifts, the first in paid employment and the second, unpaid domestic work in the home.¹³

A significant number of women in full-time work are single parents, reflecting changing family patterns in Australia. Although many cases may be found where churches have offered valuable pastoral care to single parents, it is nevertheless true that the prevailing emphasis on the church as a family and on the theological importance of the family can be discouraging or oppressive to those who have experienced family breakdown. It is also discouraging to single people without children, who are also among women in the paid workforce.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CHURCH DECISION-MAKING

Australian women did not gain access to decision-making structures in Protestant churches overnight. In the Anglican church, Perth was the first diocese to allow women to be on Synod, followed by Melbourne in 1924. Women were allowed to be on parish councils in Sydney in 1921 and in Melbourne in 1954, although their church attendance had been much higher than that of men since at least the 1880s. They could not be Synod representatives in Sydney until 1978. Muriel Porter was the first woman elected to the Melbourne Diocesan Council, in 1985. **P. 355**

Today, women's participation rates are much greater at the parish level than in the higher echelons of church decision-making. Women are generally well-represented on parish councils and committees, and are increasingly appointed or elected as church wardens. In the Uniting Church, women's representation on Councils of Elders has increased, from 35 percent in 1977 to 45 Percent in 1985. It is less uncommon to find that the parish treasurer is female, but women are still under-represented on property and finance committees. At the higher levels of church organisation, the decrease in women's participation is striking.

In the Baptist Church, women cannot be members of the Baptist Lay Preachers Society, although the first woman, Marita Munro, was ordained in the Baptist Union of Victoria in 1978. Women hold very few positions in Baptist departments and organisations, according to a paper presented to the Baptist Social Justice Group in 1988. The paper called for changes which would encourage greater participation by women.

It is painfully clear that women's participation in the church structures of Australian churches is far from adequate. Moreover, very few are on the staff of theological colleges or in leadership positions in para-church organisations.

WOMEN AT HOME

'Many Christian books on the family almost idolise the home', writes Valerie Griffiths.¹⁴ Robert Banks includes the family in his list of substitute religions in Australia and describes the Australian home as a secular idol.¹⁵ A more realistic picture of Western women's relationships to the home is also given by Valerie Griffiths:

There is widespread concern about the stress on homes today, but much is aggravated by clinging to old cultural patterns. The industrial revolution, the separation of home from a

¹³ Hochschild, Arlie (1990) *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*, Piatkus Press, UK.

¹⁴ In *Why Christians Disagree: The Role Of Women*, ed Shirley Lees, IVP, Leicester, p.85.

¹⁵ Banks, Robert (1987) *All The Business of Life*, Albatross, Australia, New Zealand & USA, pp.86-7.

man's place of work, and the size of the modern nuclear family, all serve to isolate mothers at home. Cut off from the stimulus and variety of society, they spend their time with other mothers and children ... They are better educated and trained than ever before in history, and when they get depressed and restless with hours of routine housework, they are accused of 'failing to accept their biblical role'.¹⁶ p. 356

The churches' solution for mothers at home with young children has often been to establish peer support groups for Bible Study or fellowship. There is a significant increase in organisations such as 'Women Aglow' and 'Know Your Bible' which offer women opportunities for Bible study and fellowship within a conservative evangelical framework. These groups provide friendship and social contact, but they are limited. In practical support, when a woman is ill, another mother with family responsibilities will have difficulty finding the time to assist or be unable to leave her own children. A much broader based support network is needed. Women at home may hunger for friendship and interests outside their peer group. They may wish to exercise a ministry in the church that is not related specifically to mothers and young children, yet all too often that is where they are kindly but firmly directed. The minister and congregation should not simply assume that the 'young mothers group' takes care of all individuals in that category.

Women who are at home without young children also have special needs. They may have older children, may be caring for elderly relatives or sick family members, may be single, widowed or divorced. They may wish to enter or re-enter the workforce but lack the skills or confidence. They may be looking for meaningful activity and friendship to fill their time or be fully extended and desperate for a break. They may be caught in a poverty trap, unable to afford not to be at home.

A serious pastoral challenge for the churches is the mental health of women at home. Their self-esteem is often low, and a relatively high number of women at home are dependent on minor tranquillisers, and '*are more likely to suffer from depression than women who work outside the home*'.¹⁷ We have already explored some of the contributing factors, but others include community attitudes which denigrate the contribution of women at home, and unrealistic and demeaning portrayals of women by the media. The church could have a role in speaking out on this issue, as the Government cannot legislate for change despite clearly expressed concern. But as long as the church fails to accept women as equal to men in the sight of God, society will not listen. The ACC Commission on the Status of Women has done some work in this area, but has found that the churches' depiction of women in Christian publications is quite distorted.

As we have seen, churches are lagging behind the wider society in changing institutionally and attitudinally towards women. So we stand p. 357 on shaky ground if we seek to influence the community. But as we work for healthy change within the church we can also direct our energies and resources to pastoral needs. The ministry of women both lay and ordained, as well as those in religious orders, can be of great help to women in distress.

WORKING WOMEN WITH FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Whether the church likes it or not, women are entering the workforce in increasing numbers, and this will have an impact on the church's activities. For families under

¹⁶ Lees, p.82.

¹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics 1978, quoted in Nelson & Walters, p.76.

economic pressure, two incomes may be essential, while for others the woman may decide to work for other reasons. Couples are increasingly assuming that their family lifestyle will be based on two incomes. Although it may be appropriate for churches to raise issues of affluence and consumerism, it is not helpful simply to be judgemental about women's motivation for working without looking at broader issues in the family and society.

