

**"The attitude of man is informed by reason,  
[that] of woman by sensuality."**

– Philo, De Opificio Mundi, 165.

**"The woman is inferior to the man in every way."**

– Josephus, Contra Apionem, ii.201.

**"There is no 'male and female'. We are all one in Christ Jesus."**

– Paul, Galatians 3:28.

# **The Role of Woman in the Church**

by Frank Daniels

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This paper is the summary of a long period of research conducted by the author. The objectives of this report are to bring to light the egalitarian stance of the teachings of Jesus and to discover the meanings of several Biblical passages which deal with the subject, some of which are often misinterpreted.

## PART ONE: GOD'S VIEW IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

### Creation

#### Gen 1:27

*"So God created humanity in His own image, in the image of God he created it; male and female he created them. And God blessed them and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth'. And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is on the face of the earth, and every tree that has fruit yielding seed; to you it shall be for food.'"*

From the creation it is clear that man and woman were given parallel roles in the creation order. Man and woman were each given dominion over the animals and plants. Nowhere is woman placed beneath man. In the following chapter we read that Eve was formed from Adam's side "to be a suitable helper to him" (2:18). This does not place woman as man's inferior either, for the Hebrew word translated "helper" is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament: twenty of these cases refer to help from a superior. In fact, sixteen of the twenty-one refer to God (such as Ex 18:4, Psa 27:9, Psa 94:17, and Psa 146:5). Thus, there is nothing at creation that would subjugate women to men. The use of "suitable helper" to describe Eve actually implies a spiritual **partnership** between the husband and wife. Adam needed help, and help was provided.

#### Gen 3:16-19

*"And to the woman he said:*

*'I will greatly multiply your pains and your groanings. You will bring forth children in pain, but you will turn to your husband. And he will dominate you.'*

*"Now he said to Adam:*

*"Because you have listened to your wife's voice and have eaten from the tree that I had instructed you that one alone not to eat, the ground is cursed in your work. In pain you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will yield thorns and thistles for you. And you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, until you return to the ground from which you were taken from. Because you are dirt, and to the dirt you will return."*

These penalties are often interpreted as applying to all women and all men. However, what the Lord says to Adam makes it clear that these things were meant for Adam and Eve alone: only **Adam** was taken out of the ground. God had directly told **Adam** not to eat of the tree. Also, the *reasons* given for the punishments only apply to Adam and Eve. They do not apply to all men and women. It is unreasonable to suppose that God is punishing **you** for eating the fruit of a tree that you will never see.

There has been a long-standing tradition stating that these "curses" apply to all women and all men. This simply is not true. God says elsewhere in the Bible (such as in Ezek 18) that he will not punish one person for another person's sins. Specifically in the passage in Ezekiel, we are told that the descendants will not bear the iniquity of their ancestor. This same idea is found in Deut 24, 2 Kgs 14, 2 Chron 25, and Jer 31. It is made abundantly plain that each one is accountable for his own sins and not another's and therefore each will be punished for his own sins and not for another's. Yet tradition persists in telling us that God is punishing each of us for what Adam and Eve did. Some go so far as to say that Adam passes us his sin. This is not what God says.

Furthermore, if it had been God's intent to smite each of us in the manner prescribed in Genesis 3, he has certainly been ineffective. Not all women suffer strong pains in bearing children. In fact, many women bear no children at all. Also, very few men in America eat bread by the sweat of their faces, toiling over the ground until they die. Does each of these men and women escape **God's** wrath? Then God is ineffective if indeed he intended to "curse" all humanity.

But he did not intend this (as we have shown above) but was rather punishing two specific people for their own sins. The tradition which speaks otherwise originated as Jewish leaders began to subjugate women. [You will notice that the portion said to Adam is seldom quoted. It contains the clearest explanation.] We intend to show that God has not subordinated women to men. In this section we shall see how God treated women under the First Covenant.

First of all, nowhere in the Old Testament are women forbidden from entering the priesthood. This might be striking in our culture where women are generally not allowed to serve in a forum involving men. In fact, the Hebrew phrase "Aaron and his sons" used to define the priesthood (Ex 29:44; Num 18:7) may also properly be rendered "Aaron and his descendants", as the Hebrew word for "sons" is often translated descendants, with the translation being determined by the context. Examples will follow where this sort of thing occurs.

For further evidence that there were women priests in the first covenant: in Lev 6:18 we have: *"Every male among the children of Aaron shall eat it,"* describing the grain offering.

In fact, in the same narrative we have, *"Every male among the priests shall eat of it; it is most holy."* (Lev 6:29) This describes the sin offering.

In the law of the guilt offering in Lev 7:6, the same language is used: *"Every male among the priests shall eat of it. It shall be eaten in a holy place. It is most holy."*

The use of "every male among the priests" implies that there were women among the Levites, the priesthood. Women are mentioned in Ex 38:8 and 1 Sam 2:22 as *"serving at the door of the tent of meeting."* At this location were the altar of burnt offerings and the laver. Here the sacrifices were slain. Here the priest was consecrated and lived for seven days after consecration. Here the sacrifices were eaten. Here the Nazarites shaved their heads. The tent of meeting was of high importance. In Num 18:21-22 we find:

"And to the children of Levi, look, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting. "And the children of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting again, lest they bear sin and die."

The context shows this passage to be speaking of women...women engaged in "service" at the tent (or tabernacle). The word "served" used to describe the women who ministered at the door is only applied to military service or tabernacle or temple service. The Hebrew word is used to designate the service of only one class of Tabernacle servants: the Levites, the family of the priesthood.

Women were also allowed to take special vows and become Nazarites, as Num 6:1-2 make clear: *"Again Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel and say to them, 'When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazarite, to dedicate himself to Yahweh,...''"* The passage goes on to describe the vows of the Nazarite. Now the regulations which apply to Nazarites agree with those for the priests during worship (see Lev 10:8ff, Lev 21, Ezek 44:28 and cf Num 6).

## **Prophets**

### **Miriam**

*"And Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dancing.*

*"And Miriam answered them, 'Sing to Yahweh, for he is highly exalted; the horse and his rider he has hurled into the sea.'"* (Ex 15:20-21)

Miriam was prominent as a prophet, and at one time she and Aaron even questioned Moses' preeminence (Num 12).

*"Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had married a Cushite woman); and they said, "'Has Yahweh indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us as well?' And Yahweh heard it."*

Even when Miriam was punished for her part in speaking against Moses, we are told that "the people did not move on until Miriam was received again," (v.15) for she had been shut up out of the camp for seven days. Micah (6:4) mentions Moses, Aaron, and Miriam as having been prominent – sent by God.

### **Deborah**

*"Then the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of Yahweh after Ehud died. And Yahweh sold them into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; and the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-hagoyim.*

*"And the sons of Israel cried to Yahweh; for he had nine hundred iron chariots, and he oppressed the sons of Israel severely for twenty years.*

*"Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the sons of Israel came up to her for judgment.*

*"Now she sent and summoned Barak the son of Abinoam from Kadesh-naphtali, and said to him, "Behold, Yahweh, the God of Israel has commanded,*

*"Go and march to Mount Tabor, and take with you ten thousand men from the sons of Naphtali and from the sons of Zebulun. And I will draw out to you Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his many troops to the river Kishon; and I will give him into your hand."*

*"Then Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.'"*

In the remainder of this passage from Judges 4, Deborah leads the army of Israel to victory against Sisera's army. The Song of Triumph given by Deborah following the battle is one of the earliest recorded songs to God. It is important that the reader notice that Deborah was married, and still did these things. We might also add that another woman, Yael, was solely and directly responsible for the death of Sisera, the enemy leader.

