

# WOMAN *in the* CHURCH

BY RUSSELL C. PROHL

*A Restudy of Woman's  
Place in Building  
the Kingdom*

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Russell C. Prohl

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*DEDICATED  
TO  
MY WIFE*

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	11
2 THE ORDER OF CREATION AND THE ORDER OF REDEMPTION	20
3 I CORINTHIANS 11:2-16	24
4 I CORINTHIANS 14:34, 35 AND I TIMOTHY 2:11-15	31
5 OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORITY	36
6 WHY THE LAW WAS INVOKED — THE SETTING	48
7. WHY THE LAW WAS INVOKED — THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH	55
8. APOSTOLIC ACTION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE	58
9. GOD'S WOMEN IN A MAN'S WORLD — THE OLD TESTAMENT	65
10 GOD'S WOMEN IN A MAN'S WORLD — THE NEW TESTAMENT	68
11 GOD'S WOMEN IN POST-APOSTOLIC TIMES	73
12 WOMAN IN THE CHURCH TODAY	77
<i>Bibliography</i>	83

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

What is the God-pleasing status of woman in the church? Are the Biblical restrictions which say that the women should "keep silence in the churches,"<sup>1</sup> and "I permit no woman to teach,"<sup>2</sup> valid today? How can a woman best fulfil her duties and obligations as a royal priestess?

These are questions which have been demanding the serious consideration of most Protestant church bodies both collectively and individually in recent years. Katherine Bliss's book, *The Services and Status of Women in the Churches*,<sup>3</sup> is the result of a request on the part of the World Council of Churches for a study of these questions. And another book has been written as a result of a resolution of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America authorizing a committee to study this problem.<sup>4</sup> When the Lutheran World Federation met for its first convention in 1952, forty pages in small print were used to acquaint the delegates with the planned program of the women's section of the assembly.<sup>5</sup>

This special interest shown by councils and federations of churches is just as strong within the individual denominations. In 1953 the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod selected a committee to restudy the Bible passages which restrict woman's activity in the church. This was done because it was evident that a sincere difference of opinion existed both among clergy

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1. I Cor. 14:34.

2. I Tim. 2:12.

3. (London: S. C. M. Press, 1952.)

4. Inez M. Cavert, *Women in American Church Life* (New York: Friendship, 1951).

5. *Study Document for Section VI, Women of the Church* (Hanover, Germany: Lutheran World Federation, 1952), pp. 159-199.

and laity concerning the application of these texts in restricting the voting membership of local congregations to the male membership.<sup>6</sup> In 1955 the Protestant Episcopal Church, meeting in convention, refused the women's section of the assembly voting privileges in determining church policies.<sup>7</sup> But also in 1955 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. resolved henceforth to approve the ordination of women to the pastoral ministry.<sup>8</sup> And in 1956 the Methodist Church, at its convention, granted equal legal status to all the clergy regardless of sex.<sup>9</sup> This means that in the Methodist Church the women of the clergy will now possess the same equality of rights which has already for years been granted to the women of the clergy in the Disciples of Christ.

The Protestant churches in Europe are wrestling with the same problems concerning woman's status as the churches in America. In certain parts of the Church of England the question, "Should Women Be Priests?" is now being hotly debated.<sup>10</sup> In the rest of Europe where Protestantism is primarily Lutheran, we find the same extremes of opinion as those found in the churches of America. There is, on the one hand, a conservatism which refuses to give any position to a woman by which she would exercise authority over a man, and, on the other hand, a liberalism which offers equality of status.

These extremes found within world Lutheranism are noteworthy. It was mentioned above that the conservative Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has had a committee working since 1953 on the question of allowing women to vote in the local congregations. At the convention of this church body in June of 1956, the committee recommended to the convention that

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6. *Proceedings of the Forty-second Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1953), p. 484.

7. *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (Printed for the Convention, 1955), pp. 201, 202.

8. *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1955), pp. 95-98.

9. *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 7, 1956, pp. 520-533.

10. R. W. Howard, *Should Women Be Priests* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949).

the Synod's traditional policy of denying the vote to women be continued.<sup>11</sup> Although many clergymen and laymen were not pleased with this recommendation, it was approved with but ten dissenting votes from the six hundred delegates.<sup>12</sup> Among the less conservative Lutherans here in the United States, however, women already have equal voting status with the men in the congregations, and they are elected to the conventions of the synods where they have equal rights with the men in determining church policies. As yet none of the Lutheran Synods in America ordain women.

In Europe the main problem question among the Lutherans is that just mentioned—ordaining women, of giving equal status to the pastoral ministry of all regardless of sex. In 1944 women were in charge of four of the sixty-one Lutheran churches in Holland, and Lutheran Norway, in 1938, passed a law opening all civil and ecclesiastical offices to women, but as yet no women have been ordained in the Lutheran churches of these countries. In Lutheran Finland a young woman was refused ordination in 1955 because "there is no ministry by women in the Church of Finland."<sup>13</sup> In Denmark, on the other hand, in 1948, a Lutheran bishop ordained three women who had completed the required courses of study.<sup>14</sup> But the majority of the Danish bishops did not approve of the action of the brother bishop. After eight years a fourth woman has now been ordained in Denmark, but in order to receive this rite the candidate had to go to a bishop outside her home district. Her own bishop refused to ordain her.<sup>15</sup>

The difference of opinion on the status of woman in the church which exists between the bishops in Denmark is very evident also within the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

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11. *Proceedings of the Forty-third Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), p. 569.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 571.

13. *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXVII (February 1956), 139.

14. Bliss, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-156; Fritz Zerbst, *The Office of Woman in the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), pp. 9, 10.

15. *The Lutheran Layman*, XXVII (May, 1956), 8.

For example August C. Kroeger, a brother in the Argentine Republic, writes in the *Concordia Theological Monthly* that women are to have no part whatsoever in the public ministry of the Word. Teaching in the Sunday school and parish day school are not included in the list of things which he says a woman may be permitted to do.<sup>16</sup>

The sainted Dr. George Stoeckhardt disagrees with Kroeger. In an article in another issue of the same magazine, Stoeckhardt places his stamp of approval on the calling of qualified women as parochial school teachers, and says that they, like pastors and male teachers, can serve the congregation best if they are called for an undetermined length of time. Stoeckhardt says that all church services of whatever kind are the ministry of the Word, and although the woman teacher may be teaching children, she is nevertheless teaching God's Word as to all the ears of the congregation. He continues by saying that the restrictions of Paul concern only teaching publicly before men, and in the case where the woman has the gift of prophecy there are no restrictions whatsoever.<sup>17</sup>

R. C. Lenski, the Greek scholar of the American Lutheran Church, is held in high regard by the Missouri Synod brethren, but in his New Testament commentary he does not agree with Dr. Stoeckhardt, especially when it comes to prophesying. Lenski identifies prophesying with teaching and preaching and says of women, "Whether they have the gifts of tongues or of prophecies makes no difference, in fact, Paul's prohibition is intended for just such."<sup>18</sup>

Now how are these sincere differences of opinion which exist within denominations and between denominations of Protestant persuasion concerning woman's God-pleasing status in the church to be resolved? If there had been no Reformation,

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16. A. C. Kroeger, "Die Stellung der Frau in der christlichen Kirche," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, IV (February, 1933), 85-95.

17. G. Stoeckhardt, "Von dem Beruf der Lehrerinnen an christlichen Gemeindeschulen," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, V (October, 1934), 764-773.

18. R. C. Lenski, *Interpretation of I and II Corinthians* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1946), p. 615.

and there were no Protestants, this problem would not now plague the church, and those who dared question the stand of the Papal See would probably be directed to some one like St. Bernard, the Abbot of Clairvaux, or to St. Thomas Aquinas, the eminent Dominican theologian, for an answer.

Since so much mariolatry has been foisted upon the people of the Roman church in recent years, Bernard would most likely be the first choice as the one to answer the question of woman's status. This saint had a great devotion for the Blessed Virgin. One day, as he was kneeling before her image in prayer, she opened her lips to speak to her devotee. Observing this just in time, Bernard cried out, "Silence! It is not permitted to a woman to speak in the church."<sup>19</sup> Now if St. Bernard would not permit even the mother of our Lord to speak in the church, how could any other woman entertain the thought of doing so?

On the long chance, however, that some one might not be convinced by St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas could be held in reserve as a second witness. He, too, has spoken on this question. His first argument for restricting woman is that she must be in subjection to man.<sup>20</sup> To a humble lay person seeking to get a simple, understandable answer, Aquinas would probably explain his first argument about like this: Woman must be in subjection. A woman must wear her hair long to indicate this subjection. A monk or priest must have a tonsure. Since it is impossible to have the hair short and long at the same time, a woman cannot be a monk or a priest.<sup>21</sup> And if a rebellious spirit prompts some one to object that it isn't enough to say that woman must be in subjection, St. Thomas has two more arguments to put forward. His second argument is that the voice of a woman is an invitation to unchastity, and therefore must

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19. M. A. Wyker, *Church Women in the Scheme of Things* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1953), p. 46.

20. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (22 vols.; London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1925), XIV, 89, 90.

21. Charles E. Raven, *Women of the Ministry* (New York: Doubleday-Doran, 1929), p. 91.

not be heard in the church, and the third that women do not possess the required wisdom to be teachers and preachers.<sup>22</sup>

Of course such arguments would convince few Protestant Christians today. This does not mean, however, that the voice of the fathers no longer plays a part in the decisions of the churches. But today appeal is made to tradition in such subtle fashion that one does not recognize it for what it is. As an example of this attention is directed to the "whereas" section which precedes the "therefore" of the report made by the committee to the 1956 convention of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In part it reads:

The fathers of our Synod found in America the greatly prized liberty of determining their own polity as a free church in a free country. They established the system of voters' meetings now in vogue among us in order to regulate and administer the congregations affairs. With minor variations of procedure the subjects of deliberation and action in such voters' meetings are still what they were in our fathers' days . . . . Our church has prospered under this system. Through participation in the business of the local congregation there has been trained a steady stream of able and enlightened laymen who have become strong leaders in the work of our congregations and Synod. At times, indeed, because of sinful human weakness, some meetings have been tumultuous and quarrelsome, below the dignity of Christian gentlemen. But at least the meetings were not an arena for battles between the sexes. . . . We believe that Scripture fully sanctions the basic polity set up in our church, and we can foresee only evil results in any change of the polity under which our church has been so signally blessed for more than a century. . . . We therefore recommend: That synod, for the sake of peace and order, urge that our congregations continue the Scripture-sanctioned and time-tested policy of administering their affairs through the male voters' meetings.<sup>23</sup>

As noted above, this appeal was approved by the convention with little opposition. Tradition is still very powerful in twentieth-century Protestantism!

22. Aquinas, *op. cit.*, XIV, 89, 90.

23. *Proceedings, Missouri Synod, 1956*, pp. 568, 569.

Some people, however, who shun tradition like poison, go to other extremes in denouncing the apostolic restrictions. They say, perhaps, that the restricting texts are not in the New Testament spirit and should be thrown out as interpolations, or that Paul in these passages is permitting Saul the Rabbi to get the better of Paul the Christian. Such suggestions are just as unacceptable as those based on traditions, and, it may be added, just as unacceptable as those of the absolutizing literalist who insists that woman must be silent in the church because that is what the words say in the apostolic restrictions.

But isn't God's Word to be the guide in making any decision about woman's status in the church? Indeed it is! The pertinent passages must be studied carefully to determine what the words actually say. This, however, is only the beginning. The statements must next be considered in their context, and in the light of the whole Bible. Also very important are the answers to such questions as: To whom were the words addressed? How did people think and act at that time and in that place? What was the writer's relationship to the people and the situation? What in these passages is of temporary and what is of lasting significance?

Doctors E. G. Sihler and W. Arndt have written some outstanding articles which point out the importance of using sound hermeneutical principles in interpreting the New Testament epistles. This is so important because, as Sihler says, "It is very difficult for us modern Christians to realize the attitude of the primitive Christians to the world and the world to them."<sup>24</sup> These writers also point out that to understand a New Testament epistle you must know the man who wrote it, and the world as it existed about him. Dr. Arndt writes, "The better you are informed on all the various relations the writer sustained to the outside world, the world about him, the more you will be able to uncover fully the intended sense of his statements."<sup>25</sup>

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24. E. G. Sihler, "The Primitive Christians," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, V (October, 1934), 744.

25. W. Arndt, "Paul as Citizen," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, II (October, 1931), 736.

Martin Luther is thinking along these same lines when he tells us that as important as it is for us to answer the question, "What is the Word of God?" there is a second question of greater importance, namely, "What is the Word of God for *me*?" He writes:

One must deal with and proceed with the Scripture properly. The Word has come into being in various ways from the beginning. One must not only observe if it is God's Word or if God has spoken it, but rather, to whom it is spoken, if it concerns you or some one else. Here there is a division like summer and winter. God said much to David, and commanded him to do this and that. But it does not apply to me. It has not been spoken to me. He could very well speak it to me if He would have it so. You must observe the Word that concerns you, that is spoken to you and does not concern some one else. There are two kinds of Word in the Scripture. One does not apply to me and also does not concern me. The other does concern me, and upon it, because it applies to me, I may boldly venture, and depend upon it as upon a strong rock. If it does not concern me, I must stand still. The false prophets come forward and say: "Dear people, this is God's Word." It is true, we cannot deny it. But we are not the people to whom He speaks.<sup>26</sup>

Prof. Julius Bodensieck of Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, sums up the things that should be avoided in making application of the apostolic restrictions to the subject of woman's present day status in the church as follows:

A biblical, evangelical, Lutheran method of determining the principles for the role of women in church and society would include the rejection of any principle which,

- a) conflicts with the unequivocal, universal, identical sinfulness of men and women;
- b) conflicts with the unequivocal, universal, identical grace bestowed on men and women;
- c) conflicts with the placing of equal responsibility upon men and women in the kingdom of God;

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26. Otto Scheel, *Luthers Stellung zur heiligen Schrift* (Tuebingen: Mohr, 1902), pp. 43, 44, my translation.