We have already seen how women's church attendance declines when they enter the workforce full-time. Another development is the diminishing pool of volunteer workers. Christian and non-Christian organisations alike find it harder to recruit volunteers, as more women seek paid employment. Churches as well as school canteens are feeling the pinch. Many churches may need to reassess their priorities. Professional cleaning and secretarial assistance may be required. Flower arranging may disappear. Women's Bible-Study groups may need an evening as well as a day-time option, as 'Women Aglow' has recognised.

The increase in numbers of house-churches and home fellowship groups with little or no ties to the institutional church may be linked to this trend. These groups have flexible meeting times, rather than the standard Sunday morning service, have no plant to maintain or complex administration and thus fewer jobs to be done by busy people.

Church attendance on Sunday mornings can prevent Sunday from being a day of rest for working women or men. Catholic churches have begun to acknowledge the need for more options by scheduling a Saturday evening mass. The needs of working parents can be viewed by the church as a creative opportunity for ministry rather than another step in its decline. One result of women working is children's increased participation in after-school activities. Many branches of organisations such as the Boys' Brigade and Girls' Friendly Society have had an upsurge in numbers (as have secular organisations like p. 358 Girl Guides and Scouts). Weekday after-school 'clubs' run by churches are proving very successful. Holiday programmes with both recreational and Christian teaching components have been popular in the United States and some Australian churches are becoming involved in this area. Initiatives taken by churches in the provision of child-care for working parents have been greatly appreciated. Creativity is required when churches seek to staff these programmes, as the women who might have volunteered are now often the clients.

WOMEN MARRIED TO MINISTERS

It is natural to expect that women married to ministers would, of all people, be valued and nurtured by the church, but this has not always been the case. Extraordinary expectations have been laid on them, with very little pastoral care.

It should not be necessary to call for sensitivity and support from the church for ministers' wives in their difficult task. But women married to ministers are increasingly trying to clarify their role, with varying degrees of support. Some have prepared themselves for ordination or other ministries in their own right. In the Uniting Church a number of married couples who are both ordained exercise team ministries. Some women freely accept partnership in ministry with their husband without any special recognition. Others decide to keep a certain distance from their husband's work and parish involvement. Unconscious expectations of a minister are hard to challenge, but it is important for parishioners to support their minister and family, whatever model is chosen.

WOMEN IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

'Religious women are the yeast in the ferment of change in religious life', concludes Turner's survey of men and women in religious life.¹⁸ Since Vatican II, changes in the Catholic church have deeply affected almost all aspects of life in religious communities. Prior to this, *'abiding by the rules was the name of the game'*, conformity was important and under the vow of obedience, the superior's decision was absolute.¹⁹ By the late 1970s, most sisters were wearing informal clothes, had a personal money allowance and often lived in small communities in suburban homes. Enclosure regulations had been **P. 359** discarded and the convent routine of set prayers replaced by more flexible prayer times worked out by small communities or by individuals themselves.

Many sisters, especially some of the elderly, found it difficult to adapt to these changes. *'We were more secure before the changes; we knew exactly what we should do.'*²⁰ Despite some concerns about loss of identity, the new freedom and flexibility were welcomed. The sisters particularly appreciated moves towards a consultative approach to decision-making. Personal friendships are no longer discouraged. With more autonomy about individual ministries sisters are less willing to accept transfers without discussion.

Religious women felt that they related more effectively to lay people now that their lifestyles were less obviously distinct. They were concerned about hurts inflicted on lay people, often women, by the institutional church. They understood that the gulf was widening between the institutional church and the laity, many of whom were no longer prepared to accept unquestioningly the dictates of the church. Religious women also felt that they should learn to speak out on social issues, although this had not been their traditional role.

The future of religious life for women is uncertain, as few young women are entering religious congregations. Of those sisters surveyed, 72 percent remained fully committed and happy with their situation, while a small number were re-examining their vocation. Many committed sisters were finding new and creative areas for ministry as they struggled to work out their identity in a climate of change.

CONCLUSION

Awareness of women's issues in the church has forged new alliances that cut across traditional boundaries. Anglican and Catholic women have met together at combined MOW/WATAC conferences. Clergy and laity have combined forces either to support or oppose women's ordination. Some conservative evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics have forced an alliance to oppose women's ordination while liberals, progressive evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics find themselves in agreement. Religious sisters and lay workers are working together creatively for change in the Catholic church. Christian women are entering into dialogue with secular feminists. Of course, divisions remain even between women themselves. **P. 360**

Although the institutional church has wounded many women, it differs from other human institutions in that it has Christ's healing power within it. Its divisions may be public and damaging, but the Holy Spirit is working in new ways. Women are ministering to each other and where men support women in their vocation and quest for justice, healing is also experienced in the Christian community. Justice and reconciliation will open the way for healing at the institutional level. Even where major differences of

¹⁸ Turner, p.184.

¹⁹ Turner, p.89.

²⁰ Turner, p.73.

opinion exist, there are many cases where the church holds these together in tension without division for the sake of the Gospel.

The church as the body of Christ has the role of maintaining an image of Christian community, or even as modelling the Kingdom of God to the world. With respect to women, its failure to do this is conspicuous. But Christ's body was also broken, and if, as the church, we accept our brokenness, we are identifying with the brokenness of the world instead of putting ourselves on a pedestal. Women, who have been marginalised, and often exploited, whether in the church or outside, have special insights into the experience of those whom society has rejected, those with whom Jesus himself identified. Men who support issues of justice for women in the church sometimes find themselves experiencing the same kind of hostility.

The path ahead may be difficult, but it need not lack the Christian virtues of love, forgiveness, self-denial, humility and service. It is only as we ourselves seek to be more Christ-like that we will be instruments of healing and change for all of God's people. It is only in the imitation of Christ that the church will be seen to transcend the old barriers of race, class and gender.