## **Huldah**

During Josiah's reign over Israel, the High Priest and two other important statesmen were sent by the king to consult with Huldah the prophet. She speaks as the voice of God; "Thus says the LORD" (2 Kings 22:15-9; 2 Chron 34:23-7). Jeremiah and Zephaniah were in Judah also at the time but there is no record of their having been consulted. One of the temple gates was named in her honor. History tells us that her tomb was the only gravesite within Jerusalem other than the House of David. (see Starr, p.135) The Rabbis write that Huldah taught in the school at Jerusalem and that she lived in the college or "second quarter" (see 2 Kings 22:14). From this example, we can gather that it was not due to a lack of male prophets that Huldah was chosen by God. Rather, the male and female prophets were risen up by God concurrently, and Huldah was at least equal to the males.

## **Other Women**

The wife of Isaiah (Isa 8:3) and Noadiah (Neh 6:14) were also female prophets.

Psa 68:11 reads, *"The Lord gives the command; the women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host."*

We also have in the Old Testament, the accounts of Ruth and Esther. Ruth was from Moab, but Esther was a Jewish queen. In fact, Esther's authorship of the book bearing her name cannot be readily disputed by anyone, as she was certainly well educated and was able to write well. In Est 9:29, 9:32 we see that she managed state affairs and wrote. Her book also contains private

matters about her life which no other would likely have known. We trust that she indeed did write the book named for her and that her work is as inspired of God as were the other Biblical writings.

Women were also "heads of father's houses", as is reckoned in a list of "princes" in 1 Chronicles (ch2 - ch10). Fourteen women are mentioned among these, including Miriam and the "sons" of Sheshan, who had only daughters (2:31, 34). Starr (p.148-160) goes into intricate detail to describe each one of these female heads of houses, something we do not desire to do. This is left to the interested reader.

We have seen that the Lord appointed women to do a number of different tasks under the old covenant. As we shall presently observe, his treatment of the gender did not change in the New Testament. Christ himself presents examples of behavior with which the teachings of the disciples harmonized.

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## **PART TWO: THE GOSPELS**

There are several passages in the four gospels dealing with women. Some of the images presented are almost incidental in nature; others are highly important as they present to us God's own unchanging view of women. These passages form the foundation of a guiding teaching from which the apostles do not stray. We hold that woman in general is herein portrayed as man's equal.

Mt 24:39-41 gives representations of the second coming of Christ. The account depicts both men and women being taken up to be with Jesus. The short story 'two men shall be in the field' is followed by a parallel for women: 'two women shall be grinding at the mill'. With this, Jesus indicated women to be co-heirs to the Kingdom of God, an idea carried on elsewhere as well. In the modern Christian churches, this notion is not so striking, but the concept of "co-heirship" including women was not orthodox in the day when Jesus said it.

Another example of the parallel male/female stories is found in Mt 24:45-51 and Mt 25:1-13, where the parable of the honest and dishonest male servants is followed immediately by the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Each account stresses the importance of being diligently prepared for the Lord's return. These are tailored to the two genders.

One of Jesus' earliest healings, the first in Mark and Luke, was of a woman – Peter's mother-in-law (Mt 8:14-15; Mk 1:29-31; Lk 4:38-39). Nothing is remarkable about this particular healing, although she was a woman, but when Jesus healed a woman on the sabbath (Lk 13:10-17), he rebuked the ruler of the synagogue who showed indignation toward the sabbath healing. In doing so, Jesus uses an extremely rare phrase, "daughter of Abraham", to describe her (v.16). The expression "son of Abraham" was commonly used to respectfully refer to a Jew, but "daughter of Abraham", was an unknown parallel phrase. Swidler calls it "almost unheard of"; others call it "rare". It occurs nowhere else in the Bible. No major lexicon mentions its use outside the Bible,

and we have seen it attested only once elsewhere in a Talmudic reference written centuries after Jesus.

## **Divorce**

In Rabbinic Judaism at the time of Christ, it was legal for a man to divorce a woman for any reason, but not the other way around. This teaching is not in the Bible but is from Judaic tradition. The Pharisees questioned Jesus about this to test him (Mt 19:3-10; Mk 10:11-12; Lk 16:18). Jesus referred back to the Genesis 1 account of creation and undid their tradition by saying that only for adultery should divorce ever be granted, and even this is unnatural. We must remember that Jesus was not only addressing the issue of the conditions of acceptable divorce, but was directly attacking the Jewish tradition of subjugating women which had been brought before him.

## **Adultery**

Even in the case of adultery, Jesus showed mercy when he freed a woman caught in the act (Pseudo John 8:2-11). Notice that the man involved was not present. Men were not subject to such punishment, although the Law prescribed it (Lev 20:10). Since there were no witnesses against her, Jesus did not condemn her. Rather than simply letting her get off free, he instructs her to stop her sinning. Jesus not only showed mercy to the woman, but also taught against the practices of his Jewish culture which treated women as the cause of adultery. Elsewhere he tells men that it is sin even to look at women with lust (Mt 5:28). The responsibility is placed on the individual and directed at his own heart. This upturned the notion of women as sex objects which had developed over the centuries before Jesus.

## **Women at the table**

In Lk 10:38-42, Mary is described as "sitting at Jesus' feet", an expression used for "studying under" someone (see Swidler). She is also noted as listening to his message. In contemporary Judaism, the teaching of the Hebrew Bible to a woman was absolutely forbidden, as was any religious discussion with a woman. This tradition continued until the 10th century and was contemporary to Jesus. Rabbi Eliezer wrote in the First Century:

*"Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman."* He also wrote, *"Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her obscenity."* Mishnah, Sotah (3,4)

Jesus violated all tradition by not only allowing Mary to learn, but by also letting her shirk the traditional woman's role of waiting tables. He told Martha – who waited tables alone – that Mary was doing the good thing by listening (rather than waiting tables). Actually, the equal status of women is thought to have been a Lucan priority, a matter of chief importance.

In the house of Simon the Leper, the following event took place (Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-8):

Women were ordinarily forbidden from entering the dining area. Mary of Bethany was allowed

to enter and to anoint Jesus. Some of the disciples questioned this anointing, calling it 'a waste', but Jesus defended it as a good work. Once again, this uplifts both the woman involved and the woman reader who was immersed in her own culture in which certain schools of thought placed women beneath men.

### **At the Well (Jn 4:1-42)**

Jesus is described as needing to go through Samaria. When he approached the woman alone and talked to her, she questioned why he would be asking something of a woman of Samaria. It is well known that Jews generally had no contact with Samaritans, and the passage says this. However, Samaritan women were particularly to be avoided, for women were considered unclean while issuing blood (during their periods) and after giving birth (see Lev 15:23-4, 20:18). Such impure women were forbidden from associating with men or engaging in free temple worship. Since the Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with one another, it was impossible to know whether Samaritan women were 'clean' or not so they were proclaimed **“menstruants from the cradle”** by Jewish leaders (Mishnah, Niddah 4:1; see Evans, J.Morris). Nevertheless, Jesus spoke to her. [Also see Mt 9:18-26 Mk 5:24-34; Lk 8:43-8, where Jesus heals a 'bleeding' woman and allows her to touch him!] his disciples join them at the end of the history. They don't wonder why he is speaking to a Samaritan (after all, they are in Samaria and have just returned from a Samaritan village), but they do think to ask why he would be talking to a **woman** (Jn 4:27).

Again, the problem was a social and cultural consideration. The rabbis forbade men from talking with women in the street:

*"He who speaks much with a woman draws down misfortune on himself, neglects the words of the Law, and finally earns Gehenna."* (Mishnah Aboth 1,5).

Finally, in the Talmud, we have a further commentary:

*"One is not so much as to greet a woman."* (Talmud bBerakhoth 43b).