- d) absolutizes any one historical order of society;
- e) is based on a number of isolated texts; or
- f) is not applicable to women in modern society, in totalitarian or welfare states, or to unmarried women, or to working women.<sup>27</sup>

This chapter opened with the question, "What is the God-pleasing status of woman in the church?" As we have observed, this is a question of major importance in the church today. To answer it the Scriptures must be searched, but this searching must be an enlightened one based upon sound hermeneutical principles such as those suggested by Sihler, Arndt, Luther and Bodensieck. The chapters which follow represent the results of such a searching of the Scriptures on the subject of the status of woman in the church.

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27. Julius Bodensieck, "Theological Principles Determining the Role of Christian Women in Church and Society," (Lutheran Social Ethics Seminar, Valparaiso University, December, 1955), p. 1. (Mimeographed)

## Chapter II

### THE ORDER OF CREATION AND THE ORDER OF REDEMPTION

God is our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. As Creator He has created each of us for a special purpose, a calling or vocation. He has placed us in the particular position which we occupy in relation to others. The most important example of this is seen in the sex-differentiation which determines the whole of life, the difference in a man and a woman which makes them dependent upon each other. "Male and female created He them."<sup>1</sup>

As Redeemer God is no respecter of differences, no respecter of persons. In Christ there is no difference in master or slave, Jew or Gentile, male or female.<sup>2</sup> Redemption transcends all differences.

As Sanctifier God works in us and through us that His will both as Creator and Redeemer may be done, that we may work out our faith in love in our God-given relationship to our fellow men. We are to be "imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us," and at the same time we are to be "subject to one another."<sup>3</sup>

In the last twenty-five years two terms have come into general use to indicate, on the one hand, God's work and will as revealed in Creation, and on the other hand, God's work and will as revealed in Redemption. The one term, the Order of Creation, designates the "particular position which by the will of the Creator any created object occupies in relation to others,"<sup>4</sup> and

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1. Gen. 1:27.

2. Gal. 3:28.

3. Eph. 5:1, 2, 21.

4. *Proceedings, Missouri Synod, 1956*, p. 555.

the other term, the Order of Redemption, designates the relationship of the redeemed to God and his fellow men in the new life established by God in Christ.

These terms have come into popular usage as a result of their extensive employment by Emil Brunner in his book on Christian Ethics, *The Divine Imperative*.<sup>5</sup> This book first appeared in a German edition in 1932. In his book, *The Office of Woman in the Church*,<sup>6</sup> which first appeared in German in 1950, Fritz Zerbst uses not only the terms but also the arguments of Brunner. In turn the committee of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod uses Zerbst extensively in its report of June 1956.<sup>7</sup>

Although the same terms are used and the same arguments are advanced, the conclusions of Brunner and the conclusions of Zerbst and the Missouri Synod committee are not always the same. All agree when speaking of the status of woman that, "Just as it is clear that the wife is a spiritually responsible personality in exactly the same way as her husband, so also it is clear that in the order of creation sex individuality means that the husband's functions in the family differ from those of the wife; and normally the external guidance of family life belongs to the husband."<sup>8</sup> In other words there is agreement that, "So long as it is only women and not men who bear children, and nurse them, so long also the domain of woman will be essentially different from that of man."<sup>9</sup> However when it comes to deciding what is included in or excluded from the domain of woman, differences of opinion make their appearance.

Fritz Zerbst and the Missouri Synod committee recognize that the order of redemption has modified the position of woman and will continue to do so, but they conclude that the basic inequality of the sexes as expressed in the order of creation must remain for the duration of the present age, and that it is the

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5. Trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947.)

6. Zerbst, *op. cit.*

7. *Proceedings, Missouri Synod, 1956*, pp. 553-571.

8. Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 375.

business of the church to give expression to this inequality by denying to woman any position in the church, including the proclamation of the Word, which would give her authority over man. Zerbst writes:

In a manner peculiar to it, the New Testament assigned to woman a position in the church which is in harmony both with the order of creation and with the order of redemption. On the one hand, it applies the truth enunciated in Gal. 3:28 by placing the woman beside man as being one with him in Christ, and also by entrusting her accordingly with manifold tasks in the church. On the other hand, it impresses upon woman her duty of being under obedience and withholds from her the office of Word proclamation in the assemblies of the congregation.<sup>10</sup>

In agreement with these conclusions of Zerbst the committee of the Missouri Synod "emphatically warns against any anti-Scriptural practice whereby the headship of man to woman in the affairs of the church would be surrendered."<sup>11</sup>

Brunner, however, points out that Redemption has removed the inequality of the order of creation and transcends it,<sup>12</sup> and that Christian marriage should not be confused with the "patriarchal attitude towards marriage which has no connection with genuine fundamental Christian principles, but is the product of definite historical conditions and accidental views."<sup>13</sup> He goes on to say that, "A true marriage is only possible where the wife is in every way equal to the husband in independence and responsibility."<sup>14</sup> Therefore he concludes:

This is why it is absolutely impossible to put down in black and white, as a universal rule, which spheres of activity "belong" to woman and which do not. This can only become

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10. *Op. cit.*, p. 68.

11. *Proceedings, Missouri Synod, 1956*, p. 570.

12. *Op. cit.*, p. 380.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 379.

clear through experience, and for this experience first of all the field must be thrown open.<sup>15</sup>

In the chapters which follow we shall from time to time refer to the above arguments and conclusions, and will indicate our approval or disapproval.

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15. *Ibid.*, p. 376.

### Chapter III

#### I CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

There are three New Testament passages which in some way restrict the activity of woman in the church. The first is I Corinthians 11:2-16 which demands the covering of the head. The second is I Corinthians 14: 34, 35 where silence is enjoined. The third is I Timothy 2:8-15 which prohibits teaching.

In I Corinthians 11 Paul tells us that the praying and prophesying woman should keep her head covered, for it is a shame, indecent, for her to do otherwise.

Of whom does this passage speak? It does not speak of women in general, nor of Christian women in general, but it does speak of married women, of Christian wives. That Paul is speaking of a Christian woman is evident from the references which mention her Christian worship such as verse five where she is said to pray and prophesy, and from verse eleven where she is said to be "in the Lord." That she is a married woman, a Christian wife, is evident from verse three where the Greek reads: *kephalē de gunaikos ho anēr*. The Revised Standard Version and the American Translation by Goodspeed are correct when they translate these words, "The head of the woman is her husband." The lack of an article before *gunaikos* and the presence of one before *anēr* calls for this translation. The reference to the dishonor which the uncovered woman brings to her man in verse five as well as the references to Genesis 1 and 2 in verses seven to ten give further support to the idea that we are here concerned with a married woman. The editor of the Concordia Home and Teachers' Bible, by his marginal explanation of verse ten, shows that he agrees that Paul is speaking of a married woman when he says that the woman is to have on her head "a covering, in sign that she is under the power of her hus-

band."<sup>1</sup> Fritz Zerbst points out in this connection that Paul's primary concern in this whole epistle is for the undisturbed preservation of marriage, and "to understand Paul we must bear in mind that the relationship between the sexes always has its center in marriage."<sup>2</sup>

Failure on the part of students of the Bible to note that Paul is here referring to the Christian wife has led far too many to the erroneous conclusion that this passage teaches a general subordination of women to men. This is done in spite of the fact that most commentators and commentaries agree that it is the husband-wife relationship that is here being discussed.<sup>3</sup>

Fritz Zerbst is speaking of I Corinthians 11 when he declares, "The entire passage indicates, however, that this problem must be viewed as being closely related to the 'doctrine' and to proper conduct in marriage."<sup>4</sup> His statement is more general when he writes, "In all his pronouncements concerning the position of woman, Paul's central concern is for the preservation and protection of marriage."<sup>5</sup>

G. Campbell Morgan, in *The Corinthian Letters of Paul*, agrees with Zerbst. He writes in connection with the passage we have been discussing, "The subject unquestionably is that of married men and women in the church. The relationship of the unmarried is not in view, except in a very indirect way. There were women in the church married, who were behaving in a certain way which had caused difficulty in the minds of others. About that Paul was now writing to them."<sup>6</sup>

The woman concerning whom Paul writes in I Corinthians 11 is the Christian wife. But what does Paul mean when he says that the head of the woman is her husband? Lenski notes

1. *Concordia Home and Teachers' Bible*, ed., Theo. Graebner (St. Louis: Concordia, 1940).

2. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

3. *E. g.*, Chrysostom, Calvin, Meyer, Lange, Clarke, Zerbst, Morgan, International Critical Commentary, Interpreters Bible, Expositor's Bible, etc.

4. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 32.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34.

6. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul* (New York: Revell, 1946), p. 132.

correctly that "Paul's . . . use of 'head' is here restricted to the one feature of being over another in an arrangement made by God."<sup>7</sup> Lange adds to this thought when he writes, "By the term 'head' he expresses the next immediate relation sustained . . . as it is definitely realized in marriage."<sup>8</sup> Morgan suggests that we go to Ephesians 5 to learn what is involved in this headship. He says,

To know the exact relationship between husband and wife as it is adumbrated through the whole of this passage, turn to the letter to the Ephesians, and in the fifth chapter the husband's authority is insisted upon, but it is the authority of self-sacrificing love. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it." Then we turn to the statement concerning the wife, "Wives be in subjection to your own husbands, as unto the Lord." That is to say, the wife's position is that of a glad and willing response to the authority, but it must be the authority of self-emptying love.<sup>9</sup>

The ancient Chrysostom knew what Paul was trying to say here, and he spoke out against those who tried to read into the word "head" the thought of the servitude of woman to man. He wrote, "Had Paul meant to speak of rule and subjection, as thou sayest, he would not have brought forward the instance of a wife, but rather as of a slave and a master. For what if the wife be under subjection to us? it is as wife, as free, as equal in honor."<sup>10</sup>

From I Corinthians 11 we learn then that the husband is the head of the wife, that under normal circumstances, the husband is to be the head in the marriage union. This leads us to the next question. How is the wife to indicate that she recognizes the headship of her husband? Paul says she is to do so by keeping her head covered even when she takes the initia-

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7. Lenski, *Corinthians*, p. 434.

8. John P. Lange, *Lange's Commentary*, ed., Philip Schaff (New Testament 10 vols.; New York: Scribners, 1906), VI, 223.

9. Morgan, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

10. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, ed., Philip Schaff (New York: Scribners, 1899), XII, 150.

tive in the service and leads in prayer and prophecies. Just what is meant by covering the head is not certain. It could refer to the wearing of the Greek veil or to the Hebrew head cloth. The important point is that the woman should retain the veil or head cloth as a sign that she is a faithful wife. To remove it would put her in a class with the Corinthian prostitutes.

In the *Expositor's Bible*, Dods points out the importance of the head covering of the wife by saying, "It was the one significant rite in marriage that she assumed the veil in token that now her husband was her head, to whom she was prepared to hold herself in subjection."<sup>11</sup> From Genesis 24:65-67 we learn that when Rebekah was told by Abraham's servant that the man approaching them was Isaac, whose bride she was to be, "She took her veil and covered herself . . . Then Isaac brought her into the tent . . . and she became his wife." According to the ancient Assyrian code this veiling was a necessary part of legalizing a marriage. Usually the veiling took place in the presence of the bride's parents, but in the case of a captive bride the following was demanded:

If a man would veil his concubine (captive woman) five or six of his companions he shall cause to sit down: before them he shall veil her. He shall say, "She is my wife." She is his wife. But the captive woman who was not veiled in front of the men, whose husband did not say, "She is my wife," she is not a wife.<sup>12</sup>

The veil was demanded for the wife, but it was forbidden to the harlot. Severe punishment awaited the harlot if she tried to wear a veil. And even more severe punishment would be the lot of the man who neglected to report a harlot who was wearing a veil. We read:

The harlot is not to veil herself, her head is to be uncovered. The one who sees a veiled harlot is to seize her, secure witness, and bring her for the judgment of the palace . . . Fifty

11. *Expositor's Bible*, ed., W. R. Nicoll (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1887-1902), I Corinthians pp. 247, 248.

12. J. M. Powis Smith, *The Origin and History of Hebrew Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 232.

blows shall they inflict on her. Bitumen they shall pour on her head. But if a man see a veiled harlot and let her go, and do not bring her to judgment of the palace, on that man they shall inflict fifty blows. . . . His ears they shall pierce, string them with a string, and bind them on his back. A month of days he shall do the king's work.<sup>13</sup>

Not only the harlot was denied the veil, but we learn from Numbers 5:18 that also the wife who is accused of adultery has her head uncovered by the priest. If she is guilty she must die, but if she is innocent the head covering is returned to her. Susanna was thus uncovered when she was on trial.<sup>14</sup> At first glance it might seem that the Old Testament speaks of a custom that is somewhat different. Judah, we are told, thought that Tamar was a harlot because she wore a veil. But from Genesis 38:21 it becomes evident that Judah did not think she was a common harlot, but a cult prostitute, a woman who was married to the gods and, therefore, did wear a veil.

But something much closer than the Assyrian code, and the uncertain examples of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha, was involved in the restrictions expressed by Paul in I Corinthians 11. As we have observed, Paul was primarily interested in the preservation and protection of marriage. Now, for a wife to drop the head covering or veil in public was, in the sight of Jewish law, equal to renouncing her marriage. If her husband was a pious Jew he was expected to divorce her. If he was a pagan he could lock her out of her home without explanation. It is from the Talmud that we learn:

The following married women are to be divorced without the marriage portion: Such as go out with their heads uncovered. . . . It is a godless man who sees his wife go out with her head uncovered. He is duty bound to divorce her.<sup>15</sup>

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 231, 232.

14. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apocrypha an American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 351.