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Married Couples in Clergy Partnerships: Opportunities and Problems

Sue Saunders

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This transparently open and honest account of the joys and difficulties of harmonising professional relationships (where husband and wife are both ordained and serving in the same parish) with marital relationships is to be highly commended. As more women graduate from theological schools, the number of ordained husband and wife teams can be expected to increase rapidly. The author discusses the crises of identity roles, the need for 'space' and the challenges and opportunities in the changing social context of church life. Did Paul anticipate some of these issues when he wrote to the Church in Corinth and to Timothy in Ephesus? In this case, study of the issue of roles is further complicated by the fact that, up to the present, only men can be 'priested' in the Church of England while women must remain as ordained deacons.

INTRODUCTION

The seeds of this article originally came from a group of clergy couples working in the Birmingham Diocese. There are ten couples who are both ordained—that's twenty 'Clergy people', a sizeable minority. We meet regularly to share joys and pains—often more pains, which is why this piece of writing seems to pose more questions than it answers. But I

write from where I am and share my reflections as an offering of a piece of knitting or patchwork, rather than a well worked theological treatise. I thank the couples who offered their reflections similarly to me last year, and whom I quote in this piece of writing.

In Birmingham, there is no blueprint for the clergy couple—not one of us works in the same way as another—we are all different, but sharing our discomfort with current structures and models within the Church of England, our conviction that we are called to work in this way, and our sense that God is doing a new thing in our Church. [p. 362](#) Fortunately our Diocese has been willing to allow us to try our ‘new thing’ and has been open to our various ways of working. We range from a couple who describe themselves as ‘co-vicars’, to another where he is the Vicar, she the non-stipendiary deacon. Two women are engaged in full time stipendiary posts whilst their husbands lecture/ study elsewhere. Even when the total job is one-and-a-half, one couple splits it into three-quarter-time each, and another divides it on the lines of the man doing ‘one’ and the woman doing the ‘half’! Family commitments obviously play a part in the way jobs are divided up. None of us had two fully stipendiary posts and none of us work in different parishes as the moment. Much depends on the context; the couples who are part of a wider team find it easier to share ‘straight down the line’, possibly because the precedent for sharing already exists; areas of responsibility are already being worked; couples who are the sole staff find this harder to do. One couple remarked, ‘It’s easier if husband and wife are part of a larger team—it’s harder then to cast the wife as “assistant” or “second class”.’

Couples share ministry in different ways; some do everything together, others have a mixture of joint and individual ministry. One couple in Birmingham have only one joint responsibility, doing everything else separately; ‘We are two individuals who just happen to work in the same church, just happen to be married to each other’. One couple said: ‘People tend to perceive, if we lead things together, that he’s in charge and I’m helping!’ Another couple said: ‘We have found it necessary explicitly to state that such-and-such is a delegated area of responsibility for that person—so any questions, advice or help are directed to that one person.’

EXPRESSING THE IMAGE OF GOD

Most clergy couples feel that the marriage of male and female in the ordained ministry is an important expression of the image of God. It is in community, male and female, that we fully express that image. Leadership should then be ‘fully human’, and male and female clergy together express this whether married to each other or not. Some couples are deliberately careful to avoid stereotyping of the male and female roles, for example by expressing ‘the tenderness of the male and the rationality of the female’. One woman said: ‘Being a woman in ministry, I no doubt express the femaleness of God, though the fact that I’m not a priest and have a minor role in worship at the main eucharist of the day might continue to suggest that the maleness of God is more important.’ Much here is true of a mixed teamleadership—the [P.363](#) group of us in Birmingham are not sure that a married clergy partnership contributes any magic ‘ingredient x’ to the team—save the muddle we offer in our relating which speaks of the complexity of human relationship. In terms of what we are expressing about ministry we encounter a paradox: on the one hand our partnerships express the fact that ministry is something that is shared and in which all participate, and something which requires cooperation. On the other hand, a husband and wife in the same parish can be too powerful or apparently self-sufficient, and can therefore *discourage* lay people from sharing in ministry. We have to be particularly careful that the former is emphasised, and to beware that we are not seen to be saying that ministry is exclusively about ordination, thereby denying a role to lay people whether

clergy husbands or wives or not. We hope that we are saying something about people having different roles but equal value, particularly when one half of the partnership is priested and the other cannot be. We would not wish to be seen as interchangeable—as if we were identical—but wish to be seen as complementary both in terms of gender and function, and this we feel to be an enriching experience and a gift to the church.

Some congregations find it curious or unimaginable that a married couple could sit down and have a staff meeting alone together as two members of the clergy, which raises the question of whether we have to be more ‘professional’ in our approach to work, simply to avoid clashes of roles. Some couples cannot separate ministry from marriage at all; nor would they wish to, seeing that the joint ministry of ordained husband and wife affirmed the idea that ministry and life are inseparable. This, I think, highlights one of the major difficulties facing the clergy couple—that of how far the professional relationship harmonizes with the marital relationship. Communication, organisation, responsibility, sharing and submission to one another form part of both relationships—what works in the marriage may not be translatable to the professional situation. This means that a change of gear is necessary and can produce strain. Many people ask ‘Is it possible to work closely with your spouse?’ and add ‘I know I couldn’t work with mine!’ Perhaps what they are trying to say is that there is something essentially different between relating as a colleague and relating as spouse—certainly this is the area that clergy find hardest—it is all too easy to let the games we play as a married couple creep into the vestry and staff room. Alternatively, it is possible to find that relating as colleagues becomes the only way you *can* relate and the marriage relationship wanes and eventually disintegrates. People say [p. 364](#) that it is a ‘problem’ for two clergy to be married to each other: sometimes by that they mean that they cannot understand how it could work, or sometimes they mean that they are confused about our roles. Sometimes they mean they don’t know how to deploy us. However, all this can tempt the couple to fall into the disastrous trap of playing down the marriage in order to minimise people’s confusion. So we begin to behave as if we are not married, which at best oversimplifies our relationships, and at worst leads to estrangement. It is an open question whether it is possible to be authentic in relating in both ministry and marriage, once the compartmentalising that many find necessary takes place.