This was so strict in the time of Jesus as to not allow a man to speak to his own wife, daughter, or sister in the street (see Schonfield, Swidler, etc.). But Jesus disregards the woman's gender and violates the social order to speak to teach this woman spiritual truths that Nicodemus (ch. 3) could not fathom. It is also important and interesting to notice that she is the first person to whom Jesus reveals that he is the Messiah, which he tells her plainly (v.26)! Until then, he allowed people to think what they will.

Furthermore, she evangelized the message of Jesus to her entire city, leading them to listen to Jesus (v.39-42).

## **The Crucifixion**

At Golgotha, the male disciples ran away (Mt 26:56; Mk 14:49). John remained, but the others are gone. Yet the women stayed by his side: among them Mary, Salome (=? Mary the wife of Clopas), Mary Magdalene, and his aunt.

## **The Burial and Resurrection**

Only women witnessed the burial of Christ, though women were not considered in their culture to be legal witnesses to any event (Mt 27:61; Mk 15:47; Lk 23:50-6). The gospel writers present their testimony as equal to a man's testimony. Similarly, only women were present at the tomb to see the angel and Jesus (Mt 28:1-8; Mk 16:1-8; Lk 24:1-12; Jn 20:1-10). Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna, and possibly other women were there.

More importantly, Mary Magdalene is sent forth by the angel to tell the good news of Jesus' resurrection to the male disciples (Mt 28:7-10). She is the first person, a woman, to receive this apostolic commission.

Also observe that Mary recognized Jesus' voice when he called her name (Jn 20:16), just as the sheep recognize the shepherd's voice when he calls them by name (Jn 10:4-5). Note that these accounts appear in the same book.

Thus we see that men and women were given parallel – equal – roles in the gospels, entirely contrary to the prevailing Jewish teachings. Jesus' egalitarian stance, according to some historians, brought criticism on him as well as on His disciples. Before leaving the gospels, we shall look at Mt 1:1-17, the genealogy of Christ. Women were very seldom ever mentioned in print unless they had some sort of importance, yet four women plus Mary are mentioned in Jesus' genealogy. Furthermore, all four had some sort of sexual taboo or deviance associated with them...as also did Mary by her premarital conception (thought to be adultery).

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# **PART THREE: HEADSHIP AND VEILING**

## **Headship**

*"Now I praise you, because you remember me in all things and you are holding to the things that were passed down, just as I passed them down to you. Now I want you to know that each man's head is the Anointed One. Now man is woman's head; now God is the Anointed One's head.*

*"Each man who prays or prophesies with something down on his head is disgracing his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head totally uncovered is disgracing her head, for it is one and the same with the one who has been shaved.)*

*"For if a woman is not covered, she should also be shaved. But if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to be shaved, then she should be covered.*

*"For indeed, a man is not bound to have his head covered, since he is God's image and glory. But woman is man's glory.*

*"For man is not from woman, but woman is from man. For also, man was not created through the woman, but woman through the man.*

*"On account of this, the woman is bound to have **authority over her head**: on account of the angels. Regardless, neither is woman without man nor man without woman in the Lord. For just as the woman is from man, so also the man comes through woman. But all things are from God.*

*"You judge among yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God uncovered? Now nature itself does not teach you that if indeed a man has long hair it is a dishonor to him. However, if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her, because the hair has been given instead of a covering.*

*"But if someone decides to be argumentative, **we have no such custom, nor do God's assemblies.**" (1 Cor 11:2-16, emphasis mine)*

Before continuing, it is very important to study certain concepts used in the New Testament. One of these is that of "headship".

The Messiah is said to be the head of his community (Eph 5:23, etc). What is the head? Literally, the head is the upper division of the body, containing the brain. The Greeks believed the heart and head both to be important sources of life sustenance for the body. The body was seen to 'flow out' from the head, as from a source, and to be attached to it (see Eph 4:15-6 and Evans, Swidler, Hurley, Swartley). In fact, the Greek word **κεφαλη** (head) was often used to denote a source location. The 'headwaters' of a river system are called the same thing in Greek. Even the mouth of a river is called **κεφαλη** because topographically it looks as if the mouth is the common source of the system (see also *Journal of Amer. Acad. of Rel.* Sep '74 pp543ff). Note that in Col 1:17-18 Jesus as head is directly connected with him as "beginning" as well as "firstborn from among the dead". The "source" connotation is present.

In this same sense, the main stalk of a vine can be viewed as a 'head' with the branches issuing forth from but being linked to it. This analogy is used in the same way in the Bible: Christ is the source.

The cornerstone of a building is the stone set first at the foundation which forms the beginning of the entire structure. The Messiah is called the cornerstone several times in the Bible. In Greek, cornerstone is literally the 'head (**κεφαλη**) of the corner'. Christ is the source.

The use of **κεφαλη** to mean this kind of source in metaphor is common and is one of the most common of the metaphorical uses of "head" in Greek (see Swidler, Evans, Knight). It was, however, considerably rare for "head" to be used to denote a position of authority. **Κυριος** (lord) or **αρχων** (ruler) were used instead for this purpose. In fact, only one author was able to find any Greek uses of **κεφαλη** in classical literature to mean "authority". He finds 13 uses which appear to be such in all of history: 6 in Plutarch, 3 in Philo, 1 in the Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs, 1 in Herodotus, 1 in the Apostolic Fathers, and 1 in the Greek Anthology. Only 4 of these are within 100 years before the apostles (Knight, Appendix 1), and even these are not necessarily referring to the *function* of leadership but merely to some sort of leader.

The Liddell-Scott Lexicon, the standard text for studying contemporary 'secular' Greek, does not list "authority" (or anything like it) as a use for **κεφαλη**, but does list "source". The same is true for Moulton and Milligan's Lexicon. This should indicate the rarity of the authority connotation,

if any existed. In fact, those lexica that do list an authority connotation for "head" do so while interpreting Biblical passages, showing their own cultural bias. Most modern scholars, such as F.F. Bruce, have switched to the "source" understanding of the metaphorical use of κεφαλη in the man/woman relationship. This author expects, however, that conservative resistance to this interpretation will rise as the orthodoxy is further challenged.

Christ is the source of man, as of the church. The Biblical use of "head" in metaphor is "source".

*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For through him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created by him and for him." (Col 1:15-6)*

God is also the source of goodness. The notion of headship is actually stronger than the word "source" indicates, for there is a dependence on the source implicit. Were it not for the Messiah there would be no Christian men and no church. Each Christian man points to Christ for origin. No single word seems to capture the "flowing forth" well.

Headship is important to our discussion, as man is said to be the head of woman. Although the Bible does not say that man has authority over woman, we know from Genesis 2 that man is the source of woman, and so "headship" can be clearly understood this way.

### **The Veiling of Women**

James Hurley's text provides a complete and detailed analysis of Jewish veiling customs from the time of Moses through the post-Talmud era. Of all the sources, his evidence is the most extensive, comprising 17 pages in his book. We will attempt to highlight his more pertinent findings, numbered as he numbered them in his conclusions:

"2. Graeco-Roman practice of the day, as evidenced by art and literature, did not include mandatory veiling of any sort.

Facial veiling was unknown and whether or not women pulled their shawls over their heads was a matter of indifference.

3. Graeco-Roman custom was concerned with the coiffure of women...A woman's hair was generally dressed with great care. It was frequently braided and decorated, sometimes with very costly ornaments. The dressed hair was a sign of rank and dignity.

4. The Old Testament includes no requirements of veiling of women, although it presumes their hair will be put up (Num 5:18).