15. H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuentestament aus Talmud und Midrash* (Munich: Beckische Verlag, 1954), III, 429, my translation. See also *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed., I. Epstein (London: Soncino Press, 1935-1948), "Kethuboth II," XVIII, 448, 451.

We have learned that the wife was to keep her head covered when praying and prophesying in order to protect her marriage. We now ask: What is meant by praying and prophesying? These words are used of the men in verse four and of the women in verse five of I Corinthians 11. The meaning in each case must be the same. Whatever is said of the men must also be true of the women. Calvin writes, "Prophesying I take here to mean declaring the mysteries of God for the edification of the hearers (as afterward in chapter xiv) as praying means preparing a form of prayer, and taking the lead, as it were, of all the people — which is the part of a public teacher."<sup>16</sup> Lenski writes that to prophesy is to "present and properly to apply the Word of God by teaching others."<sup>17</sup> Charles Hodge also believes that to pray and prophesy is to officiate in public worship.<sup>18</sup> Adam Clarke says, "We learn from the apostle himself that *prophēteuein*, to prophesy, signifies to speak unto men to edification, exhortation, and comfort (XIV, 3). And this comprehends all that we understand by exhortation, or even preaching."<sup>19</sup>

A woman, then, may pray and prophesy, that is officiate in the service, in the type of meeting spoken of in I Corinthians 11. She may offer prayer and preach to and teach others. But of what kind is the meeting at which she has this privilege? Meyer writes, "The Corinthians themselves . . . would understand both what kind of meetings were meant as those in which women might pray and speak as prophetesses, and also that the instruction now given was not abrogated again by the *taceat mulier in ecclesia*."<sup>20</sup> He goes on to say that these must be "smaller meetings for devotion in the congregation, more limited circles assembled for worship, such as fall under the

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16. John Calvin, *Commentary on I Corinthians*, trans., J. Pringle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 355.

17. Lenski, *Corinthians*, p. 437.

18. Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Armstrong, 1894), p. 207.

19. Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary* (6 vols.; New York: Eaton and Mains, 1911), VI, 138.

20. H. A. W. Meyer, *Meyer's Commentary on the New Testament*, ed., Wm. P. Dickson (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), V, 249.

category of a church in the house."<sup>21</sup> By checking the context we can be more specific than Meyer seems to be. In I Corinthians 10 and 11 Paul makes reference to the agape and the eucharist, the love feast and the Lord's Supper with which the feast was climaxed. This was a closed service.<sup>22</sup> Only the initiated were invited. At this service, where no outsiders were present, the Christian wife was permitted to join the men in leading in prayer and delivering God's message.

We have mentioned the references to Genesis 1 and 2 found in I Corinthians 11:7-10, but we have not as yet considered them. These will be discussed in a separate chapter after our examination of I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2, where like references are to be found. The same is true also of a discussion of the relation of custom to law as we find it in the passages restricting woman's activity in the church.

There is one remaining observation to be made before leaving I Corinthians 11. All that we have said so far about this chapter could be classified as belonging to the order of creation, to the arrangement of God at creation whereby the husband is made the head of the wife in the marriage union. However we must not overlook the fact that Paul here reminds the Corinthians that there is also an order of redemption. In verse eleven we read, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither is the woman without the man in the Lord." This verse reminds us that whatever God arranged at creation when he made the husband the head of the wife, that "as far as being 'in the Lord' is concerned, both are altogether equal. The man is not 'in the Lord' in such a way that the woman is excluded, nor of course, vice versa. Gal. 3:28 stands: 'Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.'"<sup>23</sup>

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21. *Ibid.*

22. Lyman Coleman, *Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1856), p. 415; H. H. Henson, *Apostolic Christianity* (London: Methuen, 1898), p. 16; T. M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (New York: Doran, n.d.), pp. 44-68.

23. Lenski, *Corinthians*, p. 446.

## Chapter IV

### I CORINTHIANS 14:34, 35 AND I TIMOTHY 2:11-15

From I Corinthians 11 we learned that the Christian wife, when she assists in conducting the service at the closed meeting of the church, is to cover her head to indicate that she is a faithful wife. In I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 additional restrictions are placed upon the woman. What are they?

In I Corinthians 14:34 we read, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." The word for keep silence is *sigatōsan*, from *sigāō* which means "keep silent," "hush," "hold peace," —Luther, "*lasset schweigen*." The same verb is used in verses twenty-eight and thirty. In twenty-eight, the one who speaks an unknown tongue is to keep silent if there is no interpreter, and in thirty we are told that one prophet should hold his peace to give another a chance to prophesy. Verse thirty-four continues, "for it is not permitted unto them to speak." The Greek word for speak is *lalein* from *laleō*, "talk," "utter words." Verse thirty-five informs us that the restrictions include also the asking of questions in church. The word *eperōtatōsan*, from *eperōtaō*, means "ask for," "inquire," "seek," "question." So the restrictions in I Corinthians 14 are: maintain silence, do not speak, do not ask questions. Now, what about I Timothy 2?

In I Timothy 2:11, 12, we read that the woman is to learn in silence. In both verses the noun *hēsuchia* is used. It means "stillness," "desistance from bustle," "refraining from the use of language." Verse twelve says the woman is not to teach, *didaskēin* from *didaskō*, "teach," "instruct." When we add these statements in I Timothy to those already noted in I Corinthians, we find that the restrictions are so complete, so all inclusive, that the careful reader will realize that here a silence is demanded just as strict as that brought about by the screen, the gallery, in the Jewish synagogue. We cannot agree with

those who try to read into these verses the idea that they do not demand a complete silence, or that they just deny the right to debate, or that they do no more than instruct the women not to cause a commotion. Lenski is correct when he declares that these passages tell us that the men only and not the women are to speak, teach, prophesy, use tongues, interpret, and pray.<sup>1</sup>

We now ask: Upon whom are these restrictions placed? Just as in I Corinthians 11 so it is in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2. These restrictions are placed upon Christian wives. Here again Paul's primary interest is in the protection and preservation of marriage. It is for this reason that he directs the women in I Corinthians 14:35 to consult their husbands at home. And in both I Corinthians 14:34, 35 and I Timothy 2:11, 12, the woman is instructed to be under obedience, in subjection, to the man. What man? The cross-references listed for I Corinthians 14:34 in the Concordia Home and Teachers' Bible are to the point. The first is I Corinthians 11:3, "The head of the woman is her husband." Then Ephesians 5:22, "The husband is the head of the wife." Colossians 3:18, "Wives, be subject to your husbands." And Titus 2:5, where it is said that the women are to be taught "to be submissive to their husbands."

Meyer would be pleased with these cross-references because he says that both I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 speak of the husband and wife relationship just as I Corinthians 11 does.<sup>2</sup> The International Critical Commentary says of I Corinthians 14:35, "It is assumed that only married women would think of asking questions in public."<sup>3</sup> Luther writes that I Timothy 2 instructs women to be obedient to their husbands.<sup>4</sup> Zerbst, too, is in agreement with these thoughts. He says of I Corinthians

1. R. C. Lenski, *Interpretation of Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, Philemon* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1946), p. 555; Lenski, *Corinthians*, p. 615.

2. Meyer, *op. cit.*, V, 334.

3. *International Critical Commentary*, eds., C. Briggs, S. Driver and A. Plummer (New York: Scribners, 1901-1920), I Corinthians, p. 325.

4. *Works of Martin Luther*, ed., C. M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Holman, 1915), VI, 471.

14, that Paul is here interested in maintaining "the position assigned in creation to the married woman."<sup>5</sup> He goes on to say of I Timothy 2, that "Verse 15 indicates clearly that also in this passage the primary reference is to the married woman."<sup>6</sup> Lange says of I Corinthians 14, "Unmarried women are not taken into account."<sup>7</sup>

Of course there are those who disagree with the married woman theory. For example it is interesting to note what the committee of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has to say in answer to questions about these passages being directed to married women. The committee writes, "Can anyone declare with sober face that the maiden ladies in Corinth and Ephesus were granted rights that were denied to the more experienced and responsible married women?"<sup>8</sup> These words are very revealing. They reveal that the committee has overlooked the fact that, on the one hand, the less experienced and less responsible maiden ladies did not in those days dare to speak to or question or answer a male speaker in public, and that, on the other hand, it was the more experienced and responsible married women who were doing just that. Paul was writing about an actual situation which existed in the primitive church, a situation which he knew would supply the enemies of the church with additional evidence that Christianity was destroying marriage and the home. He knew the rabbinic law and he knew Greek custom.<sup>9</sup> He was well aware of the fact that a married woman who would address a promiscuous gathering and join in a discussion in an open meeting was thereby forfeiting her right to remain a wife. When discussing I Corinthians 11, we pointed out that the woman who appeared outside her home with uncovered head was subject to divorce without receiving her marriage portion. The very same law tells us that this is true of the

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5. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

7. Lange, *op. cit.*, N. T. VI, 297.

8. *Proceedings, Missouri Synod, 1956*, p. 564.

9. Marguerite Woodruff, *Underlying Factors Contributing to Paul's Teaching Concerning Women* (Doctor's Dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, July 1949), pp. 66, 73, 100.

woman who is guilty of "conversing with all sorts of men."<sup>10</sup> Only an ungodly husband would keep a wife who broke this law. Paul had good reason to have a sober face when he imposed these restrictions on the more experienced and responsible married women.

We come now to another important question. Where are these restrictions to be in effect? From I Corinthians 11 we learned that a woman may lead in conducting a closed meeting of the congregation, in that type of meeting which would with the passing of the years become the "mass of the faithful." But in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2, where absolute silence is demanded of woman, we are introduced to another type of service. Like the closed meeting of I Corinthians 11, this, too, is an *ekklēsia*, an assembly, a meeting, a congregation. But unlike the meeting in I Corinthians 11, this meeting is open. Here you have not only the initiated, the communicants, but also the catechumens, the uninstructed, the unbaptized, the unbelievers. In verse twenty-one of I Corinthians 14 the presence of the unbeliever is mentioned, and in verses twenty-two and twenty-three we have both the unbelievers and the unlearned. Here we have the mass, the service, of the catechumens, the open service of the church.<sup>11</sup> It is in this service where there are those present who are uninstructed or unbelievers, where there are those who might see in any active participation of a woman a confirmation of the accusations against the church which were so prevalent in those days, that absolute silence is demanded.

The I Timothy 2 passage does not mention the church, but from verse eight we can make the deduction that the restrictions are to be observed *en panti topō*, in every place, where the men only, and not the women, are to raise their hands in prayer.<sup>12</sup> This, again, is the open meeting where greater restrictions were necessary because of the non-Christians present.

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10. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 168; *Talmud*, XVIII, "Kethuboth II," 448, 552.

11. Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 416; Henson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

12. Lenski, *Interpretation of Colossians, etc.*, p. 554; *Interpreters Bible*, XI, 403.

We have now considered I Corinthians 11, I Corinthians 14, and I Timothy 2. They have much in common. All place restrictions upon woman's activity in church. All indicate that it is because the wife is to be subject to her husband that the restrictions are to be observed. All refer to the Old Testament as the source of the law which demands such subjection.

As we now go on to the next chapter and a consideration of the Old Testament passages referred to in the restrictions, we shall note how the evidence piles up in support of our contention that the Christian wife is the woman involved: that there is no law of creation which makes women in general subordinate to men in general, but that there is a law of creation which makes the husband the head of the wife.

## Chapter V

### THE OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORITY

In support of the restrictions placed upon woman in the church we find that I Corinthians 11:7-10 takes us back to Genesis 1 and 2. In I Timothy 2:13-15 it is Genesis 2 and 3. I Corinthians 14: 34 sums it up very briefly in the words, *kathōs kai ho nomos legei*, "as also saith the law."

I Corinthians 11:7 states that man is the image of God, but it does not say this of the woman. Some interpreters have drawn from this the far reaching deduction that woman was not made in the image of God. Dr. Franz Pieper, in his *Christian Dogmatics*, says such a position is untenable, for Genesis 1:26, 27 expressly state that woman, too, was created in the image of God.<sup>1</sup> It is in this passage that God speaks and says, "Let us make man in our own image. . . . So God created man in His own image. . . . male and female created He them." The fact that woman, too, was created in God's image is corroborated by the New Testament passages which speak of those in whom the divine image has been restored, such as Colossians 3:10, 11, and Ephesians 4:24, as well as Galatians 3:28. Fritz Zerbst, when discussing the meaning of "image" in I Corinthians 11:7, calls upon the witness of Theodoret and Calvin, who conclude that this reference is not to the divine image of Genesis 1, but that here "'image' . . . refers to the order established for marriage."<sup>2</sup> In other words we have here a reference to an order of creation concerning the position of the husband and wife in marriage, a repetition of the thought expressed in verse three, "The husband is the head of the wife."

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1. Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics* (3 vols.; St. Louis: Concordia, 1950), I, 523.

2. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

When speaking of Genesis 1, Pieper declares that woman as well as man was not only created in God's image, but also was given like dominion over the creatures of the earth. However he goes on to say that Genesis 2:18 "teaches that woman in her relation to man occupied a subordinate position even before the Fall."<sup>3</sup> He says that the term "an help meet for him" in Genesis 2:18 expresses this fact. Now if the sainted doctor had said that Eve was subordinate to Adam because he was her husband and therefore her head, and that every wife is like Eve to recognize and honor her husband as her head, we would agree with him without hesitation. He contends, however, that woman as a sex is subject to man as a sex. This is another matter, and as we shall endeavor to point out, does not rest upon a Scriptural basis.