MARRIAGE AND MINISTRY ‘ON SHOW’

Given that we are letting our marriage enhance and enrich our ministry, another source of stress is the exposed nature of our marriages. There is a danger of the clergy being a focus of ‘that which is perfect’ and marriages are no exception. This is true whether or not both husband and wife are ordained. There are difficulties and tensions experienced by clergy partnerships, and conflict is part of most of our experiences. If we can learn to be honest about this, and help each other to grow through the difficulties, we have something special to share with our congregations. First by enabling them to see conflict in a non-threatening way as a positive opportunity in marriage. Secondly by witnessing to the way relationships, and particularly the Body of Christ, can grow through tension, and also by expressing something about the accepting nature of love. However, this is an ideal that is difficult to attain; people do find it embarrassing if a husband and wife openly disagree. That tells us more about them than about ourselves, and we need to be able to let them hear their own truth about difficulty with conflict. Few of us are able to tackle this, I suspect—loyalty on the staff team often prevents us from being open about our clashes and problems; however I believe our ‘aggro’ can be healing to others if we can learn to admit failure and to help others to see it is not the end. But none of us wants to make the

clergy team look precarious, so we walk a tightrope. God forbid that in our attempts to make our conflicts a role model for others we should forget to be ourselves! All this means a great deal of honesty about the marriage and the ministerial relationship and it does create an enormous amount of pressure.

Of course a major source of the pain is the fact that one half of the partnership is priested whilst the other is not, and in most cases would [p. 365](#) like to be. To stand to one side and watch your contemporaries moving to a place you cannot go to, yet feel called to go to, is bad enough. When one of them is your husband, it is agony. One couple spoke of the way in which it had felt like a parting. When we met with the then Bishop of Birmingham before joining the Diocese, he asked me, 'Do you want to be a priest?' When I said 'Yes', he turned to my husband and said 'And you will bear that pain'. That has been true. Husbands can feel that they would rather not go through it than be the focus of pain, and the day of the priesting becomes less celebratory than it might be. The opportunities for growth that this presents must not be denied—with openness and frank expression on both sides, with neither protecting the other, new levels of identification can be reached. However, it does not do to be told that because you are one flesh his priesting will affect you both, as one woman was told!

Some couples run into problems with the way in which the congregation view them (and aren't congregations forward in expressing those views!). One couple in our Diocese has found that the congregation has felt disappointed in the ordained wife; 'Why can't she be a real Vicar's wife,' they say, then, *sotto voce*, 'like the last one!?' Disapproval is expressed that the wife is 'gallivanting around the parish' being diaconal rather than preparing the Vicar's supper. Some parishes view the Clergy couple as a two-headed four-legged beastie—the 'JanenJohn'. At a vote of thanks at one church the clergy couple in the team were thanked as a pair—but the items for which they were both praised were things that only *she* did, not him.

That brings me to the issue of differences, competition and threat. It takes a very strong marriage to endure (nay, rejoice in) a partner shining in the same area as you—particularly if your self esteem is low! 'When is your wife coming to take our service?' is not a question guaranteed to put a spring in your step. People do make comparisons—and tell you about them. Not always easy to listen to; not always easy to forget.

It is very easy to lose one's identity when sharing in joint ministry in the same Church. This can lead to a desperate search for oneself, and asking of the question, 'Who am I?' There is the constant danger that one becomes unable to be apart, to function alone. Perhaps more so for the woman the question can become 'Could I do this alone without my husband to lean on, or without asking him to take on the jobs I can't cope with? Would this parish want me on their staff if I didn't come as part of the package?'

There can be problems when the curacy or partnership suits one half of the couple but not the other—either due to the churchmanship [p. 366](#) (can't we find another word for this?), or style of ministry, or social factors. One partner will eventually feel demoralised and unfulfilled whilst the other blossoms.

The fact that the working structure is so fixed can cause problems. The vicar-curate hierarchy can be a straitjacket: what do you do if it's the female that has the administrative and managerial skill, suited to the role of incumbent, whilst the male feels happier concentrating on pastoralia? The fact that legally the man is senior in a two-staff (by virtue of his priesthood) is felt to be a tension, especially when the couple sees their partnership as absolute equals. Some feel that one has to 'work it' according to the legal and structural position, otherwise one is living in a 'fantasy land'. Others feel it is better to ignore utterly the laid down legality and work in whatever way suits them, their marriage, and their

gifts. Existing structures do not reflect reality for many couples—the question of what we do about it is not simply a question for the couples involved—but for the whole Church.

On a more mundane level there are some things that provide challenges to us which can be enriching: in clergy partnerships we are blessed with a colleague who is intimately and professionally involved in our ministries and at the same time ruthlessly honest! This is a personal challenge to each one of us to be able to take criticism, and also to be able to 'let be' the partner who is doing 'our job' in a different way to the way in which we would do it. This is particularly the case in areas of delegated responsibility. We have to respect the needs of the other in unburdening or not, depending on the personality. We have to live with not having to know everything the other is party to, because of confidentiality. The importance of 'space' is felt in every clergy partnership. If work is shared, then it becomes necessary to find other spaces. One couple said: 'We have found it necessary to have interests and activities apart from each other where we are known primarily through the activity. It demonstrates that you are of value for your own sake and not just because of your ministry.' As with any couple sharing the workplace the marriage can become dominated by the Church so that it becomes less obvious that other common interests and bonds must be worked on to keep our marriages healthy. Making time for one another with no Church agenda is a priority. Boundaries between work and home and family are even more fuzzy than for 'normal' clergy families: 'Life can be so absorbed by the world of the Church that it needs a determined effort to go beyond the boundaries and know what's happening "out there,"' remarked one couple. [p. 367](#)

NEW WINE, OLD WINESKINS?