8. The evidence of the Talmud indicates that by somewhere between the third and sixth century it had become the practice of Jewish piety for women to go outside with a shawl drawn over their heads. Full facial veiling was not the practice of Talmudic Jews." (Hurley's appendix)

As to the specific nature of the 'covering' mentioned in 1 Cor 11, two theories have been expounded. The first, which is the majority view, is that the hair was to be done up, which formed the 'covering'. Loosed hair had certain symbolic meanings both in Jewish custom and in Greek custom. Some claim further that temple prostitutes of Aphrodite performed orgiastic rituals with loosed hair and that to imitate them was disgraceful.

Others claim that the temple prostitutes had shaved heads and that Paul was referring to women whose hair is cut short like a man's, as if to reject their femininity. According to this view, Paul calls it unseemly that a woman (or wife) should deny her femininity.

It seems, however, that the covering used by the Corinthian women was some sort of shawl, covering the top of the head, perhaps restricting the hair from flowing freely. The long hair and short hair issue is only Paul's analogy and should not be confused with the issue at hand. Whatever the social issue at hand, Paul presents two sides of an argument for wearing the covering.

We have already discussed veiling and headship. Some translators of this verse, however, render the woman's covering to be a symbol of submission. Translators ought to render the word "ἐξουσία" in v.10 "authority". This word is never used to represent someone else's authority, but one's own: in this case the woman's. *"On account of this, the woman is bound to have authority over her head: on account of the messengers."* Furthermore, translators render the phrase ἐξουσία ἐπὶ as universally as "authority over" or "power over" wherever it appears *except* in this verse, where a woman has the power. Εξουσία (exousia) is a term of will, indicating in this case that the freedom of choice belongs to the Corinthian woman, and Montgomery rightly translates it such: "the woman ought to have authority over her head." With the appropriate feminine hairstyle, the woman asserted that she was a Christian woman in the wild city of Corinth. The phrase "on account of the messenger" has no known clear interpretation, but obviously the Corinthians were to understand it. Literally hundreds of explanations have been given for "on account of the messengers." Apparently, this was part of a counterargument given in the Corinthian letter to Paul. Were these human messengers from other Christian assemblies who might have seen the unusual shawl covering in Corinth? Were these divine messengers ("angels") who supposedly watched over congregations? We do not know.

Let's review 1 Cor 11:

Apparently there was some sort of covering being called for by the Corinthians, which was in line with their local customs. Paul advises the Corinthians that the women there are encouraged strongly to wear the covering so as to not resemble the prostitutes. However, after making this case, Paul includes a statement which carefully affirms the equal status of women, pointing out that because she too is human, the matter is ultimately the woman's choice. [In the translation given above, the word "αὐτῇ" (to her) has been omitted because a text variant without this word is supported by all three traditions, including affirmation from the important papyrus manuscript p<sup>46</sup>, which Young Kyu Kim has dated to the first century. It is also the only reading which explains the development of the other two. Also, the word is found in brackets (doubtful) in NA<sup>26-7</sup>.]

It is also important to notice that in v.15 "long hair has been given to her **instead of** a covering". The long hair is a **substitute** for the covering; long vs. short hair is not the element of discussion. Furthermore, this seems to make the bound vs. loosed hair view less likely. Paul is here saying that since the woman already has long hair (which is a covering for her), she can justifiably choose not to wear the covering. Note the ending, "**We have no such custom.**" The views agree that Paul is stressing that the men should look like pious men and the women like pious women.

Elsewhere, Paul denounces the "costly array" braiding. The practice of either loosing one's hair or clipping it is a disgrace to the woman's source, the man, of whom she is the glory. Nevertheless, Paul is not issuing commandments; he is advising the women of Corinth to make the choice to wear the covering which locally distinguishes pious Christian women from prostitutes.

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## **PART FOUR: THE APOSTLES**

Note: There are many who believe that the books of Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter, and 2 John were not written by the supposed author. We have seen evidence supporting and denying the apostolic authorship and will assume in this paper that all of the above ARE APOSTOLIC.

### **Guiding Teachings:**

#### **Gal 3:27-28; Col 3:11**

Interestingly enough, both the Greeks and Jews had in their cultures a prayer or dominical saying which expressed thanks for not being a woman. Both prayers were similar in form, became popular at almost the same time, and may have originated from a 6th century B.C. saying.

The Jewish prayer appears three times in rabbinic teachings, among those Tosephta Berakhoth 7,8 where we read:

*"Praised be God that he has not created me a Gentile!  
Praised be God that he has not created me a woman!  
Praised be God that he has not created me a slave!"*

"Ignorant person" was sometimes spoken for "slave" in this daily prayer of thanks for all Jewish males. The Greek expression is identical, usually saying "a Greek and not a barbarian", etc. The resemblance to Galatians is striking:

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek.  
There is neither slave nor free.  
There is no 'male and female'.  
We are all one in Christ Jesus."*

This denouncement of physical distinctions is echoed in Col 3:11, where "Western" manuscripts place "male and female" at the top of the list. Some presume this to be an insertion. Whether it is or not, the ideas are certainly parallel. However, the phrase in Colossians may be independent of Galatians.

With regard to the wording of Gal 3:28, Bruce (p189) says,

"The reason for the change [of neither..nor to 'male and female'] is probably the influence of Gn 1:27... 'He made them male and female'. In Christ, on the contrary, 'there is no "male and female"'...Paul states the basic principle here; if restrictions on it are found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus...they are to be understood in relation to Gal 3:28 and not vice versa."

### **Rom 5:12-4; 1 Cor 15:21-2**

"On account of this – as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and so death passed through to all men. For until the Law came, sin was in the world, but sin is not recorded where there is no law. Death, however, reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a type of the one who is about to come."

"For since through a man there is death, through a man also there is a resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

These verses indicate that Adam was the one through whom sin entered into the world. This is entirely contrary to the Rabbinic teaching, which Paul as a Pharisee knew. The teachings hold Adam blameless and point to Eve as the source of sin. In Ben Sira 25:24 it is written,

*"Sin began with a woman, and thanks to her we all must die."*

Paul rejects this teaching blatantly, placing the responsibility on **Adam's** shoulders for keeping the teaching which God had entrusted to him specifically. Paul received his 'new' ideas from no one but the Lord. These ideas agree with those already found in the gospels. We have seen in Genesis 3 that Eve's ignorance and newness to the teachings of God contributed to her choice to eat the forbidden fruit. But Adam was clear-headed. He could have advised Eve properly but did not. He was not deceived, but he allowed Eve to convince him that he too should eat the fruit. Adam willfully ignored his responsibility, and so Paul puts the blame on his shoulders – instead of on Eve's.

In the letters, women are constantly being mentioned as converts, co-workers, laborers, etc., which was against custom. It was even rare for a woman to be named in a greeting, as is often done by the writers of the letters.

### **House Churches**

Four churches are mentioned by Paul or Luke as being led in women's houses. The women are Chloe (1 Cor 1:11), Lydia (Acts 16:14-5,40), Mark's mother (Acts 12:12), and Nympha (Col 4:15). This was respectable in itself, but some authors have pointed out that phrasing like what is used in these passages may indicate that the women oversaw or led the house churches. We feel this bit of evidence to be inconclusive, but note it nonetheless.

## Apostles

**Αποστελλειν** in Greek means "to send forth, send out". To merit the term *apostle*, one had to have been divinely commissioned to preach. In church tradition Mary Magdalene is called the Apostle to the Apostles for preaching the gospel to the male disciples. Paul defends his own authority with "Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord?" (1 Cor 9:1)

*"With personal encounter with the risen Lord, personal commissioning by Him seems to have been the only basis of the apostolate."* (Rengstorf: "apostolos"; Kittel I,431) The *Dictionary of NT Theology* says similar things.