In Genesis 2:18 we read, "The Lord God said: It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him an help meet for him." The key words, according to Pieper, are "help" and "meet," in the Hebrew, *ezer* and *neged*. The preposition *neged* is translated as "before," "in the presence of," "in the sight of." For example, in Psalm 16:8 we read, "I have set the Lord always *before* me." The noun *ezer* means "help" or "helper." It is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament, and sixteen times it is used for a super-ordinate, not a subordinate, helper. In no case is the one who helps subordinate unless we consider Genesis 2:18, 20 as exceptions. The most common use of *ezer* is in reference to Jehovah as a help. In Psalm 33:20 we read: "The Lord, He is our help." Exodus 18:4, "For the God of my father was my help." Psalm 146:5, "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help."<sup>4</sup> If this word *ezer*, "help," does indicate a grade or rank, we should conclude from its use elsewhere in the Old Testament that Adam was subordinate to Eve. The truth is that the word itself indicates neither a higher nor a lower grade or rank.

It is important to note the context in which the words "an help meet for him" are found. This expression is contained in

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3. Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, 524.

4. Also Ps. 27:9; Ps. 94:17; Ps. 115:9, 10, 11; Deut. 33:7.

both verses eighteen and twenty. The intervening words tell us that the creatures of the earth pass before Adam and he notes that they come two by two, as mates, male and female. But he found no female which was fit, suitable, like himself, to be his mate. God therefore created a mate for him, a helper suitable for him. The Douay version has captured the true meaning of this expression in the words, "Let us make him a help like unto himself." These verses, then, do not tell us that God created a second sex to be servants to the first sex, but they do tell us that God created a wife for a husband, that, as Luther says, "God . . . bestowed on him a spouse."<sup>5</sup> The concluding verses of the chapter establish this beyond a doubt. We read: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

Seen from this point of view that Genesis tells us about a husband and wife, about marriage, we find no reason for rejecting the argument found in both I Corinthians 11 and I Timothy 2 that just as God created the man first, so he expects him to be first, the head, in the marriage union.

The Timothy passage makes reference also to Genesis 3. I Timothy 2:14 reminds us of Eve's fall into sin as related in Genesis 3:6, and I Timothy 2:15 recalls what is stated concerning the consequences of sin for woman and marriage as related in Genesis 3:16. Again, almost without exception, commentators indicate their choice of Genesis 3:16<sup>6</sup> as the primary cross-reference for I Corinthians 14:34, where the words, *kathōs kai ho nomos legei*, "as also saith the law," appear. Genesis 3:16, therefore, becomes a passage of particular importance to the understanding of the apostolic restrictions. We shall consider it first and then Genesis 3:6.

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5. *Luther's Works*, ed., Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955 —), XII, 257.

6. *E.g.*, Lange, Meyer, Zerbst, Strack and Billerbeck, *The Bible Commentary*, *Interpreters Bible*, *International Critical Commentary*, etc.

Genesis 3:16 reads, "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." It should be observed that here again, as in Genesis 2:18-25, the Bible speaks of marriage. "Thy conception . . . thou shalt bring forth children . . . thy desire shall be to thy husband." Could it be stated any more clearly that God is here speaking to a wife about her relationship to her husband? It is also important to note the form of the verb *mashal*, "rule," as it is used in this verse. It is the Hebrew imperfect which, it is true, sometimes has the force of an imperative, but it is more commonly used as an expression of the future. The Hebrew is *yi-meshal(bak)*, "he will rule over you." God is not here issuing a special commandment, "Be thou ruled by him!" or, "Thou shalt not rule!" But here in Genesis 3:16 we have a statement, a prediction, a prophecy, of how man, degenerated by sin, would take advantage of his headship as a husband to dominate, lord it over, his wife. Nowhere in the Bible is Genesis 3:16 quoted or referred to as establishing a general subordination of woman to man. It is a gross abuse of this passage, which speaks of the husband and wife in marriage, to use it as an argument for the general subordination of woman as a sex to man as a sex.

The same may be said of Genesis 3:6 and the Timothy reference to it, which says, "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression." Too often it is assumed that I Timothy 2:14 indicates that since Eve was the first to sin, she and all her daughters after her are to be deprived of making independent decisions. What does this verse say? Here again we are referred to Adam and Eve, a husband and his wife, and in the very next verse, I Timothy 2:15, we have a link with Genesis 3:16, which, as we have already seen, speaks of the husband and wife in marriage. In I Timothy 2:14, 15, we are told that in marriage there is a union of two beings, a man and a woman, and that one member should not act independently of the other in things involving the business of the marriage union. Eve should have consulted

Adam, but she didn't, and forever since the wife has been made vividly conscious of the husband's headship by his sinful abuse of his position. However, a ray of hope is held out here, as in I Corinthians 11, for the husband and wife who are in Christ, who are blessed by the order of redemption, for verse fifteen concludes the thought of the passage with the words, "Notwithstanding she [the wife] shall be saved in childbearing, if they [the husband and the wife] continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety."<sup>7</sup>

We have now considered the Old Testament authority called upon to support I Corinthians 11 and I Timothy 2, as well as the primary reference used to back I Corinthians 14. These Scripture passages support the argument that the New Testament restrictions are addressed to the married woman. However we have not as yet exhausted the possibilities of the I Corinthians 14:34 statement "as also saith the law." Although most commentators say this is a reference to Genesis 3:16, they do concede that *nomos*, "law," is used in the New Testament as a reference in its narrowest sense to the Decalogue, in a somewhat broader sense to the Pentateuch, and in its broadest sense to the whole of the Old Testament. Zerbst, therefore, says that the law in I Corinthians 14 may refer to Genesis 3:16 or to the wives of the patriarchs.<sup>8</sup> Others, for example, Lange and the Hirschberger Bible, add Numbers 30:8 as a possibility.<sup>9</sup> Still other Old Testament passages which at times are used in this connection are Ecclesiastes 7:26, 28; Isaiah 3:12; Exodus 27:21 and 28:1; Leviticus 15:32; and Numbers 4:2, 3. The weakness of the use of some of these passages seems quite obvious, but since they have been put forward in all seriousness by leaders in the church, it is necessary to give them our attention.

We consider first the suggestion that the law in I Corinthians 14 may refer to the wives of the patriarchs. This is a good

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7. *I.C.C.*, XLI, 33.

8. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

9. Lange, *op. cit.*, N.T. VI, 297; *Hirschberger Bibel mit Anmerkungen* (Hirschberg: Krahn, 1852), Part III, 332.

suggestion for we find that it has support in the only New Testament example of a woman who is praised for her submissiveness to a man. I Peter 3:5, 6 tells us that the devout wives of the Old Testament were submissive to their husbands just as Sarah was to Abraham.

The next passage is Numbers 30:8. We read, "If her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vows which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, where with she bound her soul, of none effect: and the Lord shall forgive her." It is evident from this verse that a husband may approve or disapprove of a vow which his wife has made. There are those who would conclude from this that whatever a woman does in worship and in service to God must meet with the approval of a man. But let us examine the whole picture presented by chapter 30. Verses three to five tell us that a young daughter, a daughter who is not yet twelve and one-half years of age,<sup>10</sup> is not to make a vow which places upon her father the responsibility of paying for a sacrifice, and she is not to bind herself with an oath which would affect her home life, unless she has her father's consent.<sup>11</sup> Verses six to eight say the same thing about a wife. She is not to make her husband responsible for a sacrifice, or bind herself with an oath, for example, to remain away from the marriage bed, unless she has an agreement with her husband to do such a thing.<sup>12</sup> But as can be readily seen we have here no reference to a general control of man over the woman's worship and service to God. This passage refers to particular circumstances where a daughter, who has not yet reached maturity,<sup>13</sup> is to respect the wishes of her father, and a wife those of her husband. That this is not a general rule for all women is quite evident from verse nine of this chapter, where we are told of

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10. *Talmud*, "Kiddushin," XXII, 7.

11. See Matt. 15:4-6.

12. See I Cor. 7:5.

13. As a *bogereth* she was no longer under her father. *Talmud*, "Kiddushin," XXII, 406.

women who were "not restricted by any male authority or household government."<sup>14</sup>

Our next passage is Ecclesiastes 7:26, 28. These verses are sometimes used by those who, like Thomas Aquinas, contend that woman's activity must be restricted in the church because "women are not perfected in wisdom."<sup>15</sup> From Ecclesiastes 7 we learn that Solomon has been investigating wisdom and that he is now ready to report on his findings. His research has provided evidence that, on the one hand, only one man in a thousand possesses true wisdom, and that, on the other hand, wisdom is not to be found in a woman's arms, no matter how many you may embrace. We agree that the man with seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines should be able to speak with experience about women, but that this passage proves that women lack the necessary wisdom for leadership in the church, we do not agree.

We turn now to Isaiah 3:12 where we are told that God's people are in a sad state because "women rule over them." Adam Clarke points out that there is some doubt that the word "women" should appear in this passage at all. The word thus translated could just as well be translated as "usurers."<sup>16</sup> The verse would then say that Israel's sad condition is indicated by the fact that their kings are so indebted to the money lenders that these usurers, and not the kings, are the real rulers. However since the markings in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew show that at least for the past millenium this verse has been understood as containing the word "women," we shall accept it in this way. Most commentators consider the word "women" as a proper translation, but they do not believe that the actual reign of women is here alluded to. For example the Hirschberger Bible thinks this is a reference to effeminate men rulers,<sup>17</sup> men who knew as little about ruling as the secluded and uninformed women of the day. Gray and Adams see here rulers who

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14. P. E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1923), I, 292.

15. *Op. cit.*, XIV, 89, 90.

16. Clarke, *op. cit.*, IV, 36.

17. Part II, 4.

"are as unfit as women; or these rulers are under the government of their seraglios."<sup>18</sup> The latter would be like Solomon whose "wives turned away his heart after other gods,"<sup>19</sup> or like Ahab, who was the tool of his wife Jezebel. Those who consider it a calamity for a woman to rule should recall the golden age of God's people when Deborah ruled as prophet and judge for forty prosperous years.

The next four passages, Exodus 27:21, and 28:1, Leviticus 16:32, and Numbers 4:2, 3, inform us that the tabernacle and temple priests and servants of the Old Testament were men and not women. We can readily understand why the Roman, Greek, and Anglo-Catholic churches, which have mistakenly transplanted the Old Testament class priesthood into the New Testament church, should disapprove of a woman entering into their levitical priesthood, but the glory of the Reformation church is the universal priesthood, the priesthood of all believers. On the birth day of the Christian church Peter settled this matter for all times when he quoted Joel to show that all Christians, including the daughters and handmaids, have the privilege of telling forth the word and will of God.<sup>20</sup> Yes, all who have tasted that God is gracious are royal priests. All are to offer spiritual sacrifices and declare God's wonderful deeds.<sup>21</sup> As the Reformers so aptly put it in the Smalcald Articles:

The ministry of the New Testament is not bound to places and persons as the Levitical ministry, but it is dispersed throughout the whole world, and is there where God gives His gifts, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers; neither does this ministry avail on account of the authority of any person, but on account of the Word given by Christ. Nor does the person of a teacher add anything to this word and office; it matters not who is preaching and teaching it.<sup>22</sup>

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18. J. C. Gray and G. M. Adams, *Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), III, 97.

19. I Kings 11:4.

20. Acts 2:16-18.

21. I Peter 2:5, 9; Rev. 5:10.

22. *Concordia Triglotta*, ed. Fred Bente, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1921), p. 511.

We turn now to another possibility as the source of the law in I Corinthians 14:34. We said above that the law could, in its narrowest sense, refer to the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. Do we find anything helpful in determining the authority for the apostolic restrictions on woman's activity in this summary of the law?

The first table of the Decalogue<sup>23</sup> tells us to love God above all things. Here we are concerned with the perpendicular, the God to man and man to God relationship—to the order of redemption. As was pointed out in our discussion of the order of redemption, in granting spiritual blessings God knows no sex, and in demanding spiritual obligations He knows no sex. "In the Christian church a man does not hold a higher rank because he is a freeman or lower rank because he is a slave, nor does one stand higher if a man, and lower if a woman."<sup>24</sup> In man's relationship to God, with which the first table deals, there is neither male nor female. All are one.

But how about the second table<sup>25</sup> and woman's status before her neighbor? Here we have two commandments which are of special interest. The one is the Fourth Commandment,<sup>26</sup> "Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother." The other is the Sixth, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

It is especially significant that in the command to honor father and mother the authority rests in both parents,<sup>27</sup> the mother as well as the father. Those who would make something of the prior mention of the father in Exodus 20:12, will find that in Leviticus 19:3 the order is reversed, "ye shall fear every man his mother and his father." In this latter passage it is the man, *ish*, the male human, who is to honor and obey his mother. Proverbs 30:17 presents this in much more vivid language by saying, "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." So we see that the sex of the

23. Ex. 20:1-11.

24. Kretzmann, *op. cit.*, IV, 244.

25. Ex. 20:12-17.

26. The Lutheran system of numbering the Commandments is used.

27. Prov. 1:8; 6:20; 30:17; Lev. 19:3; Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20.

parent makes no difference. The children are to give like honor and obedience to each.

Now what is true of this authority as it is found in the home is also true as this authority expands to the school, the church, the state, for parental authority is the basis of all authority. Luther writes, "All authority has its roots and warrant in parental authority. . . . All who are called masters stand in place of parents and from them must obtain authority and power to command."<sup>28</sup> Plato, the disciple of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle, was in full accord with this divine law when he wrote that in the administration of authority "neither a man as a man, nor a woman as a woman, has any special function, but the gifts of nature are equally diffused in both sexes; all the pursuits of man are the pursuits of woman also."<sup>29</sup> So here in the Fourth Commandment, which certainly has to do with horizontal authority, with the order of creation, we find that just as in the first table of the law God is no respecter of sex. Children, whether male or female, are equally duty bound to give like honor and obedience to parents, whether male or female. In establishing authority and in demanding obedience to authority, sex is not in any way considered.