Clergy partnerships do not sit happily on existing job structures. New wine needs new wineskins. Our partnerships are in the main characterised by a view of sexual equality which finds the Church's insistence on male dominated job partnerships incongruous. What is required is a flexible approach whereby diocesan pastoral strategies are prepared to go for joint appointments and job sharing, even with the financial complications that these bring (part-time males run into problems with pensions and housing for some strange reason).

It would be marvellous if we could cease to be regarded as problems ('Where can we place them?', 'Who will pay?'), and could be greeted as an opportunity and challenge for ministry, with the belief that any administrative difficulties are worth overcoming. Perhaps we will all have to take risks in making a couple 'Joint Vicar-in-Charge' or putting a woman in charge of a parish with her husband as the curate, providing the sacerdotal role but not the 'senior' role we assume goes with it. There is a danger that we will deal with each couple on a 'oneoff' basis, providing something *ad hoc* and tailor-made. That would be a pity, for a challenge is worthless unless it results in permanent change, permanent erasure of anomalies. We are not pioneers unless others follow—let's not offer tomorrow's partnerships today's models.

Clergy partnerships do present a challenge and an opportunity. But some dioceses see them purely as a problem and now refuse to place a married couple in the same parish. Some couples do indeed come to the conclusion that it is better to work in separate parishes where one can be known in one's own right and feel free to be oneself. This arrangement presents issues of its own which I cannot examine here.

It may seem as if the clergy couple's life is fraught with difficulty, strain and tension. Whilst it would be foolish to deny this, it must also be recorded that these partnerships are often highly creative, and force the Church to address significant and uncomfortable issues—regarding structures, flexibility and working patterns, yes, but *also* regarding

marital conflict and growth, models of relating, the clergy as 'beyond reproach'. Clergy partnerships are an increasing phenomenon—men and women do fall in love and marry at college, and, indeed, before and after the training situation.

Given all this, the Church has to decide how best we are to use *both* people: not denying the vocation of either of them, not asking one of them (usually the woman, dare I say) to soft-pedal, not forcing them into moulds that are inappropriate. [p. 368](#)

I hope other dioceses are as caring as Birmingham, and that there are places couples can go to be totally honest about their relationships in a safe environment—without this, the task is all the harder. Clergy couples—problem? or opportunity? What is the Spirit saying to the Church?

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A Woman Iconographer of Maadi, Cairo

Leonie B. Liveris

Reprinted with permission from MaryMartha, International Orthodox Women's Journal, January 1991

In March 1989 I had the privilege of attending a meeting of Orthodox women in Cairo, Egypt to plan the second Orthodox Women's Consultation subsequently held in Crete in January this year. Many images remain in my memory of the women I met, the churches and monasteries visited and indeed the whole atmosphere of a teeming city reflecting both great poverty and wealth, and the sound of the call to prayer from the minarets and the bells calling the faithful to Divine Liturgy. And I especially have a lasting and detailed memory of a visit to a tiny studio tucked away in the dome of an old Coptic Orthodox Church. It was in this church that we met an iconographer, Jacqueline Ann Ascott.

The Coptic Orthodox Monastery and Church of the Virgin Mary—Adawia, built on a spot marking one of the places where Joseph and Mary and the child Jesus rested after fleeing into Egypt from Palestine, is being faithfully restored by clergy and congregation. The church is on the banks of the Nile and surrounded by an ancient wall built by the Romans.

Jacqueline Ann Ascott was a student of art history at Oxford University in England and a member of the Anglican Church. She was drawn to the Coptic art form and continued her studies for her PhD on early Coptic iconography and its subsequent changes through to the present day. During her research she studied Arabic and Copt languages, in which she is now highly competent in spoken and written form. Her research brought her to Egypt and in direct contact with the Coptic Orthodox Church. She was chrismated into the church, and her spiritual father and advisor is His Holiness, Pope Shanouda III. Dr Ascott is an outstanding scholar and she is recognized by her church as an iconographer committed to restoring the true Coptic art form in church icons. In February 1989, she presented her PhD thesis before an assembled audience of over 2,000 at the Church of St

Mark, a meeting chaired by His Holiness Pope Shanouda and at which she answered to her work in Arabic.

Dr Ascott is married and has three children, all of whom are Coptic Orthodox, speak Arabic and are already learning to paint icons. She is p. 370 a teacher, and both monks and nuns from the desert monasteries attend her studio for lessons on the early art form of Coptic icons. Dr Ascott's work at present is the restoration of the Church of the Virgin Mary at Maadi, on the outskirts of Cairo.

During preceding centuries European influence in Egypt has affected the style of icon painting, and the unique Coptic art form of the early church has slowly deteriorated. Many smaller Coptic Orthodox Churches use European catholic paintings and prints for their icons, neglecting their own icon heritage. The true Coptic icon is often viewed as belonging to the past and relegated to the old museums, churches and monasteries. The art of Coptic iconography is not as severely restricted in style as the Greek and Russian traditions. Coptic icons are recognized by the eyes through which it is said 'one sees heaven'. Coptic icons distinguish themselves by their 'sweetness, piety and humility', and iconographers avoid representing scenes of torture of saints and martyrs as well as representations of the fear of the Day of Judgement. There is a very strong and popular tradition of icons depicting Joseph and Mary and the Christ child in their flight into Egypt. Joseph is always walking beside Mary, and in one unique style of icon Joseph holds the Child over his shoulder by the foot, a typical action still among the people of today.

In her restoration work for the Church of the Virgin Mary, Dr Ascott has concentrated on icons depicting events throughout the life of Christ with special emphasis on the events during Lent. The icons will be placed all around the walls of the restored church and on the iconostasis. Dr Ascott is a fine role model for women in the Orthodox church. And in a land and a faith which is strongly patriarchal and often discriminatory on the role and position of women, her work is especially valued, not only for its fine art and religious importance, but also the fact that she is a new believer in the Coptic Orthodox Church and also a woman.