The Twelve were apostles, but these groups should not be confused, as there were other apostles such as Paul, James the less, and Andronicus. The Twelve were not the only ones commissioned by Jesus. Seventy-two were present at the first commissioning. Paul's direct commission to preach is also on record (Acts 9; Acts 26). Who then is **Junia** (Rom 16:7-8), called an outstanding apostle? The name **Junia** (Julia in variant readings) is a common Roman female name. "Junias", which the NIV translators use here, is an unattested masculinized version of the name. There is no reference in any literature in history to a name or nickname called "Junias". That Junias might be a nickname for a longer name such as "Junianus" is also highly unlikely, especially considering that Latin nicknames, diminutives, were formed by lengthening the name (as Priscilla for Prisca), not by shortening it. Origin (185-253), the earliest commentator on Rm 16:7, referred to Junia as female. Jerome (c.340-420) did likewise. In fact, although several people commented on Junia's femininity throughout history, there is no record of anyone in history having supposed the name Junia to be a man's until the 13th century, when Aegidius of Rome (1245-1316) referred to both Andronicus and Junia as "honorable men" (see Swidler). ALL attestations before this point refer to Junia as a female **αποστολος**, including John Chrysostom (4th century), who writes,

*"To be an apostle is something great. But to be outstanding among the apostles – just think what a wonderful song of praise that is! They were outstanding on the basis of their works and virtuous actions. Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was even deemed worthy of the title of apostle."* (see Brooten article)

Chrysostom, it must be noted, was somewhat of a misogynist, and yet he praises Junia as a female apostle.

According to Brooten, it was **Martin Luther** who popularized the notion that Junia could have been a man called "Junias". Luther had no connection to any early manuscripts which could have provided him with this theory; it was an **unfounded opinion**.

## Prophets (OT)

Old Testament female prophets are mentioned, as we have seen. A prophet is one through whom God speaks directly, usually about the future. This gift should not be confused with the gift of teaching.

"Whereas teachers expound Scripture, cherish the tradition about Jesus, and explain the fundamentals of the catechism, the prophets, not bound by Scripture or tradition, speak to the congregation on the basis of revelations....The teacher considers the past and gives direction for the present....The gaze of the prophet is directed to the future....For the reliability of prophecy there is no objective criterion; it is grounded in the divinely given proclamation itself." (Friedrich: "προφετης ktl"; Kittel VI,854)

The *Dictionary of NT Theology* says similar things. Essentially, a prophet is a spokesperson of God.

Women prophets were Miriam, Moses' sister (Ex 15:20; Num 12:1-2) – Micah refers to her also (Mic 6:3-4); Deborah, a prophet and judge (Judg 4:4,6); Huldah, who was sent by a king which opposed a 'goddess' cult (2 Kings 22:14-20); and Anna (Lk 2:36-8), who lived at the temple at the time of Jesus' birth. Most of these are regarded in the Old Testament section of this paper.

### **Prophets (NT)**

Prophecy in the New Testament was a gift used to edify groups of Christians (1 Cor 14:3,4) and is compared to tongues with interpretation which accomplished a similar though 'lesser' feat. Women are mentioned as engaging in prophecy in the congregation (1 Cor 11:5). Joel is quoted (Acts 2) as saying, "*Your sons and your daughters will prophesy*" (Joel 2:3, 4), referring to the New Covenant. Among Christian women who used this gift were Philip's daughters (Acts 21:7-9) and the 'Jezebel' of the book of Revelation (Rev 2:20-3). The prophecy of Joel recalled by Luke in Acts 2:16-21 points out in two places that women as well as men are given this gift. Paul, in 1 Cor 11, refers to public prayer and prophecy as being normal for women, with certain cultural stipulations which have already been discussed.

### **Teachers**

It is useful though not essential to give at this time a definition of teaching as it is used in the New Testament. The term **διδασκειν** (to teach) as used in the gospels in the absolute sense (without a direct object) is always used of Jesus to refer to the correct doctrinal teaching of the Law and Prophets. The concepts of the **διδασκαλια** (teaching) and its **διδασκαλος** (teacher) were linked ideas. This **διδασκαλος** was often a synonym for rabbi and is sometimes translated "master".

After the resurrection of Jesus, the Christian use of **διδασκαλια** grew to include relating Jesus to the prophecies about him. Eventually the notion expanded to the concept of "doctrinal teaching". This was NEVER simply the transferring of information to someone from a book or from another person, but was a charismatic spiritual gift, considered miraculous in places. Teaching requires Heavenly guidance but not direct intervention as does prophecy. A simple check by the reader will reveal that "teachers" always appear on lists of those who are miraculously gifted.

Priscilla, or Prisca, was the wife of Aquila. The couple were Paul's friends whom he describes as his coworkers (Rom 16:3). In Paul's greeting to the couple in Romans, Priscilla's name is listed

first. We recall that women were not generally called coworkers, a term of equality, in society and in this case a wife's name is listed before her husband's. All scholars seem to agree here that the reasons for this shift are that Priscilla was more active and prominent in the church and had the more active role in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). The fact that she had any role in Apollos' learning the gospel more accurately indicates that she did teach. In fact she did teach a man. Her doing so is presented as a natural thing. Harnack's argument that Priscilla was the author of Hebrews is not without merit. His 13 point contention is found in its entirety in Starr's appendix.

Of further note about the wording in Acts 18:26. Apollos "began to speak freely in the synagogue, and when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and more accurately explained to him the way of God." The traditional understanding is that Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos home with them, but the passage does not say this. Brooten states that it is her understanding that she and her husband taught Apollos where he was: in the synagogue.

The apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla refers also to a woman, Thecla, who was sent by Paul to be a teacher. This book was circulated widely from the second century onward and appears to have core elements of truth to it. Thecla was actually revered in early church tradition. There were women teachers.

### **1 Tim 2:8-15**

What then is the teaching referred to in this passage? Congregational teaching? No. This interpretation does not explain the use of the singular "ἄνδρος" (trans. "man") in v.12 or Paul's reasoning in v.13-15. If we read the text as translated by some scholars, the passage restricts any woman from teaching any man...in contradiction to what we know took place (e.g. Priscilla, etc). Also, the "congregational teaching" done then was more of a discussion (from διαλεγομαι) than a lecture format like is common today.

We propose the following reading of the text, which agrees within itself and with all passages of the Bible previously discussed:

*"So, I direct the men everywhere to pray, lifting up godly hands without anger or disputing."*

*"In the same way also, women are to adorn themselves in suitable attire, with an appropriate attitude and soundness of mind: not with wreaths, or gold, or pearls, or expensive clothing, but through good deeds, which are becoming for women who are professing piety toward God."*

*"Let a woman learn in quietness and in all submission."*

*"Now I do not allow a wife to teach or to dominate her husband, but to be in quietness."*

*"For Adam was formed first; then Eva. And Adam was not deceived, but when the woman was totally deceived, she became in transgression."*

*"Now she will be delivered through child-bearing, if they continue in trust, and love, and holiness with soundness of mind."*

A translation similar to this appears in *The Original New Testament* (by Schonfield), and the Charles B. Williams translation is in agreement as well – "A married woman...." This differs from most modern translations in the exchange of man/woman for husband/wife. Is this exchange justified?