We turn now from the Fourth to the Sixth Commandment. It is the Sixth Commandment which establishes and protects marriage. Marriage involves not one or three, but two human beings, and not two human beings of the same sex, but of opposite sexes. In marriage the two become one flesh.<sup>30</sup> They are joined, united, as one being, and in this union the husband is the head,<sup>31</sup> and the wife is the body or heart.<sup>32</sup> In marriage the wife is to respect and honor her husband as her head, and when that head makes a decision, the heart is to find its greatest happiness in carrying out that decision. The husband, too, is

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28. H. T. Kerr, *A Compend of Luther's Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1943), p. 223.

29. Plato, *The Republic*, par. 455, quoted from E. Densmore, *Equality of the Sexes* (New York: 1907), title page.

30. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5, 6.

31. I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23.

32. Eph. 5:25, 28, 29.

to honor the wife and find his greatest pleasure in fulfilling the wishes and desires of this his heart. Very beautifully have Matthew Henry and others commented on the meaning of marriage when they remind us that Eve was not taken from Adam's head that she should rule over him, nor from his feet, to be trampled under foot, but she was taken from his side, that she might be his equal; from under his arm, that she might be protected by him; near his heart, that he might cherish and love her.<sup>33</sup> It is in the Sixth Commandment, the commandment which has to do with marriage, that we are told to lead a chaste and decent life in word and deed, and each love and honor his spouse. Could this be the *nomos*, the "law," in I Corinthians 14:34? It is our conclusion that if the *nomos* is found anywhere in the Decalogue it must be here in the commandment which speaks of the husband and wife relationship.

Before leaving the Old Testament, there is one more passage to be considered which seems to have been overlooked by commentators, or perhaps it was purposely passed by because it is said to be the law of the Medes and Persians. In the first chapter of the Book of Esther we are told that, as a result of the refusal of Queen Vashti to respond to a summons from King Ahasuerus, the king, upon the advice of the wise men that knew the times, proclaimed a law. What was the law? The wise men pointed out that as a result of Vashti's deed all the wives of the empire would now be inclined to despise their husbands. The law must counteract this. So the law was proclaimed that "all the wives should give to their husbands honour, both to great and small."<sup>34</sup> The circumstances were such on this occasion that they provided an excellent opportunity to proclaim a general subordination of women to men, but instead we have here what we find in every passage relating to the submission of women to men — the wife is to recognize her husband as her head. Nowhere in the Old Testament outside of the husband and wife relationship in marriage do we find such a demand.

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33. E. B. Pollard, *Oriental Women* (Philadelphia: Barrie and Sons, 1907), p. 4.

34. Esther 1:20.

In the course of our discussion of the Old Testament, we have introduced many New Testament passages—all of which refer to a wife's submission to her husband as a sign that she recognizes him as her head. What was just said about the Old may be said as well about the New Testament. Nowhere outside of the husband and wife relationship in marriage do we find such a demand for submission. In fact in the whole of the Bible there is but one passage in addition to Esther 1:20 where we are told of a law which makes a woman *hupandros*, that is, under the law of a man. To illustrate a Christian's relationship to the law, Paul shows in Romans 7 that it is like the law that binds a woman to her husband. In verse two we read, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Quite obviously this, too, is a law that has to do with the husband and wife in marriage. In this respect it is in harmony with the Bible as a whole. But we have here an additional thought that should be noted. We are informed that "if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." In other words, if she has no husband she is not *hupandros*, under the law of a man.

We have now given careful consideration to the Old Testament passages which have been called upon to support the New Testament restrictions on the activity of women in the church. We have also considered many New Testament passages having a bearing on the subject. This study has revealed that it is not true, as many believe, that the Bible subordinates woman as a sex to man as a sex. There is no law of creation which makes women in general subordinate to men in general. There is, however, a law which makes the husband the head of the wife, or as it is expressed in Titus 2:5, there is a law which demands that wives should be submissive "to their own husbands." This is the law which is called upon to support the apostolic restrictions.

## Chapter VI

### WHY THE LAW WAS INVOKED—THE SETTING

In our study up to this point we have noted that the law to which Paul refers in I Corinthians 14:34, and the references in I Corinthians 11 and I Timothy 2 to the first three chapters of Genesis, all point to one thing as the basis for the apostolic restrictions on woman's activity in the church. That one thing is the husband and wife relationship in marriage. It is summed up in the words: The husband is the head of the wife. Why was such a law invoked? A consideration of the setting in which the Apostles and the primitive Christians lived will help us to understand.

The pagan influences, which descended upon Israel as a result of the Babylonian captivity and the invasions of Alexander the Great and of Rome, had a disastrous effect on the status of the Jewish women. Exposed as the Jew was to paganism on every side, he and most of his religious leaders came to consider woman as little more than an agent of the devil. Examples from the Apocrypha and the Talmud give evidence of this.

Even the heroines of the Jews in the centuries just before the New Testament times impress upon us the fact that a woman's charms are a powerful force to destroy man. We see this in the stories of Judith and Susanna found in the Apocrypha. Judith, dressed in all her feminine finery and posing as a traitor to her people, deliberately tempted Holofernes, the general of the enemy forces, to desire her. When he was drenched with wine and she was alone with him in his tent, she cut off his head and carried it back as a trophy to her people saying, "My face deceived him to his destruction."<sup>1</sup> Although Susanna did

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1. Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apocrypha an American Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), p. 158.

not misuse her charms and she is described as a faithful, pious wife, her beauty was so ravishing that two elders of the city lost their lives in their effort to possess her.<sup>2</sup>

The Wisdom of Sirach is in its spiritual content as high as any of the books of the Apocrypha, and yet throughout its pages we find the lowest estimate of the worth of woman. Of women in general he writes, "Any wickedness but the wickedness of a woman. . . . Any malice is small to a woman's malice."<sup>3</sup>

Sin began with a woman,  
And because of her we all die.  
Do not give water an outlet  
Nor a wicked woman freedom to speak.  
If she does not act as you would have her,  
Cut her off from your person.<sup>4</sup>

Of daughters he says, "If you have daughters, . . . do not look too favorably upon them."<sup>5</sup> "To have a daughter is a disadvantage."<sup>6</sup> Of both daughters and women in general we have this gem.

A daughter is a secret cause of sleeplessness to her father,  
And his concern for her robs him of his rest;  
In her youth, for fear she will pass her prime,  
And when she is married, for fear she will be hated;  
When she is a girl, for fear she will be profaned,  
And be with child in her father's house;  
When she has a husband, for fear she will transgress;  
And when she is married, for fear she will be childless.  
Keep a close watch over a headstrong daughter,  
For fear she will fill your enemies with malignant joy,  
And make you the talk of the town and notorious among  
the people,  
And disgrace you before the multitude.  
Do not look at anybody for her beauty,  
And do not sit among women,

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 349-353.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 271.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 272.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

For as a moth comes out of clothing,  
 A woman's wickedness comes from a woman.  
 A man's wickedness is better than a beneficent woman.<sup>7</sup>

When we turn from the Apocrypha to the Talmud we find that we are greeted by an attitude that is even less kind to woman. It is said that for the Buddhist woman there are eighteen special hells, but if she lives virtuously through 1,500 rebirths she may be born as a boy and at last reach Nirvana—nothingness. The leaders of the Jews would not agree with this, but from the Talmud we learn that a favorite benediction of the Jew was, "Blessed be God who has not made me a heathen, a slave, a woman."<sup>8</sup>

Hinduism teaches that woman has no soul and it is a sin for her to read the Vedas, the holy books of the Brahman. So degraded is she that the Brahman must stop reading his Veda while she is passing the door. The rabbis did not take away the woman's soul, but as to her studying the Torah they said, "Let the words of the Law be burned rather than committed to women."<sup>9</sup> "He who instructs his daughter in the Law instructs her in folly."<sup>10</sup>

It was Buddha who warned his disciples against woman in these words, "How then ought you to guard yourselves? By regarding her tears and smiles as enemies, her stooping form, her hanging arms, and all her disentangled hair, as tails designed to trap man's heart."<sup>11</sup> The Talmud keeps pace with Buddha by asserting, "Do not converse much with women, as this will ultimately lead to unchastity. He who gazes at a woman eventually comes to sin, and he who looks at a woman's heel will beget degenerate children."<sup>12</sup>

A man shall never walk behind a woman along a road, even his own wife . . . and whoever crosses a stream behind a

7. *Ibid.*, p. 306.

8. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

9. A. Brittain, *Women of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Barrie and Sons, 1907), p. 10.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Pollard, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

12. *Talmud*, "Nedarim," XIX, 56-57; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

woman will have no portion in the world to come. He who pays money to a woman counting it from his hand to hers for the sake of gazing at her, even if he possesses Torah and good deeds like Moses our teacher, he will not escape the punishment of Gehinnom. A man should walk behind a lion rather than behind a woman.<sup>13</sup>

The Jews were horrified at the very idea of having their daughters married to the gods, that is, becoming priestesses in the temple of Venus, but many of them nevertheless agreed with Confucius that, "Men must have mothers, and so women are a necessary evil."<sup>14</sup> Of course the rabbis put it little differently. They said, "The world cannot exist without males and females—happy is he whose children are males, and woe to him whose children are females."<sup>15</sup>

It is said that one of the seven types of Pharisees was the bleeding Pharisee, who in his eagerness to avoid looking at a woman shuts his eyes and so bruises himself to bleeding by stumbling against a wall.

Because of the low regard in which woman was held, innumerable regulations developed which circumscribed her activity. This was done, it seems, not in order to protect the woman, but in order to protect the man from the woman. Outside of her home she was to keep her person covered as completely as possible. The men were warned, "A woman's hair is a sexual incitement."<sup>16</sup> "He who looks at the little finger of a woman it is as though he looked upon her secret parts."<sup>17</sup> "He who looks upon the heel of a woman will have crippled children—lame, blind, dumb, deaf."<sup>18</sup> According to the rabbis one of the twenty-four things which prevent repentance is looking at

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13. *Talmud*, "Berakoth," XXXI, 383-384; Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

14. W. Dallmann, *The Battle of the Bible with the "Bibles"* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1926), p. 36.

15. *Talmud*, "Kiddushin," XXII, 425.

16. *Talmud*, "Berakoth," XXXI, 145.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Strack, Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, I, 299, my translation. See also *Talmud*, "Nedarim," XIX, 56, 57.

women.<sup>19</sup> If the above warnings are kept in mind it is not difficult to understand why it was considered as indecent for a wife to stand before a congregation with her head uncovered and why a devout husband would be expected to divorce her if she did.

Like rules restricted woman's speaking in public. There were six things a scholar must not do. One was that he must not converse with a woman in the street, not even his wife.<sup>20</sup> Why? It was impressed upon the pious Jew that he must not converse much with women as this would ultimately lead to unchastity<sup>21</sup> because "A woman's voice is a sexual incitement."<sup>22</sup> And this is why it was considered as indecent for a woman to speak in a public assembly and a devout husband was expected to divorce her if she did.

"There is nothing," the rabbis said, "worse than a woman."<sup>23</sup> To prove this contention they pointed out that when the Israelites were guilty of idolatry at Sinai only three thousand men were put to death, but when they were guilty of adultery at Shittim twenty-four thousand died.

With the leaders of the Jews holding and spreading such ideas it is not surprising that the period which produced the synagogue also brought with it the gallery or the screen where the women had to worship unseen by the men. The status of the Jewish woman, domestically, culturally, and religiously, was at its lowest point in history when God sent forth His Son to redeem the world. Such was the environment in which Peter and Paul and all the first Christians of the Holy Land spent their formative years.

There was little change in the environment as far as woman was concerned when the New Testament writers, about thirty years after the Ascension, wrote their epistles to the primitive Christian congregations in Rome, Greece, and Asia Minor.

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19. S. Schlechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), p. 330.

20. *Talmud*, "Berakoth," XXXI, 266-267.

21. *Talmud*, "Nedarim," XIX, 56-57.

22. *Talmud*, "Berakoth," XXXI, 145.

23. Strack and Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, III, 410, my translation.

Although Rome ruled in these areas, Greek culture was still predominant. The Greeks, from the days of Solon in 476 B. C., classified their women in five groups.<sup>24</sup> Of all the Greek women only the *hetairai*, the intellectuals, the women philosophers, were free to do what they pleased, when they pleased.<sup>25</sup> It is said that the difference between the Greek wives and the *hetairai* was as great as the difference between the inmates of a Turkish harem and a French actress.<sup>26</sup> More numerous than the *hetairai* were the *auletrides*, the dancing flute girls, slaves, who after their performances were auctioned to the highest bidder. The *concubines*, also slaves, made up the third group. The fourth were the *dicteriades*, the public prostitutes, who appeared only at night. In Corinth the *dicteriades* were crowded out by the thousand priestesses of Venus who enriched the temple authorities through the income received from the sailors and merchants who docked at and traded in the notorious city.

The *wives* made up the fifth group. They were the chattel, the property of the Greek citizen. They were trained to see as little as possible, hear as little as possible, inquire as little as possible. Greek wives were confined to separate quarters. "The door of the court is the boundary fixed for the free woman."<sup>27</sup> They differed from the slaves only in this that they did have supervision over the slaves.<sup>28</sup> Wives never ate with their husbands when others were present. They did not talk to strange men.<sup>29</sup> The Athenian orator Demosthenes is said to be responsible for the statement, "We have the *hetairai* for our pleasure, concubines to satisfy our physical needs, and wives to bear us

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24. L. A. Starr, *The Bible Status of Woman* (New York: Revell, 1926), pp. 161-162.

25. F. A. Wright, *The Feminine in Greek Literature* (New York: Dutton, 1923), p. 62.

26. E. B. Gamble, *The Evolution of Woman* (New York: 1894), p. 324.

27. M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (New York: Scribners, 1901), p. 247.

28. L. Zscharnack, *Der Dienst der Frau in den ersten Jahrhunderten der christlichen Kirche* (Goettingen: Vonderhoeck-Rupprecht, 1902), p. 2.