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The Christian Single Woman in Singapore

Florence Ng

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In 1985 a Graduate Christian Fellowship of Singapore working committee presented a paper titled, *The Phenomenon of Sex Imbalance in the Churches*. This paper was based on a survey conducted in 1985¹ which demonstrated that females who are single outnumber

¹ A questionnaire, designed to investigate the sex ratio and to gauge the causes for any imbalance, was given to every church-goer in 13 churches on a particular Sunday. The churches were selected on the basis of

male singles in the ratio of 3:2. ‘This phenomenon is already acute among those below 29 years of age, without mentioning those of 30–39 years of age.’² As a single woman I felt for those who have had to grapple with the issues of singleness, and I am glad to share some matters which are close to my heart.

Over the years I have discovered that being single does not necessarily equate with being lonely. I have come across married women who are lonely. The fact is that, in marriage, sexual intimacy or even the lack of it may heighten a sense of separateness from others, especially if there are strains in the relationship.

For singles, however, the problems of loneliness are different. In the first place there is no one to relate to at the physical level available to the married person. Yet there are times when we feel that we have been created to relate to another at that level, and we have to remind ourselves that hunger for physical intimacy will pass. Our hormones go up and down, and what goes up must come down! That is what I tell myself, for God is well able to sustain us.

We must also remind ourselves that lack of such a physical relationship does not mean that there is no intimacy. There is still access to emotional intimacy with loved ones. If we delve into our memory banks perhaps we can recall those occasions when, as we have poured out our hearts to the Lord and studied his Word, we have experienced a wonderful sense of belonging with him. Many will also [p. 372](#) be able to bring to mind intimate moments of sharing with trusted friends, which have given much joy and meaning to life.

If such times are outside our experience, perhaps it is because we have not learned to think aloud with others, including the Lord, at close quarters. Maybe past negative encounters have taught us that vulnerability is too great a price to pay for that depth of intimacy. However, the fault could lie with ourselves and our lack of wisdom in the choice of confidantes. We need to ask God to give us close and reliable friends with whom we can share ourselves—our dreams, hopes, and anxieties, without feeling ashamed or embarrassed.

It is hardly likely that we shall meet such people if we are obsessed with our own needs, for the self-centred are always the most uncomfortable of company. However, let us consider further practical means to cope with singleness.

When the single woman enters the crisis of ‘mid-life’ she comes to realise that the probability of remaining single outweighs that of getting married. The timing of this awareness varies with different people. A physically attractive woman may reach this stage later than a less attractive one. A sense of ageing is sometimes triggered off when she meets her married peers and sees their grown children. It is further reinforced when she finds herself attending the wedding receptions of her juniors in terms of age, e.g. her ex-Sunday school pupils.

At this stage, she is likely to slide into depression or resignation. Depression can prove to be of much value in her life, if she allows the Lord to lead her through it. Such depression may open up avenues for her to prepare herself emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and even physically to face the future whatever it may hold. This preparation must not be disdained (it is comparable to that mentioned in [James 4:13–16](#)). One of the great assets of any human being is the possession of a compass to chart and direct one’s life. Without that, we become like pieces of driftwood.

Such questions as the following need to be asked and thought through rigorously at this stage of life.

denomination, language group, and age and type of congregation. 5,809 church-goers and 773 Sunday School students responded.

² GCF paper, *The Phenomenon of Sex Imbalance in the Churches*, p. 14.

- (1) 'Am I so desperate for marriage that I would even consider forming a relationship with someone who does not meet my basic criteria, e.g. a Christian of similar or greater spiritual maturity?' Thinking and praying through such a question may present us from slipping into self-deception and compromise when a non-Christian suitor turns up unexpectedly. It is so easy to glide into an affair 'unknowingly', for 'the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' ([Jer. 17:9](#)).
- (2) 'Can I accept singlehood as a 'gift' from the Lord?'. Or, 'What am I [p.373](#) to do about my state?' The single woman may need to think of definite ways to fulfil her need, e.g. ask the Lord for a husband; join the Singapore Social Development Unit (a government matchmaking project). She could ask friends to introduce her to eligible men. Finally she might set a time frame before God to 'head-hunt', so that, if by the end of that time there is nobody suitable, it will be easier for her to accept her continuing singleness as a confirmation from the Lord.
- (3) The third question revolves around living with her parents. 'Do I have to live with my parents if I am going to remain single?' Often, married siblings expect the single woman to live with the parents and take care of them. This may cause guilt feelings to develop. We cannot all harmoniously 'coexist' with our parents, because increasing age brings with it entrenched convictions and habits. If there is a clash between the single woman and her parents, living together can be very miserable. It is far better to live away from them, and go home during weekends with joyful anticipation than to live together in a cold war. If the single woman has a house of her own, the parents can be shuttled around the family members so that the responsibility of caring for them is shared among all the siblings.

Even after a period of depression is over and life returns to 'normal', she needs to watch her own development as a single person. It is so easy to develop the symptoms of a frustrated spinster. It may do her good to remember the following suggestions.

Consciously make the effort to contact and meet up with friends and relatives, whether married or single. If she does not do this, she will find herself with plenty of reasons and excuses to work late hours on weekdays and even weekends. A good pay-packet does not take away the aching feeling of loneliness, and even the sense of futility at the end of the day. It is especially important for a single woman to look for a job where she is happy with the work and especially with her colleagues, so that there is a sense of good teamwork or even companionship in the workplace. It is important to realise that ambitious people have a tendency to work themselves up to a high but lonely position.