Without conclusive contextual evidence, a Greek word with a restricted meaning and a more general meaning (such as **ανηρ** = man = husband and **γυνη** = woman = wife) must be translated using its general meaning. Support for using wife instead of woman is therefore presented:

1. We have seen that women of the period did teach men. We also have the record of the Old Testament, in which God chose women as prophets and judges.
2. Paul's explanation relies on Adam's relationship to Eve (husband/wife) and the subjection of Eve (the WIFE) to Adam (the HUSBAND) after her fall, which is mentioned: "Your desire shall be to your husband..." (Gen 3:16). It is important to see that Paul is **not** appealing to "headship" by saying that men were formed before women (this would be silly anyway, since Genesis says that all earth beings were created in reverse order of prominence). Rather, Paul is referring to the specific **husband-wife relationship** of Adam and Eve by noting that Adam was formed first.
3. The reference to childbearing as an honorable family role. It must be noted that verse 15 may read "shall be saved through the childbearing". Some have taken this to mean that the wife will obtain salvation through Jesus' birth. We disagree with this viewpoint. Trying to twist the meaning to "if women abide" doesn't help this, placing the salvation of each wife in the hands of all women at once. All women do not have relationships with one another, so that this idea is forced as well as being false. Still, the point is that childbearing is mentioned as a role here, something only for wives and not for women in general.
4. Where verse 15 reads, "the couple continue" above is actually "they continue" in the Greek. It is impossible to find an antecedent for 'they' unless husband and wife are intended. "They" cannot possibly be construed so as to connote all women. No plurality of women has been mentioned anywhere, and "she will be saved...if all women continue" is a ridiculous construction.

The honest scholar concludes that wives are meant in 1 Tim 2, and not women in general. What this passage forbids is that a wife teach doctrine to her husband or take control of their relationship, under whatever conditions were present at Paul's writing to Timothy. The word translated "to dominate" is **αυθεντεω**, a very strong word. It is strong enough to have signified "to assassinate", "to kill with one's own hand". (Spencer, p.86) It is not used to refer to positional authority of any kind. Rather, it refers to complete domination.

Also, the word **ησυχια** "silence" or "quietness", connotes peaceful tranquility. We contrast this sharply with the word translated "be silent" in 1 Cor 14, which roughly means "stifle themselves", **σιγατωσαν**.

The clue to what prompted Paul to write this is found in verse 11. First, we must realize two things: that Paul's letter is dealing with situations in which God's people were being misperceived publicly and with the spread of wrong teachings; also, that women were not allowed to learn the Torah (legally) until Jesus came (we encountered this tradition previously in the Gospel section.). Verse 11 actually contains Paul's primary directive, that *women be allowed to learn*.

They should learn in "quietness" – just like "a quiet and tranquil life." They should not be causing social disruption when they do so, and they should learn in all submission to their inspired teachers. Submission is a voluntary act of treating another person as at least an equal. It is the attitude of Phil 2:1ff., although in that passage, the attitude is taken to its logical extreme. The other person is as important to you as you are, and in this case, the student should treat her inspired teacher as someone with knowledge. On the flipside, while the woman should submit, she is not being forced to adhere to a particular teaching model; nor is she being forced to learn.

Verses 12 through 15 explain that for the time being, wives should not be allowed to teach doctrine to their husbands. Why?

The answer is found in Adam and Eve's story in Genesis. Adam was on earth first: for how much longer we do not know. Adam had the direct teaching from God to avoid the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 2:16-7). As far as we know, Eve heard this only from her husband; if she did hear it from God, it was later. Having had the teachings for a shorter length of time made her more prone than Adam to being deceived. She was deceived, and dragged Adam into it also. That is, she took her "new knowledge" to Adam and persuaded him to do what he *knew* was wrong. Because of their strong relationship, the person who knew better allowed himself to be persuaded by the one who knew less accurately. (In Gen 3:3, she shows in part her misconceptions about the tree, believing that she would die if she touched it: something that God did not say.)

Paul's point in his letter to Timothy is that although women ought to be allowed to learn now, they should not be allowed to teach doctrine to their husbands because the same sort of situation might arise. His concern is that, like Eve, the women might use their relationships with their husbands to drag them away from what they know is right. Imagine a novice repairman telling a skilled one, "Just stick a knife in the toaster to clean it out!" The women are consoled with verse 15, which says that even though for now wives can't teach their husbands, they will still attain salvation through the traditional (Jewish) family roles. Needless to say, Paul's admonition was given less than 30 years after women were first allowed to learn. Today it is roughly 2000 years after Jesus. The situation that Paul was addressing no longer exists, so that his directives based on that situation are not applicable. In fact, in some of today's relationships, the opposite may be true. However, it is still prudent even today that someone with very little understanding not presume to dominate someone who has a much better understanding.

## 1 Cor 14:34-5

*The wives should be silent in the assemblies. For it is not allowed for them to speak; on the contrary, they should be submissive, just as the law says also. Now if they want to learn something, they should ask their own husbands at home. For the wives' speaking in the assembly is a social disgrace.*

Here, the passage is clearly talking about wives and not women in general, as all translations indicate. Some commentaries (such as the New International commentary) express that this passage was added at a later time and may have been a saying of Paul which could not be elsewhere fit in. We will assume it is genuine in its location. Let us examine Paul's statement and reasoning to gain the context of what was taking place.

1. The women he discusses are married (v.35).
2. They are disobeying the law (or, "the code"), being shameful.
3. They wish to learn, and are speaking to gain information (NIV says "wish to inquire about something").
4. The larger context is that of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1-14:40).
5. The women's husbands are present (else asking them what went on would be useless).

A few sources contend that tongues-speaking is being forbidden, but the verb "to speak" used alone generally refers to coherent speech. Also, this does not explain verse 35. We propose the following situation which Paul seems to have been addressing:

During a tongues speech or interpretation and/or during prophecy, certain wives were in the habit of asking questions to those involved, while their husbands were present. When they did this, they interrupted what the prophets and others were saying; they interrupted revelation from God. This was not merely an interruption but was an affront to the husband, since by not asking the questions to their husbands, they were yielding the impression that their husbands didn't know anything. It was therefore shameful to the women and to their husbands for them to do this. This was also in violation of a local statute or social code.

This interpretation does not contradict that portion of the same letter (**1 Cor 11:5**) in which women are said to be praying and prophesying in public, and falls in line with the guiding teaching in the New Testament. A wife's voluntary submission to her husband is affirmed, and the known activity of women in the first century church is not negated.

As an important footnote, we might mention that the law reference in v.34 is not an instruction from Paul to follow the Law of Moses, but his pointing to local Corinthian laws or codes. The Law of Moses says nothing about women/wives having to restrain themselves. Tertullian (d. 226), writes about Christian husbands and wives in worship:

*"Both (are) brethren, both fellow servants, no difference of spirit or of flesh.... Together they pray, together they prostrate themselves, together they perform their fasts; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equal they are both found in the church of God...."* (letter to his wife, Book II, Chapter 8; also quoted by Starr, p. 293)

Furthermore, Brootten investigates the floorplans of ancient synagogues in her book, finding that there is no reason to assume that the women were separated from the men (in "women's galleries") during synagogue worship. As her summary says, "The archaeological survey has demonstrated that the ancient synagogue ruins in Palestine yield little evidence for galleries. The ancient Diaspora synagogues yield none." (p.137) Furthermore, although the Rabbis of the early Christian period seem generally oriented against women, **"Ancient Jewish literature yields no hint of a strict separation of the sexes in the synagogue...Earliest Christianity does not seem to have had a separation of the sexes."** (p.138) Her results, completely detailed in her book, contradict the traditional view of men and women in worship.

## Overseers and Servants: Women With Responsibility

By Overseer, we mean the Greek term **ἐπισκοπος**, commonly rendered bishop. By Servant, we denote **διακονος**, commonly rendered either deacon or minister.