29. Woodruff, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 100.

children and to care for the household.”<sup>30</sup> The Greek poet Hipponax said, “It is hard to get a wife who will both bring you a good dowry and then do all the work.”<sup>31</sup> On another occasion he wrote, “There are only two days in your life that your wife gives you pleasure: the day you marry her and the day you bury her.”<sup>32</sup> When the wife did leave the home she had to wear the veil to indicate her marital status. Like the Jewess, she was warned to cover herself completely. The old Greek proverb is alluding to the necessity of covering every inch of skin when it says, “Where a fly can alight there is room for Satan.”<sup>33</sup>

Not only was it a custom of the Greeks, but it was also the law of Rome, that the wife was under the complete control and power of her husband. He was legally responsible for whatever she did.<sup>34</sup> In the disgrace of his wife was the disgrace of the husband. Because he was responsible for her actions, he had the authority to restrain her and keep her from asserting herself in public places—in promiscuous gatherings such as church services.

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30. Zscharnack, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

31. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

32. *Ibid.*

33. S. G. Champion, *Racial Proverbs* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1938), p. 189.

34. J. Declareuil, *Rome the Law-Giver* (New York: Knopf, n.d.), pp. 95-96; E. A. Hecker, *A Short History of Woman's Rights* (New York: Putman's, 1914), pp. 13-14.

## Chapter VII

### WHY THE LAW WAS INVOKED— THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

Into an environment in which Jewish and Greek customs and Roman law forbade the public appearance of women; into an environment in which the whole structure of life was arranged to suit men and to exclude women, the primitive Christian church was born. To this church, in such an environment, there was proclaimed the complete liberty of the individual before God, and the universal priesthood of believers. The apostles and evangelists preached that before God, as we have already noted, a man does not hold a higher rank because he is a freeman, nor a lower because he is a slave; nor does one stand higher, if a man and lower, if a woman.

Into this new fellowship there came the Jew and Gentile, on equal terms; the master and the slave, on equal terms; wives, concubines, former hetairai and flute girls, converted priestesses of Venus, on equal terms; men and women, on equal terms. In this society all were alike. Where Christ was present there was unity and equality in diversity. Of the primitive Christian husband and wife Tertullian wrote, "Together they pray, together they prostrate themselves, together they perform their fasts, mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally are they both found in the church of God."<sup>1</sup> In all the world there was never anything like these primitive Christian congregations!

That such an unusual society in such an environment should arouse suspicion and invite persecution from the outside, and that there should be within the church extremists who, on the

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1. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson (New York: Scribners, 1896), IV, 48.

one hand, interpreted liberty as license and who, on the other hand, insisted on an ascetic withdrawal from all things temporal, is to be expected.

Within the church the vast majority of the Christians used their liberty and equality before God in such a way that even the enemies who persecuted them had to praise them, but extremists, like the man living in adultery with his father's wife, and those who thought it of not sufficient importance to censure him,<sup>2</sup> invited the wrath of the outsider, who was only too anxious to malign this "subversive"<sup>3</sup> sect. The same extremists encouraged the slaves to assert their equality with their masters, and the women to show their independence by dropping the head covering and insisting on equal opportunity to speak. On the other extreme, the ascetics, with their insistence on complete withdrawal from the things of the world, were asking the unwed to remain so, the Christian spouses to leave their pagan mates, and all to forsake their worldly occupations to wait for the coming of the Lord.

From the outsiders' point of view these Christians were undesirables. They did not want to work. They did not want to marry, did not worship the gods, did not observe public festivals, did not hold public offices. They discouraged the ownership of private property. It was also whispered about that they were guilty of child sacrifice and cannibalism!<sup>4</sup>

The most important and the most common accusations, however, were these two: The first, that the Christians were breaking up the home and family—tampering with family relations. This accusation continued to plague the church for several centuries. Fronto of Cirta, the tutor of Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and philosopher of the second century, charged that the Christians "practised indiscriminate sexual profanity."<sup>5</sup> During the reign of Marcus Aurelius, there were

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2. I Cor. 5:1-2.

3. E. G. Sihler, "A Note on the First Christian Congregation at Rome," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, III (March, 1932), 184.

4. Sihler, "Primitive Christians," pp. 747-748.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 748; F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The History of the Christian Church to A. D. 461* (New York: Harpers, 1924), p. 65.

severe persecutions of Christians in Gaul, and we are told that "some of the slaves confessed that their Christian masters were guilty of Thyesteian banquets and Oedipodoean incests, crimes which had long been attributed to the Christians through the ignorance of the people."<sup>6</sup> Fifty years after Marcus Aurelius, Tertullian found it necessary to deny the accusation of those who claimed that Christians had all things in common — including their wives.<sup>7</sup>

The second important accusation was that the new Messiah-believers were disloyal to the Roman government. Christians in general, like Paul and Silas at Philippi, were maligned as those who "do exceedingly trouble our city and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans."<sup>8</sup> At Thessalonica the same accusation arose. "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also . . . and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar."<sup>9</sup>

This was the setting, and this was the environment, and these were the conditions which prevailed when God called upon the writers of the epistles to act to save the infant church.

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6. Foakes-Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

7. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III, 46.

8. Acts 16:20, 21.

9. Acts 17:6, 7.

## Chapter VIII

### APOSTOLIC ACTION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

What did the Apostles do in such a critical hour? They wrote to the scattered congregations to advise them in the God-pleasing ways of life. They did not take back or deny what they had taught about Christian liberty and equality before God, but they insisted that these blessings should not be used as an excuse for advocating radical social change and despising established authority. In the epistles there are at least twenty-five passages, sometimes whole chapters, devoted to this subject. In fact, I Corinthians and I Peter were written for the purpose of correcting these critical conditions and to encourage the Christians to do all within their power to end these troubles. A check of the New Testament epistles will reveal how often the church was admonished to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.<sup>1</sup> Also how often marriage and the home are involved,<sup>2</sup> and that the thought is expressed that we have liberty, but it must be adjusted to the world in which we are living.<sup>3</sup>

All these thoughts are expressed very beautifully in the First Epistle of Peter, chapter 2, verses eleven to seventeen.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of

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1. Rom. 13:1-7; I Tim. 2:1, 2; 6:1, 2; Titus 3:1, 2; I Pet. 2:13, 14; II Pet. 2:10.

2. I Cor. 5:1-5; 6:18; 7:1-40; 11:1-15; 14:35; Eph. 5:22-31; 6:1-9; I Tim. 2:11-15; 4:1-3; Titus 2:4, 5; I Pet. 3:1-7.

3. Rom. 15:1; I Cor. 3:21-23; 6:12; 8:9; 9:12, 19-23; Gal. 3:28; 5:1-12; Col. 3:11; I Pet. 2:16; II Pet. 2:19.

visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; As free and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

In giving these directives to the young churches the Apostles did not neglect to tell the women what an important part they were to play in the life of the church. The extremists, who had encouraged the women to assert themselves, had argued: Are we not all Christian brothers and sisters? Is not our congregation one big happy family? Do we not all eat at one common table? Why then maintain the attitude of strangeness and subjection which is observed in the market place or at the public games? Wear the head covering on the street and refrain from speaking at town meetings, but here in church — forget these things. Make yourself at home!

But the inspired writers informed the Christian women that what they did in church they were doing in public; that the laws which governed their action in the market were to be observed in the congregation also. Tertullian asks the women, "Why do you denude before God what you cover before men? Will you be more modest in public than in the church?"<sup>4</sup>

So the writers of the epistles called upon the women to put the lie to their accusers, to those who said that the Christian church was destroying marriage and the home. They were to do this by dressing modestly, by retaining the head covering when they were officiating at a closed service, and by maintaining the customary silence in the open services where outsiders were present. Thus they would help to avoid the accusations of sexual profligacy by demonstrating that the Christian wife recognized the headship of her husband in marriage both as a law of God and the law of the land.

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4. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III, 688, 689.

And how were these apostolic restrictions received by the women of the primitive church? They accepted them without question. They understood the situation, and they were willing to do anything that the name of their Lord might not be blasphemed, and that souls might be won for him.

Today most Protestant Christians agree that it is no longer necessary for a woman to have her head covered in church. The ancient custom has lost its significance and therefore needs no longer be observed. But many Protestant Christians do not believe that the same is true of a woman speaking and teaching in the church. This would certainly surprise the first century writers for, although both uncovering the head and speaking in public were considered grounds for divorce, the uncovering of the head was the more serious offense. This is evident from I Corinthians 11 where the woman is told that, although she may officiate in conducting a closed service of the congregation, she must nevertheless keep her head covered when she does so. It is also evident from the fact that at least twice as much space is devoted, both in the rabbinic and the pagan literature, to condemning the uncovered woman. Finally, we have the word of one Valerius Maximus, Roman historian and rhetorician of the first century A.D., who makes the observation that, "one of the first causes of divorce was a married woman daring to go out of doors with nothing on her head."<sup>5</sup>

Why is it that the more serious offense no longer offends, but the less serious does? The usual argument is that Paul mentions traditions and custom in the context to the demand to cover the head, but that he mentions law when he deals with speaking and teaching. Customs change but divine law does not. The head covering may be dropped, but the mouth must remain closed. This argument overlooks some most important facts. For example that in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 the writer does not say there is a law which demands silence on the part of woman. There is no such law to which he

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5. *The Moffatt New Testament Commentary*, ed. James Moffatt, (New York: Harpers, n.d.), VII, 149, 150,

could have referred.<sup>6</sup> What the writer does say is that there is a law which demands that the wife should be in submission to her husband. Another important fact is that although custom is mentioned in I Corinthians 11, law is called upon in that chapter in the very same way it is in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2. Furthermore it is the same law: The head of the wife is her husband.

Custom is mentioned in I Corinthians 11, but the law is present and must be considered but not identified with custom. Law is mentioned in I Corinthians 14, but custom is present and must be recognized, but not confused with law. Neither custom nor law are mentioned in I Timothy 2, but both are present and must be distinguished from one another.

Dr. Lenski, when commenting on I Corinthians 11, points out that law and custom always go together, and that the custom grows out of the law, or to change the terms, doctrine and practice always go together, and the practice grows out of the doctrine. He goes on to say that it is not the custom as a custom but the significance of a custom which is important.<sup>7</sup> Many commentators point out this relationship between doctrine and practice. Zerbst writes:

St. Paul makes clear at the outset that the position taken by him in this passage is in accord with established custom in the churches of God and that it has to do with traditions handed on by him from the Eastern church to the new churches. "Tradition" signifies both doctrine and practical rules of living. In this instance a rule of living, a decision concerning a problem related to public worship, occupies the foreground. The entire passage indicates, however, that this problem must be viewed as being closely related to "the doctrine" and to proper conduct in marriage.<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Theo. Graebner agrees with these ideas and makes the further observation that the custom or practice which grows out of the law or doctrine may change with the times. He writes,

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6. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

7. Lenski, *Corinthians*, pp. 432, 435.

8. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 32.

Doctrines are based upon divine revelation, and they are to be applied by us to all cases without exception. . . . It is otherwise with matters of Christian life. . . . The command of purity is clearly expressed in both the Old and the New Testament and is illustrated by examples. But what was indecent in one age is not so now. . . . In other words, the difficulty which existed in the church of Paul's time with reference to the application of the Third Commandment (Rom. 14:5, 6) exists today regarding the Sixth (see also I Cor. 11:5).<sup>9</sup>

Lenski expresses the same idea in the words, "While the facts of creation to which Paul goes back are in their very nature unalterable, they cannot be made an equally unalterable law regarding customs for the simple reason that customs vary endlessly for reasons that are not at all concerned with these facts."<sup>10</sup>

When we apply the above observations to the apostolic restrictions we note that in each of the three passages there is one and the same unchanging law of creation: The husband is the head of the wife. The changing custom through which this law is expressed is in I Corinthians 11 the covering of the head, and in I Corinthians 14 and I Timothy 2 it is silence in public assemblies where strangers are present.

A divine principle, a doctrine, a moral law, is ageless, but the application, the practice, the resulting custom, may vary with the times. Humility, for example, is an unchanging Christian virtue. Christ told His disciples to wash one another's feet to indicate that they possessed this virtue. Today we do not wash one another's feet, but we give evidence of our Christian humility in other ways. It should always be an occasion for joy and happiness whenever Christian meets Christian, but we have long forgotten the repeated directives of the New Testament that we show our feelings by greeting each other with a holy kiss. To be subject to authority is an unchanging law, but today we do not honor the king. It is God's will for all times that we love our neighbor and avoid giving him an occasion

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9. Theo Graebner, *The Borderland of Right and Wrong* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1945), pp. 54, 55.

10. Lenski, *Corinthians*, p. 444.

to stumble, but today it is not the eating of blood or things strangled which are involved, so we no longer pay any attention to these particulars of the Jerusalem resolution. As the Augsburg Confession states, the Apostles "forbade it for a time, to avoid offense."<sup>11</sup>

There is involved here a common rule of Bible interpretation—that commands in terms of one culture must be translated into our culture. Bernard Ramm goes directly to the heart of the subject before us when he illustrates this rule as follows: "Thus when our Lord and Paul gave exhortation and teachings of necessity they had to speak in terms of the prevailing culture to be comprehensible to their readers and hearers. For example, many of Paul's regulations concerning women . . . must be reinterpreted for our culture."<sup>12</sup>

Silence and the covering of the head in public were demanded for a time to avoid offense, but today other things are demanded for the same reason. At the present time a woman indicates her marital status by taking her husband's name, by wearing a wedding ring, and by maintaining a common residence with her husband. The Christian wife of today will fulfill God's will as expressed in the apostolic restrictions by discouraging the gossip of unbelievers and avoiding the offense which would result from hiding her wedding ring when in public, or insisting on using her maiden name, or living in a separate residence. By conducting herself in public in such a way that she conceals the fact that she is married, she would be doing something shameful and indecent, dishonoring to her husband. She would be violating the apostolic restrictions.