If your home is available, reciprocate treats by inviting your friends and their families to your place for meals. Keep the group small and personal. Large crowds often heighten a sense of loneliness for all concerned. Avoid restaurants because they impinge on the pocket unnecessarily. Besides there is nowhere like your own home to make you feel at home in other people's company. [p. 374](#)

Count your blessings! The single person has more time and freedom than her married friends to take up 'hobbies', e.g. travelling, reading, voluntary social/community work, church ministries, academic and other courses, etc. Try to go for those hobbies which involve meaningful teamwork. The single person needs to make a conscious effort not to withdraw into her own shell. Once 'hibernating' becomes a habit, it is very difficult to break out of it. Some time ago I gave tuition to three children in a Salvation Army Home. It gave me a lot of maternal satisfaction, but unfortunately it did not give me a sense of teamwork, and therefore 'relatedness' to adults.

Count another blessing. The single woman should be thankful for the freedom and the opportunities to enter into 'full-time' Christian work, should the Lord call her. With this

possibility in mind she must be careful not to tie herself down to exorbitant house loans. The single person is blessed to be in that position where she can switch from secular paid work to voluntary Christian/humanitarian work, or overseas studies for longer or shorter periods of time without imposing a burden on loved ones.

The single woman needs to see the span of her singleness against the yardstick of eternity, so that she does not get discouraged by her marital status. Since our days are numbered, let those of us who are single use the best of our active years to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, instead of hoping and striving for 'Mr. Right' to appear. If you must strive for something, strive to make your life count for eternity, so that your arrival in heaven will be one of joyful encounter with your Master.

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Pioneers in Mission: Women in India in the 19th Century

Kathleen D. Nicholls

From the beginning of the 19th century, the Amy Carmichaels, Mary Slessors, Gladys Aylwards and Mildred Cables of this world demonstrated independence and fulfillment. They have been pioneers in Christ's mission throughout the world. With courage, faith and enterprise they pioneered education, medical and social welfare programmes, fighting for justice for the oppressed of all classes. They preached and taught the Gospel, established churches and opened Bible schools for the training of women.

OPENING THE DOORS TO THE ZENANAS

In 1821 Miss Cooke astonished the men and women of Calcutta by her eagerness to teach 'useless' girls. Her school for girls was perhaps the first of its kind and continued under this loving but determined woman in spite of many difficulties. This was a break-through. Getting into the closed zenanas (women's quarters) to teach young wives and their female companions was much more difficult and openings came very slowly. In an effort to provide teachers for more girls' schools and for the women living in the zenanas, another far-sighted and determined woman, Mrs Mackenzie, wife of an English merchant, wanted to establish a 'Normal School for Christian Female Teachers, English and Native'. In 1852 under the charge of Miss Suter the Calcutta Normal School was born and so was the mission under the title of 'The Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society or Zenana Bible Mission'. It is not difficult to understand why this became modified over the years to Zenana Bible and Medical Mission and in 1957 to Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship. It is now known as Interserve International.

The women who sought to enter the zenanas of the Hindu sacred city of Benares were not only brave and enterprising but, like their sisters in other towns and cities, very aware of the will of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the essential guiding and

strengthening of the Holy Spirit. They contended not only with the heat of the long summers, the filth of the bazaars and zenanas, the unsuitable clothing of the era, dangers from animals, insects and man and the urgency of acquiring fluency but also the might of Hinduism and the p.376 all-pervading presence of death and the gods and goddesses who held the people in bondage.

Along with their efforts to educate the women and girls of India, went complete honesty as to their intention of teaching biblical principles. Perhaps nothing tested their courage as much as the need to quietly persevere when some of their pupils professed faith in Christ and the inevitable violent response of relatives and friends became a reality.

Across India in Calcutta, Lucknow, Patna, Bombay, the health of the zenana women was very neglected, especially in the times of pregnancy and childbirth. Often missionary medical personnel were sent for when local *hakims* and *dais* had done their worst and there was no hope for the patient. Englishwoman Elizabeth Beilby in Lucknow (1875 onwards) and later others in the new (for women) profession of medicine had many stories to tell of the Lord's answering their desperate prayers for His intervention. It was in Lucknow that the first hospital for women (later to become the Duchess of Teck Hospital) was opened and eventually others in Patna and Benares. The shortage of workers often meant that the doctors' and nurses' days began at 5am and went on until late at night. Sleep, of course, was often interrupted by urgent calls, the health and strength of these women of compassion and steel often being pushed to a point of collapse.

The work of these early missionaries in schools, clinics, zenana visiting and hospitals led to many women and girls professing faith in Jesus Christ. A refuge for them was needed and this must be not only secure but also a real home. *Maika* in Allahabad became such a refuge and home and also a training place to enable the widows and girls to support themselves. There was a school where their children were educated and—it was a place where marriages were arranged in the traditional Indian way.

TRAINING FOR LEADERSHIP

It was here that a long tradition of giving responsibility to Indian women began and despite some disappointments continued through the history of the mission. The first matron of *Maika* was Maryam Begum. From the Bombay Indian Female Normal school came the first Indian woman medical missionary in Western India and Sundrabai Powar who opened the Zenana Training Home in Poona—women of ability and character who undertook formidable responsibilities. In the same mould was Qulsam Begum, a niece of the last Queen of Oudh and widow of the Indian Chief of Police. After a long struggle against the Gospel, she was finally convinced from her reading of the Bible p.377 that Jesus was indeed the Son of God and Saviour of the World. In time she became a much-loved teacher and evangelist and the special friend of 'Granny' Pollen whom she accompanied on her forays into the narrow lanes of Kurja in the United Provinces and the surrounding villages. Together they defended new Christians against the wrath of the Muslims of Kurja.