### Overseers

In the NT, this term denotes the guardianship of a congregation or of a person in charge of a certain task – the feeding of the poor. No person, male or female, is named as an Overseer in the Bible. It was generally assumed that the Overseer would be chosen from the group of older people (**πρεσβυτεροι**) of the congregation. Thus we have old people being chosen as Overseers and appointed to deal with the local community. In fact, this was a secular practice as well. From the Greek for "older man" we get "presbyter" and "elder", which became synonymous with Overseer in the second century.

We have mentioned that several churches met in women's houses. This may have implied that they were Overseers. Of course this is some authors' conjecture. There are surviving stone inscriptions which refer to a woman Overseer. "Theodora Episcopa" and the head of a woman appears in a mosaic of a 9th century church. The name also appears elsewhere in print. According to J. Morris,

"There are other examples of women bishops. An Episcopa Terni is mentioned in canon 20 of the Council of Tours....An episcopa is listed in a Vatican Library manuscript taken from an epitaph...[reading] (Hono)rabilis femina episcopa."

The Elect Lady of 2nd John may have been an episkopa (female Overseer). Many believe that "Elect Lady" (**εκλεκτα κυρια**) is symbolically referring to a congregation, however, Clement of Alexandria says in his Paedagogi,

*"There are many precepts written in the sacred books which pertain to elect persons: certain of these to elders, some to Overseers, some to Servants, and some to Widows, which will be discussed at a later time."*

The reference to elect persons as a general term for what had become known as the ecclesiastical orders may place the 'lady' of 2nd John in the position of Overseer. Also, Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott* renders **κυρια** as a woman's name, Cyria. This too is possible, especially if one

compares the greetings of 2nd and 3rd John. The authors of this paper consider this evidence inconclusive, but it bears mentioning.

Brooten's book presents a strong case from inscriptional evidence that there were women heads of the synagogue. If so, this is also strong evidence that there was nothing in the culture of the time which would have prevented women from participating in a similar way in Christian assemblies: that is, as Overseers.

We conclude that oversight of a congregation was very seldom held by women, with only one early suspected episkopa. With many women only just learning the Torah, and with resistance to their doing so, the rarity of female Overseers may have been a cultural practicality.

## **Servants**

The term **διακονος** (servant) is used to describe five people: Paul (Eph 3:7; Col 1:23), Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), Epaphras (Col 1:7), Timothy (1 Thess 3:2; 1 Tim 4:6), and Phoebe (Rom 16:1). Of these, Phoebe is the **only** one described as the Servant of a specific congregation (Cenchrea). The specific language used to describe Phoebe is more concrete than the more general "servant of the Lord", etc. used of the others.

Furthermore, the term "**προστατις**" is used to relate a function Phoebe performed. The word when used in a technical sense denotes a legal authoritative representative, as over strangers in Rome, who had no rights. (However, Paul was a citizen and needed no help of that type.) Therefore the word should be rendered as it the masculine form is translated elsewhere in the NT. While translators use expressions like "**direct the affairs of the church**" when the word group is believed to refer to men (1 Tim 5:17), "**helper**" is used when Phoebe is the person described. Also, the cognate terms from the same root are used in other places to describe church leaders' activities. In fact the usage of this word implies leadership (by example, as all Christian leadership) with care; it is similar to the verb used in 1 Thess 5:12; Rom 12:8; 1 Tim 3:4,5,12; 1 Tim 5:17 (qv). According to Brooten, there is a 3rd century inscription from Aphrodisias in Caria in which a Jewish woman is called by the same term. The context includes taking a presiding role in charitable activities. (Brooten, p.151) In the Thessalonian reference, the triple function of hard work, presiding, and admonishment is thought to indicate that this verse applies to Overseers (see L. Morris). The King James Version most often translates this word "rule" except where the feminine form occurs in Rom 16:1. The term does not indicate a positional authority; Mt 20, Mt 23, etc. would indicate that there was no Christian *positional* authority. But it indicates Christian leadership. Phoebe was a Servant and leader in Cenchrea.

## **1 Tim 3:11**

The passage falls in the middle of a section on Servants. There is no parallel for it in the discussion of Overseers. Nowhere in the discussion does a husband/wife relationship come up, except in v.12 "husband of one wife", which follows the statement on women. Even this statement is an idiomatic phrase meaning "not having remarried (after divorce or death of spouse)". (Monogamy was the norm in both Jewish and Greek cultures at the time; this is not

about bigamy. The parallel phrase for women specifically, used in 1 Tim 5:9, makes it all too clear to Kittel, who addresses this only in a footnote).

The construction used, "in a similar way", relates a similar function. That is, the women in v.11 are to have a function like the Servants in v.8-10. Indeed, the description given for women matches that given for male Servants in the previous statement.

Note: this is important also in 1 Tim 2:9, where the expression links a statement about conditions on the attitudes of men in public prayer to a similar statement about women. The women in v.9-10 are also praying publicly. Let's return to 3:11.

Is the translation "wives" for "γυναίκας" justified? Were there women Servants? We have seen already Phoebe as example.

Clement of Alexandria uses the term **διακονον γυναικον** (female Servant) in several places, writing in the 2nd century. Referring to 1 Tim 3:11, Origen writes, "This text teaches with the authority of the apostle that even women are instituted deacons in the church." (Swidler, p.310). Tertullian (160-255), who (it is believed) disliked women in positions of power, said, "How many men and women there are whose chastity has obtained for them the honor of ecclesiastical orders!" (Migne, Patrologia Latina, Vol 2, Col. 978).

Pliny, circa 99 AD, refers to finding it necessary to torture two Christian maidens called "ministrae", the Latin word for Servants. So here we have a first century reference to women Servants (Deacons).

Women in the early church served actively as Servants, though in the 3rd and 4th centuries the Church began to separate the men from the women in such orders, allowing women to minister to women but not to men. This change may have been tied to the bizarre practice of baptizing in the nude, which some performed. In the 4th century the diminutive title **διακονισσα** (deaconess) was created to describe women who occupied this now separate role.

The Catholics held several councils which restricted the appointment of women:

In 352 AD, at the Council of Laodicea, it was proclaimed that women could not serve as priests or preside over churches.

In 365 (Council of Laodicea), we have, *"One ought not to establish in the church the women called overseers (presbutidas)."* It was also decreed *"that women must not approach the altar."*

In 398, the Fourth Synod of Carthage proclaimed: *"A woman, however learned and holy, may not presume to teach men in an assembly."* In another canon, they gave us: *"A woman may not baptize."*

In 441 AD, we see, *"Let no one proceed to the ordination of deaconesses anymore."*

In 517, *"We abrogate completely...the consecration of widows who are named deaconesses."*

Finally, by 533 we have, *"No longer shall the blessing of deaconesses be given, because of the weakness of the sex."*

Two years later the death penalty was imposed on deaconesses who left the ministry to marry. (see Starr, p. 356) It is not the Bible but human tradition that has tended away from the gender roles that God declared as equal.

Let's return to 1 Tim 3:11. The word "their", added to the text by some translators, is NOT present in the Greek. In fact, there is no textual or historical support for translating "γυναικας" to be "wives" in v.11. All of the evidence points to the contrary. We must render the word "women" in its general sense and conclude that women Servants are meant. Only tradition clings to the viewpoint that wives and not women are meant in this passage. The passage contains the authorization of women Servants (and perhaps Overseers as well).

### Widows

Many church histories point to their having been an ecclesiastical order of widows. That this order existed is well documented. Whether this order originated with the apostles is uncertain. Supporters point to 1 Tim 5:3-16 as containing specifications for being enrolled in the order of widows. Most probably, the older widows were highly respected and external evidence strongly shows that they tended to devote their lives to serving Christ.