God wants His people in all ages to lead chaste and decent lives in word and deed. But uncovering the head and speaking in promiscuous gatherings, which were considered indecent in 64 A.D., are not considered indecent today. The apostolic directives concerning them are therefore no more to be considered as binding in any way. Martin Dibelius is correct when

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11. *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 93.

12. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Bible Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1950), p. 118.

he contends that the Pauline commands to be silent in the churches are directed only to married women, and that they do not apply to our present situation.<sup>13</sup>

Before moving on to the next chapter, a recapitulation should prove helpful. It has now been observed, in the first place, that there is a law of creation which makes the husband the head of the wife, but that there is no law of creation which makes man the head of woman. Also, that there is, in the second place, a law of creation which makes the parent the head of the child, but that there is no law of creation which makes the headship of the father over the child any different from the headship of the mother over the child. And it has been observed, in the third place, that the apostolic restrictions were not given to establish a patriarchal system in the church as an expression of God's will in creation as it is seen in the headship of the husband over the wife, but that the restrictions were given to prevent a violation of the customs of the day, because such a breach was considered to be equal to a renunciation of marriage. It has been observed, in the fourth place, that since these customs, speaking in public and appearing with uncovered head in public, no longer mark a woman as being unfaithful to her husband, they need no longer be obeyed. They should no longer have anything to do with woman's status in the church.

In the chapters which follow woman will be observed as she serves the Lord in her calling as a royal priestess.

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13. Zerbst, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

## Chapter IX

### GOD'S WOMEN IN A MAN'S WORLD— THE OLD TESTAMENT

The ancient world was a man's world, and it is indeed amazing to note what a prominent role the Bible women played in such an environment. We take a brief glance at the Old Testament and we find that two of its books are named for the women whose story they tell—Ruth and Esther. Three of the Old Testament women were given the title of prophetesses, women who spoke forth the word of God. They are Miriam,<sup>1</sup> Deborah,<sup>2</sup> and Huldah.<sup>3</sup> The Talmud lists four more as prophetesses—Sarah, Hannah, Abigail, and Esther.<sup>4</sup> Miriam and Deborah were outstanding leaders as well as prophets.<sup>5</sup> It seems that Miriam had full charge of the women during the Exodus. Deborah, for forty years, was Israel's judge. Yes, she was all things to Israel—prophet, judge, warrior, ruler. She towered far above the men of her day, and in the three hundred years between Joshua and King Saul, only Gideon and Samson stand out in greater prominence. Judah had a ruling queen, Athaliah. Her reign was wicked, and she was deposed after six years, but not one word is said to the effect that her reign displeased God because she was a woman. Her character, not her sex, made her undesirable. Three women were granted theophanies—Hagar,<sup>6</sup> Sarah,<sup>7</sup> and Manoah's wife.<sup>8</sup> Women, as well as men, took the vows of a Nazarite and assisted in offering the sacri-

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1. Ex. 15:20.

2. Judges 4:4.

3. II Kings 22:14.

4. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

5. Micah 6:4; Judges 4:4.

6. Gen. 16:7; 21:17.

7. Gen. 18:9.

8. Judges 13:3-5, 9, 22.

fice.<sup>9</sup> Women were permitted to minister at the door of the sanctuary.<sup>10</sup> They also took part in the great choirs and processions of the Temple.<sup>11</sup>

In looking forward to New Testament times, the prophets promised a great expansion of the kingdom activity of the women. Joel's words concerning the prophesying daughters and handmaids are quoted by Peter in Acts 2, but there are at least two other prophecies which, in the inspired original, fortify this claim. The eleventh verse of Psalm 68 reads, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it." According to Adam Clarke, an improved translation of this passage is: "The Lord gave the word; of the female preachers there was a great host."<sup>12</sup> Agreeing with Clarke we have the Revised Versions, both British and American, which translate, "The women are a great host." Another similar passage is Isaiah 40:9, which begins with the familiar words, "O Zion, that bringest good tidings, etc." You will notice that in your King James Version you have a marginal translation, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion, etc." This is a good translation, but, again, it does not reveal the sex of the Gospel messenger. According to Dr. Clarke, a better translation of the Hebrew would be, "O daughter that bringest good tidings to Zion, lift up your voice with strength; O daughter that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift it up, fear not, say to the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God.'"<sup>13</sup>

The women of God's Old Testament people were far more active socially, politically, and spiritually, than their pagan sisters, but according to the prophecies of Joel, David, and Isaiah, the prophetesses and women evangelists of the New Testament times would far exceed their Old Testament sisters in number, for they would be a great host, a mighty army!

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9. Num. 6:2, 13-21.

10. Ex. 38:8; I Sam. 2:22.

11. Ps. 68:25; Ezra 2:65; Neh. 7:67; I Chron. 25:5-7. Note *alamoth*, "maidens," in the title of Psalm 46, and in I Chron. 15:20.

12. Clarke, *op. cit.*, III, 432.

13. Clarke, *op. cit.*, IV, 162.

Although the period between the Testaments was one of a rapid fall in the status of the Jewish women, there was among them at least one who was able to rise to a place of distinction and lasting honor. Alexandra, who is sometimes called Salome, reigned as queen of Judah from 78 to 69 B.C. Before and after her reign war, insurrection, and murder ran amuck. But while she was on the throne there was an interval of peace and prosperity. The bitter quarrel between the Pharisees and Sadducees was temporarily silenced, and Alexandra's brother, Simon ben Shetach, introduced the educational system which would be the system of his people for many years to come. Heinrich Graetz writes of this queen, "It was indeed most fortunate for the Judaeen nation that a woman of gentle nature and sincere piety should have been called to the head of the state after it had been torn asunder by the recklessness of its former ruler. She came like the refreshing dew to an arid and sunburnt soil."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that the people welcomed the reign of Alexandra, and that her reign, like that of Deborah, was a bright spot on a black page of her people's history, must not be overlooked by those who insist that the rule of a woman is a calamity.

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14. H. Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Series, 1941), II, 48.

## Chapter X

### GOD'S WOMEN IN A MAN'S WORLD — THE NEW TESTAMENT

In considering the setting for the apostolic restrictions, we noted that, because of pagan influences, the women of the Jews were considered as little more than a necessary evil when the day of the New Testament dawned. When priests, Levites, rabbis, and Pharisees dared not to look a second time at a woman for fear of falling a prey to the power of the devil, the almighty God Himself chose a humble maid of Galilee named Mary and announced to her that she was to be the mother of the Savior, who would destroy forever the devil's power. A short time after the annunciation Mary gave to us the first Christmas hymn, the Magnificat, and since that day, wherever there are Christians, God is through this hymn making a woman the teacher of men.<sup>1</sup> Luther writes, "This pure virgin well deserves to be heard by prince and lord, as she sings him her sacred, chaste, and salutary song."<sup>2</sup> "The tender mother of Christ . . . teaches us with her words and by the example of her experience, how to know, love, and praise God."<sup>3</sup> "Mary begins with herself and sings what He has done for her. Thus she teaches us . . ."<sup>4</sup>

As if to foreshadow the glorious things to come, a prophetess, Anna, welcomed the Lord when He was presented at the Temple. And she not only confessed her own faith in Him, but she also spoke of Him to all who looked for redemption in

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1. Luke 1:46-55.

2. *Luther's Works*, XXI, 298.

3. *Ibid.*, 301.

4. *Ibid.*, 318.

Jerusalem. She was a female missionary at work in the Temple of God.<sup>5</sup>

During our Lord's ministry He never once uttered a word restricting women's activities, unless we would call His words to Martha a restriction. You will recall that He said that Mary had chosen the better part, in other words, that also for women Kingdom duties are to take priority over domestic duties.<sup>6</sup> At no time is there any sign of distinction in the way Jesus treated men and women. True, He did not choose a woman to be one of the Twelve, for the intimacy which this relationship involved, especially at that time, precluded such a possibility. But women did sit at His feet as disciples. They journeyed with Him. They were defended by Him in spite of the dismay of the Pharisees, and, as in the case of the woman of Samaria, in defiance of the custom adhered to by His Apostles. Just as the first good news of Christmas was announced by Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, so the Easter Angel announced the first good news of the resurrection to the faithful women, and the risen Lord Himself first appeared to Mary Magdalene and made her an apostle to the Apostles<sup>7</sup> by instructing her to preach the first Easter sermon to the men.<sup>8</sup> The faithful women were with the men when the Lord appeared in the upper room, and on Pentecost they, as well as the men, were filled with the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, and prophesied glorious things.

Not she with trait'rous kiss her Master stung,  
Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue;  
She, when apostles fled, could danger brave,  
Last at His cross, and earliest at His grave.<sup>9</sup>

In the infant Apostolic Church, women played both a prominent and an important part. Priscilla instructed Apollos for the Christian ministry,<sup>10</sup> but because of Hebrew and Greek custom,

5. Luke 2:36-38.

6. Luke 10:38-42.

7. Zscharnack, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

8. John 20:17.

9. Eaton Stannard Barrett (1786-1820).

10. Acts 18:1-3, 18, 26; Rom. 16:3; I Cor. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19.

and Roman law, she taught him only when her husband was present. There are a number of Bible critics who suggest that Priscilla wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. Some day we may learn that this is true. The four daughters of Philip served the Lord as women evangelists<sup>11</sup> for many years, but to keep within the law their father supervised and assumed responsibility for their activity. Phoebe was a "servant of the church,"<sup>12</sup> a female deacon, a minister. She and Priscilla are two of the nine women mentioned by name in Romans 16. We believe that Phoebe is important enough to deserve some special attention.

Paul gives two titles to Phoebe. The first is *diakonos* and the second is *prostatis*. *Diakonos* is used by Paul twenty-two times. Eighteen times it is translated minister, three times it is translated deacon, and only once, here in Romans 16:1, is it translated servant. There can be but one reason for not using the common translation of the word as minister in this verse as well as in the others and that is the fact that Phoebe was a woman. *Diakonos* is a title which Paul applies to himself and to Tychicus, Epaphras, Timothy, and Apollos, all full-fledged pastors, preachers, and evangelists.<sup>13</sup> According to the title Phoebe may have had all of these offices.<sup>14</sup> If so, the suggestion that she, before her conversion by Paul, was one of the women philosophers of Athens, the *hetairai*, seems logical.<sup>15</sup> She then would be above the law, permitted to travel freely, and to preach to men as well as women.<sup>16</sup>

The second title given to Phoebe, *prostatis*, indicates that she was also called to a position of authority in the church. The Greek word means "one who presides," "the chief of a party," "a president," "ruler," "foreman," "superintendent." The German

11. Acts 21:9.

12. Rom. 16:1.

13. I Cor. 3:5; II Cor. 3:6; Eph. 3:7; 6:21; Col. 1:7, 23, 25; 4:7; I Thess. 3:2; I Tim. 4:6.

14. Neither Phoebe nor any one else in the primitive church held an "office" in the formal sense of the term, but she was in the same way as the men "in the service" of the church. See Zscharnack, *op. cit.*, pp. 39, 46.

15. Also Damaris, Acts 17:34, may have been of the *hetairai*.

16. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 62; Gamble, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

equivalent is *Vorsteher*. This is the only time Paul uses this noun in his writings, but he uses the verb form from which the noun is derived, *proistēmi*, in eight passages. In Romans 12:8 it is translated, "He that *ruleth*." In I Thessalonians 5:12, "Know them that *are over* you." In I Timothy 3:4, we are told that a bishop must be one that "*ruleth*" well. Verse five of the same chapter says he must know "how to *rule*." Verse twelve tells us that the deacons, too, must be "*ruling* well." I Timothy 5:17 speaks of the elders that "*rule*." "Be over," "rule!" This is the way the verb is translated. It should also mean something to us that in each of the passages quoted Paul was speaking of an official in the church, a bishop, a deacon, an elder. By giving Phoebe this title, Paul was including her with those concerning whom the brethren in I Thessalonians are told to "know them that are over you." Why was this not considered in translating Romans 16:2? Why was not Phoebe honored with an appropriate title instead of the Authorized Version's weak "succourer," or the weaker Revised Standard Version's "helper?" An improved translation of the phrase in which *prostatis* appears would be, "She was made a superintendent of many by me myself."<sup>17</sup>

We turn now to two more women mentioned in Romans 16. In his homily on this chapter Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, says that the Mary mentioned in verse six was "carrying on the race Apostles and Evangelists ran . . . for the women of those days were more spirited than lions, sharing with the Apostles their labors for the Gospel's sake."<sup>18</sup> Anticipating the question about woman teaching in the church, Chrysostom writes that it was not Paul's intention to deny this privilege to women, but to restrict it under certain circumstances. He goes on to say that if her husband has the ability to instruct her, the wife is to learn from him but "when she is the wiser, then he [Paul] does not forbid her teaching him [her husband]."<sup>19</sup>

In verse seven of Romans 16 we find a name which has caused translators and commentators many headaches. It is

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17. See Starr, *op. cit.*, pp. 266-268.

18. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, XI, 554.

19. *Ibid.*

Junia, a common woman's name,<sup>20</sup> but, because this person is called a notable apostle,<sup>21</sup> some commentators say this must be a contraction of a man's name, Junillus, or Junianus.<sup>22</sup> But, as C. H. Dodd says, "Chrysostom, preaching on this passage, saw no difficulty in a woman apostle; nor do we."<sup>23</sup> Why not take Romans 16:7 just as it is? We could then say with the golden-mouthed Chrysostom, "Indeed to be apostles at all is a great thing. . . . But to be even amongst these of note, just consider what an encomium this is! . . . Oh, how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle."<sup>24</sup>

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20. Charles Hodge, *Romans* (New York: Armstrong, 1906), p. 706; Meyer, *Romans*, p. 567; I.C.C., *Romans*, pp. 422, 423.

21. J. Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*, ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), p. 546; Meyer, *Romans*, p. 568; I.C.C., *Romans*, pp. 422, 423; *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 380.

22. Gray and Adams, *op. cit.*, V, 89.

23. C. H. Dodd, *Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), p. 239.

24. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, XI, 555.

