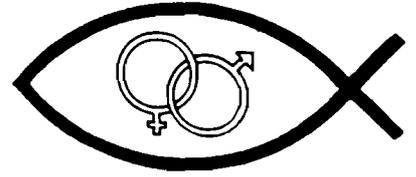


# Priscilla Papers



*"Priscilla and Aquilla instructed Apollos more perfectly in the way of the Lord"*

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## WOMEN, RACE AND APARTHEID

David M. S. Cohen

"It was interesting taking communion from a woman this morning. I've even taken communion from an African before!"

We could scarcely believe our ears. It was a highly respected, delightfully gracious, evangelical missionary society leader who was speaking. He had participated in a communion service in our church that morning (in Manly, N.S.W., Australia). At that stage, we had a team who shared in ministry in various capacities, including women who preached and assisted at communion services.

To complicate matters, we had an (unofficial) foster son from Uganda, who was in our lounge room as the opening statement was made. We felt a mixture of embarrassment, confusion, anger, and a desire for Robert (our foster son) to be spirited away.

Although we would have been intellectually aware of the links between sexism and racism, this incident radically helped to clarify our thinking. Robert had often told us how, since he had come to Australia, people used to talk to him as though he were slightly thick. (In Australia, we have a phrase "he has a couple of kangaroos in the top paddock" which is prob-

ably equivalent to the English "as thick as two planks"—and this is precisely what Robert was often made to feel).

People would speak to him slowly, as though he could scarcely understand the language (despite the fact that he is a brilliant musician and now an accomplished computer expert!), and they would raise their voices as though he were profoundly deaf. We were experiencing racism in our own society and began to see the link with the way women are often treated.

It may not be with a slowing of speech or the raising of the voice, but the implications in church, society and the home are unquestionably related.

Paul said to the church in Galatia in the often quoted 3:28, "In Christ there is no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. . . . You are all one in Christ Jesus." That morning in Sydney, the mission leader (who clearly meant no ill by his statement) reflected the fact that the barriers still exist. So long as whites set the agenda for blacks, and men do so for women, the Christian ideal remains unfulfilled. Working towards true mutuality must be our goal. God grant that our organization, Men, Women, and God (and other organizations with a similar heartbeat, like Christians for Biblical Equality), can make a strategic contribution to that end.

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