Younger widows are told to marry, bear children, and rule the house (οικοδεσποτεω: house-rule)(v.14). This is the strongest verb of "authority" given to a Christian in the New Testament. The "true" widows (v.5) trust entirely in God and pray night and day. They are blameless (v.7), have not remarried (v.9), are well reported for their good deeds (v.10), and are at least 60 years old (v.9). It is clear that the chapter speaks of support for the elderly, but as to whether it initiates or continues an "order" of widows is debatable.

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## PART FIVE: MARRIAGE AND SUBMISSION

The guiding teaching on the subject is found in 1 Cor 7, where no statements of 'rule' or 'authority' of a husband are made, but where the apostle presents eleven statements of mutuality and equal responsibility. Paul urges that divorce not take place, as Jesus had said (v.10-11) and that there should be no remarriage after a divorce. He does not condemn, however, those who do so. For three reasons he says (v.20), "Let everyone remain in the same calling in which he was called." he specifically addresses remaining unmarried, calling it good. His reasoning is as follows:

1. Time is short (v.29). The present order of this world is passing away (v.31).
2. These are times of persecution and distress (v.26).
3. The single devote their time to the Lord, whereas the married must also care for one another (v.32-34).

Important is the parallel phrase *"The unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit,"* because it thrusts upon single women the same – equal – responsibilities which rest upon single men.

Are men and women *the same* in marriage? No, at least not in the first century culture. They have different roles; for the wife, one of these was (typically) having children. Wives are urged to voluntarily submit to their husbands, because man is the source of woman. Remember that this does not imply inferiority. On the contrary, given the role of the husband, this implies equality. But equal does not mean the same. Eph 5:21, which begins the classical section on submission in marriage, starts with the parallel statement, *"Submit to one another in fear of the Anointed One."* This is the general teaching which is applied in the verses which follow.

Remember, a wife is her husband's glory, just as we, the bride of Christ, are his glory. Eph 5:21-23 gives an account of this relationship, reading in part, *"The wives should submit to their husbands as to the Lord, because man is the head of woman, as also the Anointed One is the head of the assembly. He is the savior of the body. But as the assembly submits to the Anointed One, in the same way also wives should be submissive to their husbands in everything."* The word *αλλα* (however) which connects verses 23 and 24 is a strong adversative, as Evans is quick to point out. This indicates that there is no direct connection between so-called "headship" here and the submission. That is, there is no authority to which the woman is submitting. The wife is to be submissive out of respect for the husband's godly example, not because of an authority relationship. Recall that "head" was not used in the Greek language with an authority connotation.

As a side note, some have attempted to claim that Paul here uses "head" like the Hebrew *ro'sh*, which may have had an authority connotation. However, Paul's audience was predominantly Greek speaking and gentile. Knowing this, Paul would have to have either used a term other than *κεφαλη* to convey the authority connotation or made a statement before using *κεφαλη* which made it clear that he intended to use it that way. Evans and others have done well in observing this difference in culture. Paul does use *κεφαλη* in non-Greek ways, but each time the context shows that he is doing this. The "archetypical man" image with the Messiah as the head of the man whose body reaches to the sky is used elsewhere in Ephesians, for example. When he uses this image, he describes head and body in ways that make it clear that he intends "head" in a way which would be new to the readers. Back to Eph 5:

Husbands, too, are given roles...not to be king of the household but to care for and give themselves to their wives.

*"You husbands, love your wives just as also the Anointed One loved the assembly and gave himself up on her behalf, so that he might make her holy, after cleansing her with the bath of water (so to speak), so that he would place the assembly beside him, glorious, having no stain or blemish or anything of the sort, but so that she would be holy and spotless. In this way also, the husbands are bound to love their wives like their bodies. For no one ever hated his flesh. On the contrary, he nourishes and cherishes it, just as also the Anointed One nourishes and cherishes the assembly because we are members of his body. "On account of this a man will abandon father and mother and will be united to his wife, and the two will be one in flesh." This is a great secret, but I am talking about the Anointed and of the assembly. However also, one by one, every one of you should love his wife as himself this way; now the wife should respect the husband."*

By this time, the husbands who were reading the letter have bought into the argument that the relationship between wife and husband is similar in certain ways to Jesus' students' relationship to their Messiah. These verses most likely stunned them. Submission must not take place one way in a relationship – it works **both ways**. Since the readers accepted the analogy to Jesus and his assembly, Paul turned then to the attitude of Jesus.

Jesus did not treat his students despotically. On the contrary, he loved them (and loves them today). "Love" means specifically the prioritization of another person's needs ahead of your own, and that's just what Paul described here. A Christian husband is expected to put his wife ahead of himself to the point that her spiritual well-being is all that matters. The love that the author described here is completely sacrificial and giving. Jesus regards his students as being spotless, blameless, and holy; that's how husbands should treat their wives.

This is a selfless, sacrificing love. In fact, the passage as a whole focuses on the HUSBAND'S role, not on the wife's. It might be that the poor attitudes of the men at Ephesus prompted Paul to write this portion of the letter. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve (Mt 20:28; Lk 22:46; etc). Who has the more urgent call to submission and service? Both are called to submission in v.21, but the husband is given the stronger charge. Perhaps this is because Christ's attitude of service was seen as contradictory to the so-called "male pride". Let's continue.

What if the male readers didn't like that part of the argument? Paul provided additional reasoning for them. Shouldn't you treat your beloved wife at least as well as you treat your own body? Of course! Back to the analogy, how has Jesus treated his "body" (the assembly)? Once again, he has been completely giving, wholly submissive to the body's needs.

Is the body analogy valid? Paul reasons that once they have slept together, husband and wife are "one flesh" (from Genesis 2). Therefore, they are indeed likened to a single body, and consequently, a Christian husband ought to treat his body with as much love and respect as Jesus treats his own "body," the assembly.

Having illustrated his reasoning, Paul concluded with a final statement of mutual submission within marriage.

Next, children are advised to submit to their parents. These "children" whom Paul addresses were probably adults. Submission is done voluntarily and out of respect, and for the wife this brings honor on the husband, on the family, to all men, and also to herself.

There is no 'authority' in the relationship, just as there is no 'authority' in any relationship between Christians (Mt 20:25-8). Husbands and wives submit to one another and serve one another. Note again that in 1 Tim 5 remarried young widows are told to rule the household. This does not mean to dominate the husband but to take care of the family.

As people the husband and wife are equals, but within their earthly relationship they each have roles to fulfill. For a more general and more thorough view of authority and equality in God's teaching, this author has written a short paper on authority.

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## CONCLUSIONS:

God at creation set up an egalitarian standing between men and women (Gen 1). Due to various superstitions and fears, this was put down in favor of patriarchy. Jesus' intent in this area was to right the wrong which had occurred in a superstitious culture and which had been passed down via the rabbis.

We find that women in the apostolic era were treated with equality and had similar responsibilities as the men in the church, engaging in public prayer, prophecy, and teaching, and being apostles, Servants, and possibly Overseers. Women were respected equally with men. Unfortunately, this conflicts directly with modern practice in many denominations and other groups. We strongly urge that freedom of women be reinstated and that the entering of women into the church leadership be permitted and recognized.

In the name of women "not having authority," women are not permitted to pass the collection plate, serve on communion teams, read announcements, pray (in spite of 1 Cor 11:5 and 1 Tim 2:9-10), baptize, be ushers, or do just about anything in a public setting where men are involved. Often, men are hired or directed to lead the soprano part in singing services!

We understand that there will be at first those who cling to the traditions that we wish to see overthrown. We recommend providing at first freedom to pray with and teach to men, perhaps allowing qualified women to lead Bible discussions where men are present. Finally, we realize that such action to restore may have opposition but are compelled to point out the Lord's own strong reaction to the hierarchical treatment of women.

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