## Chapter XI

### GOD'S WOMEN IN POST-APOSTOLIC TIMES

In post-apostolic times we find that women continued to play a major role in building the Kingdom. The jibe which the pagan Greeks used to ridicule the Christians was: Yours is a religion of women. The women are your philosophers! In defending the church against such attacks, Clement of Alexander wrote, "For the individual whose life is framed as ours is may philosophize without learning, whether barbarian, whether Greek, whether slave — whether an old man, or a boy or a woman."<sup>1</sup>

Tatian, the second-century apologist, addressed a special treatise to the Greeks defending the Christian position. After pointing out to these pagan Greeks that they had honored many women by erecting statues of them, and that almost without exception these pagan women were vile and corrupt and morally degraded, he goes on to say, "My object in referring to these women is, that you may not regard it as something strange what you find among us, and that comparing the statues which are before your eyes, you may not treat the women with scorn who among us pursue philosophy."<sup>2</sup>

Out of the Ante-Nicene years there remains but one extant reference to women as missionary-evangelists. From the Ancient Syriac Documents, in the Teaching of Addaeus the Apostle, we read,

Moreover as regards the entire estate of the men and the women, they were chaste and circumspect, and holy and pure . . . in circumspect watchfulness touching the ministry, in their sympathy toward the poor, in their visitations to the

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1. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, II, 419.

2. *Ibid.*, II, 78, 79.

sick, for their footsteps were fraught with praise from those who saw them, and their conduct was arrayed in commendation from strangers. . . . And in consequence of these things their bearing was fearless as they published their teaching to all men.<sup>3</sup>

In the late fourth and early fifth centuries it was Jerome who wrote of the outstanding Roman Christian women of his age. Among them was Marcella who by the Gospel turned Rome into another Jerusalem and was sought out as an advisor even by the priests,<sup>4</sup> and Paula, the Hebrew scholar,<sup>5</sup> to whom Jerome referred the more difficult portions of his commentary on Ezekiel.<sup>6</sup> Although he condemned the activity of the women among the Pelagians, he nevertheless acknowledged their invaluable assistance to him, and he defended his associations with them against the brethren who objected.<sup>7</sup> In the preface of his commentary on Zephaniah he wrote,

There are people, O Paula and Eustochium, who take offense at seeing your names at the beginning of my works. These people do not know that Olda prophesied when the men were mute; that while Barak was atremble, Deborah saved Israel; that Judith and Esther delivered from supreme peril the children of God. I pass over in silence Anna and Elizabeth and the other holy women of the Gospel, but humble stars when compared with the great luminary, Mary. . . . I shall add but one word more. Was it not women to whom our Lord first appeared after His resurrection? Yes, men could then blush for not having sought what the women had found.<sup>8</sup>

Among the clergy of the early days there were two orders of women, the widows and the deaconesses. By the end of the fourth century, however, the former was absorbed into the latter. And in spite of repeated efforts on the part of church

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3. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VIII, 664, 665.

4. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, VI, 256, 257.

5. *Ibid.*, 209, 210.

6. Starr, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

7. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, VI, 501, 502.

8. Mary R. Beard, *On Understanding Women* (New York: Longmans-Green, 1931), pp. 325, 326.

councils,<sup>9</sup> etc., to do away with the order of deaconesses, it continued to flourish in the Western Church until the eighth century, and in the Eastern Church until the tenth. In the ranking of the clergy, the deaconesses stood between the deacons and the sub-deacons.

In 112 A.D., just a few years after the death of John the Apostle, Pliny, the Roman proconsul of Bithynia, wrote to the emperor Trajan about the *ministrae*, the deaconesses, who were among those arrested and tried for their Christian faith. Three hundred years later the strength of this order reached its apex. At one time forty deaconesses were listed among the clergy of St. Sophia's Church in Constantinople. Many of the letters of Chrysostom were written to deaconesses of this church.

What were the duties of these women ministers? In the Apostolic Constitutions we read, "Ordain also a deaconess who is faithful and holy, for the ministrations towards women. . . . For we stand in need of a woman, a deaconess, for many necessities."<sup>10</sup> She was to minister to the women, instruct them for membership, assist in their baptism, visit them when ill, take them the Lord's Supper. It is of special interest to note that these duties were given to the deaconess and not the deacon for the same reason that Paul restricted the women in I Corinthians 11 and 14. The men were not permitted to minister to the women because it would be *aischron*, a shame, indecent, for them to do so. In connection with the anointing of a woman before baptism, the Apostolic Constitutions say the deaconess should do this, "for there is no necessity that the women should be seen by the men."<sup>11</sup> Like instructions are given for after the baptism. "After that, either thou, O bishop, or a presbyter that is under thee, shall in the solemn form name over them the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and shall dip them in the water; and let a deacon receive the man and a deaconess the woman, that so the conferring of this inviolable seal may take place with becoming decency."<sup>12</sup>

9. Starr, *op. cit.*, pp. 355, 356.

10. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 431.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

But did the deaconess function as a priest? If we mean by priest the Christian priesthood with its ministry of the Word, which is the office of every child of God, she certainly did. But if we mean that un-Christian levitical priesthood which was mistakenly introduced into the New Testament church, she did not. With the introduction of a class priesthood the ministry of the Word was replaced by the sacrifice of the mass as the center of worship. The deaconess was not given the sacerdotal power and authority to offer the bloodless sacrifice of the mass for the living and the dead. Both the Council of Laodicea in 352 A.D., and the Council of Nismes in 394 A.D., reprov'd in general the assumption of the levitical priesthood by women.<sup>13</sup> As a result of the introduction of the false doctrines of the class priesthood and the sacrifice of the mass, the church was gradually strangled in her mission endeavors and the order of deaconesses was killed.

We close our remarks on the office of the deaconess by quoting the instructions for her ordination as they are found in the Apostolic Constitutions.

Concerning a deaconess, I Bartholomew make this constitution: O bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her in the presence of the presbytery, and of the deacons and deaconesses, and shalt say: O Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and of woman, who didst replenish with the Spirit Miriam and Deborah, and Anna, and Huldah; who didst not disdain that Thy only begotten Son should be born of a woman; who also in the tabernacle of the testimony, and in the temple, didst ordain women to be keepers of Thy Holy gates,—do Thou now also look down upon this Thy servant, who is to be ordained to the office of a deaconess, and grant her Thy Holy Spirit, and cleanse her from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that she may worthily discharge the work which is committed to her to Thy glory, and the praise of Thy Christ, with whom glory and adoration be to Thee and the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen.<sup>14</sup>

13. Starr, *op. cit.*, p. 355; *Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Charles G. Herbermann (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1908), IV, 652.

14. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, VII, 492.

## Chapter XII

### WOMAN IN THE CHURCH TODAY

From time to time in the sixteen centuries since Nicea, women of outstanding ability and rare spiritual gifts have, with God's help, overcome the opposition of the church, and, in spite of the church, have become great blessings to Christianity. In the fourteenth century Catherine of Sienna was such a woman. Not only did she labor for the conversion of sinners and lead a wonderful revival, but she became an advisor to popes on reforming the church and a legate to crowned heads of Europe to establish peace. All this was done in spite of the continual persecutions to which she was subjected even by the friars of her own order and by her sisters in religion.<sup>1</sup> In her diary Catherine relates some of the alleged conversations between her and the Lord which took place when He was persuading her to accept the call to His service. In the following she opens the conversation.

"How shall it be done with me as Thou has said? . . . For my sex is an obstacle as Thou knowest, Lord . . . because it is contemptible in men's eyes." . . . But the Lord answered, "I pour out the favour of My Spirit on whom I will. There is neither male nor female, plebian or noble. All are equal before Me. . . . Therefore, My daughter, it is My will that thou appear before the public."<sup>2</sup>

A century ago a young woman of the Church of England wrote to Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster, "I would have given her [the church] my head, my hand, my heart. She would not have them. She told me to go back and do crochet in my mother's drawing room."<sup>3</sup> Fortunately, this young woman

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1. *Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, 447, 448.

2. Howard, *op. cit.*, title page.

3. Bliss, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

did not go back to crocheting. Today we honor her as an outstanding woman and child of God. Florence Nightingale, for it was she, accomplished what she did notwithstanding the opposition of her church. But, as we have observed, at the present time the question, "Should women be priests?" is being widely and warmly debated in the church which a century ago could find nothing for Florence to do.

In our first chapter it was pointed out that some women are now being ordained as pastors in the Lutheran churches in Europe, and that the Methodist and Presbyterian churches in the United States recently took action to give complete equality of status to women ministers and men ministers. Are the rest of us ready to do the same thing?

Is it still a man's world? Over twenty-million American women are now working as wage earners. This is about one-third of our total working population. And since 1954, according to the Bureau of Statistics, women have been working in all the job classifications of the Labor Department. In 1953, for the first time in history, the average American woman had more schooling than the man.<sup>4</sup> If the present rate of change in education continues, in the average home of 1980, the husband with a four-year high school diploma will have a wife with a four-year college diploma. It is quite evident that we are not living in the days of Aristotle who said, "Women and slaves are inferior—by the conditions of existence as I see them, therefore, they are inferior by the laws of nature."<sup>5</sup> Nor are we living in the days of Luther who could say, "God did not set up womankind to rule, neither in the church nor in secular offices."<sup>6</sup> In their days these gentlemen could look around them and observe the lowly position of women and the almost utter lack of education on the part of women, and conclude from this that nature had just not given the second sex what it takes for leadership and independent action. But how surprised they would be if they could come back today!

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4. *Wichita Falls Daily Times*, May 21, 1953.

5. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

6. Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, 524.

In what we are now about to say we are not thinking of only a few isolated cases, but we are sure that every Protestant communion is confronted with similar problems and is faced with the same challenge.

The church has a vast reservoir of talent in her devoted and highly qualified women. To keep this treasure in storage is poor stewardship. It is time for the church to put to use, to the fullest extent, the mission potential she has in her women.

There is no Scriptural reason why the women, who are in many cases the backbone of the congregation, should not have the right to help make decisions through voting membership. Contrary to the traditional stand of many church bodies, thousands of Sunday Schools have women as superintendents. The congregations which have selected these women should be congratulated rather than reprimanded. It would not be contrary to God's Word to help solve the parish day-school teacher problem by granting the same call to a teacher regardless of sex, and thus, for the first time in the history of the church, to offer some reasonable security to those women who have dedicated themselves to the public ministry of the Word in our schools. It would not be anti-Scriptural to permit our women missionaries and deaconesses at home and abroad to publicly teach the Word to men as well as to women and children. Many congregations have women who are better qualified to act as delegates to church conventions than the men whom congregations choose for this important Kingdom work. Why not send the best qualified members regardless of their sex? Just one example. There is a devout Christian woman, active in church affairs, whose knowledge of parliamentary law is recognized throughout the United States.<sup>7</sup> Why should she not be seated in an official capacity next to the president of Synod at church conventions ready with professional advice on matters of parliamentary procedure? And finally, why not open the theological seminaries to qualified young women as min-

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7. *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly*, "Mrs. Walter Hoppe," January 1954, pp. 17, 18.

isterial students? God alone knows how many outstanding prophetesses and ministers, how many Annas and Deborahs and Phoebes there would be devoting their full time to "making disciples of all nations."

The time has come to declare that since the public activity of a woman is no longer considered as a breach of the marriage vow and since the law of the land no longer denies to woman the right to act independently in promiscuous gatherings, women are eligible candidates for any office in the Church of Christ if, of course, they have qualifications equal to those of the male candidates for the office. In other words, it is time for Christian churches in general to support the 1955 resolution of the Presbyterians that "there is no theological ground for denying ordination to women, simply because they are women."<sup>8</sup> Emil Brunner offers excellent advice when he says that "it is absolutely impossible to put down in black and white, as a universal rule, which spheres of activity 'belong' to woman and which do not. This can only become clear through experience, and for this experience first of all the field must be thrown open."<sup>9</sup>

Moses once expressed the wish, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them."<sup>10</sup> May God speed the day when these words become true; when, as Joel foretells, our sons and daughters shall prophesy;<sup>11</sup> when, as David pictures the New Testament times, the host of women preachers will be great indeed,<sup>12</sup> and when, as Isaiah predicts, it shall be our privilege in Christian pulpits everywhere to hear a woman herald of Good Tidings lifting up her voice to tell the Lord's Zion, "Behold your God!"<sup>13</sup>

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8. *Minutes of the General Assembly*, p. 97.

9. *Op. cit.*, p. 376.

10. Num. 11:29.

11. Joel 2:28, 29.

12. Ps. 68:11.

13. Isa. 40:9.

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# WOMAN IN THE CHURCH

A RESTUDY OF WOMAN'S PLACE IN BUILDING THE KINGDOM

RUSSELL C. PROHL

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION (*in which it is shown that the status of women in the church is a question of major importance in the church today*)

THE ORDER OF CREATION AND THE ORDER OF REDEMPTION (*in which the distinction between these two orders is related to the question at hand*)

AN ANALYSIS OF THREE IMPORTANT BIBLE TEXTS (*I Corinthians 11:2-16; I Corinthians 14:34, 35; I Timothy 2:11-15*)

THE OLD TESTAMENT AUTHORITY (*in which careful consideration is given to the Old Testament passages which have been called upon to support the New Testament restrictions on the activity of women in the church*)

WHY THE LAW WAS INVOKED — THE SETTING, AND THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH (*in which is given an explanation of the law which makes the husband the head of the wife — a law which is used to support the apostolic restrictions*)

APOSTOLIC ACTION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE (*in which the author examines what the apostles did to save and strengthen the infant church and what they told the women to do*)

GOD'S WOMEN IN A MAN'S WORLD (*in which it is shown that women have as a matter of fact played a major role in building the kingdom — in Old Testament, New Testament, and Post-Apostolic times — and that today's church has a vast reservoir of talent in its devoted and highly qualified women*)

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