Schools, teacher training institutions, crafts and trades training, refuges—all good and necessary—but now in 1900 came a new vision in response to the expressed needs of students in Lahore in the Punjab. Professional opportunities for woman were slowly opening up and 'a college in embryo' began. The principal was an Englishwoman, but the other staff and faculty, both men and women, were nationals. For many years now the Principal has been an Indian and since Independence a Pakistani lady. So began the first inter-mission women's institution for higher learning. The influence of Kinnaird College has been felt right across the north of the Indian sub-continent.

One of the 'characters' of ZBMM was undoubtedly Rosalie Harvey, a frail woman who tried for eight years to reach India despite the unwillingness of her doctors. This irrepressible woman on reaching Nasik, Western India, in 1884 was not discouraged by the harsh bigotry of its Brahmins. In the villages she was fearless in her chastising of men who had ill-treated their young wives. In the city, woe betide any man or woman she saw ill treating an animal. In no time she had an array of animals in the mission compound and finally badgered prominent men to found and finance a branch of the SPCA. Relentlessly she besought the wealthy until at last a Veterinary Hospital was founded. But Rosalie Harvey will probably be remembered most for her compassionate care of lepers. Famine and, later, plague had made the already tragic plight of the Nasik lepers much worse. It was Rosalie who fought for shelter and food for them. With Indian and missionary colleagues, she spent her days nursing, cheering and comforting them. With wit and spirit she begged the authorities and businessmen of Nasik and Bombay to provide funds for a permanent asylum for the lepers. Her success in establishing first a home for untainted children and at last the Leper Asylum were in the succession of Carey's 'Attempt great things ... expect great things'. A babies' home and a purdah hospital were other longings of Rosalie Harvey's heart that were fulfilled.

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The 1950s saw the first men accepted by ZBMM. Yet even today three-fifths of its missionaries are women. In the heritage of the intrepid **p.378** women of the 19th century, they have often been pioneers. Medical work in Nepal, the newly created countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh, fresh areas of opportunity in Central Asia, the Gulf States and North Africa—all have challenged them to a new commitment.

In India, they have encouraged nurses' fellowships and taken responsibility in medical colleges. International schools, theological colleges and Bible schools would be less effective without the capable women teachers on their faculties. Women have established writing institutes, bookshops and correspondence courses, ministered to college students and graduates and become church pastors and deaconesses. They have undertaken mission administration with its rigours of travel and recurring crises and been active in compassionate ministry to Asian immigrants in western countries. The door is opening for women to enter increasingly wider ministries. There can be no turning back. What is the Holy Spirit saying to the Church?

Kathleen D. Nicholls has served in India with Interserve since 1955. She co-ordinates the Traditional Media Unit of the International Christian Media Commission. **p.379**

Book Review

MEN, WOMEN AND GOD

by Kathy Keay (ed.)

(Marshall Pickering, Basingstoke 1987 pp. 304. £5.95)

*Reviewed by Sally Alford in Themelios October/November 1988.
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Men, Women and God (MWG) is a collection of short chapters by a wide range of evangelical authors, from backgrounds and work situations as varied as the subjects of the chapters, covering the role of women in Scripture and in the church, the roles of men and women in society (considering education, work, politics, racism and the media), and finally 'biological' questions about women (family and breadwinning roles, singleness, rape and lesbianism). This book also has the broadest audience in view, being on the whole very readable and accessible to non-theologically trained Christians, although this is *not* at the cost of its content which merits attention also from those who have training and interest to explore the issues in greater depth and at a more academic level.

The interpretation of biblical texts is where *Men, Women and God* begins, being concerned with specifically Christian and evangelical views of feminism. There are three chapters particularly looking at the texts by Elaine Storkey, Andrew Kirk, and Faith and Roger Forster. These present a good summary of the main arguments. However they are very condensed, and I would think that someone not already familiar with the discussion might find these chapters rather hard to digest. In this first section of *MWG* there is also a chapter by Dave Tomlinson entitled 'A Masculine Confession'. This chapter is particularly valuable because it highlights the question indicated above about the extent to which assumptions and attitudes to women have failed to change with legislation. It is also valuable because it makes it very clear that feminism is not only an issue for women—Dave Tomlinson talks not only of the responsibility of men to make changes in their lives and thinking, but also of the 'crippling' effects sexual inequality also has on many men.

Part II of *MWG* provides further demonstration of the prevalence of the last century's attitudes to male and female roles in our society. These attitudes are still at work in the enormous inequalities in education and at work, in the running and policies of government and in the media, and of course there is a vicious circle particularly in the case of the media (this is a very good chapter) which reinforces the [p. 380](#) very values and assumptions on which it relies for its effectiveness, such as the idea of man as the 'natural' breadwinner (Chapter 13).

Given this evidence of the problems and injustices which still exist for many women, Part III considers 'biological' questions—questions of relationships and roles, the breakdown of the family, the place of singleness, rape and lesbianism. I was disappointed that this section included nothing about abortion, which is a key issue in 'secular' feminism, because many Christians are all too ready to pronounce upon the subject as an ethical debate without relating at all to the real problems and human suffering involved. However the other chapters are certainly to be welcomed. The most valuable thing about the book is that it clearly shows that Christian feminism is concerned about practical involvement in *every* area of life, and not solely with questions over hermeneutics and ordination. It also demonstrates the urgency of the situation, showing up the extent of real injustice and suffering, and showing up the inconsistency between the claims of Christianity of justice and liberation for all, and the practice of the church and society. It is very important that feminism is seen not as a concern with sexism alone, but as part of a greater concern for justice, and this is brought out by the chapter on women and racism. As a whole, this book should prove a very good resource and will hopefully raise the level of awareness of the issues among Christians who are often neither very well informed nor very concerned. It presents us with the need for the church—men and women working together—to get involved actively in working for change and promoting justice. [p. 381](#)

Journal and Book Information

Anvil

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Christian Challenge

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The Evangelical Quarterly

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