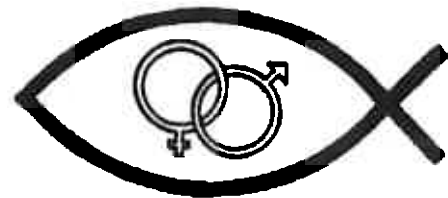


Priscilla Papers



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

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DIABOLIC DIRECTIVES ON THE IMPENDING FEMININE ADVANCE

Austin H. Stouffer
(With apologies to C.S. Lewis)

The writer wishes to acknowledge that the style of writing has been inspired by C.S. Lewis' Screwtape Letters¹ but does not suggest that the late great author would necessarily embrace the theology set forth.

URGENT MEMO TO ALL SATANIC SUBJECTS: IMMEDIATE ATTENTION REQUIRED!!

My Dear Cohorts:

The urgency of the occasion dictates the unprecedented action on my part of corresponding personally with all of you. Suffice it to say I would not interrupt your fiendish schedules were the matter not of utmost importance. I am deeply distressed with a new tactic the Enemy seems to be employing. Surely each one of you has admired my optimism through the centuries concerning our eventual overthrow of the Righteous. Indeed, as one reviews the rampant lapse in moral fiber throughout all the world in just the last earthlings' generation, we all have cause for gleeful gloating!

Yet, I observe a cloud imperceptibly gathering that, when full-formed, may well pour out irreparable havoc on our devilish schemes. I speak of none other than the rapid escalation of the female sex into significant positions of authority in the Enemy's army. With alarming rapidity troop after troop of His finest are moving to permit women to be what they call "Elders" and even commissioning them to the rank of "Reverend!"

Listen and tremble! If membership in the Enemy's full-time ranks will ever fully open to women, in no time His detestable band of female faithfuls could double or even triple His force of determined, qualified teachers, elders and pastors. One has visions of "revival" for their side of proportions too staggering to contemplate. Denizens of the deep, I am sounding the alarm for us to take up arms with deadly zeal and speedily repel this potentially impenetrable force.

For some of you, the memory of my masterful work in Eden has grown faint. Pity ... it was indeed my finest hour! Let me recapitulate the highlights. My decision to deceive only the woman was brilliant. I still can see her standing there — disgustingly innocent, naive, pristine. Seeing such absence of malice reminded me why I so disliked her Maker. Yet, carefully garbed as I was in the beautiful body of one of His nicer creations (serpents were so magnificent then...) her unsuspecting and unsullied mind became a sure target for deception.

Don't misunderstand me; a talent lesser than mine easily might have failed, for she asked thoughtful, intelligent questions. But you may recall that the Enemy's command to abstain from that most desirous of trees came to Eve not from her Maker, but from her mate. Frankly, I've always relished that as a weakness in His plan, not to have roundly briefed them both as to that fearful foliage. Hence, my choice of Eve to deceive. Her knowledge of the facts seemed

Dr. Austin H. Stouffer is ordained with the Evangelical Free Church of Canada and maintains a practice as a Marriage and Family Therapist in Langley, British Columbia, Canada.

sparse, not having heard them gravely uttered by her Creator, but perhaps casually by her companion. One sometimes wonders whether the male gender's inability to communicate is a created condition...

But, my worthies, do you see the significance of my masterful act? Oh, I could have approached them together and *obviously* he would have yielded to *me*. He yielded to *her*, didn't he? How could he have possibly withstood the master deceiver?² But, you see, had they both identically shared this diabolic deed, neither could have blamed the other.

Oh, what a stroke of genius! For the rest of history this selfish sinner would condemn his other half for causing him to sin, without me having to point one deceptive finger at him. Now the stage would be set for the physically stronger half forcefully to forever remind his physically weaker equal of causing his downfall. So together they have become ours. Robbed of innocence, pure love and the Enemy's impeccable attributes, they are easily filled with craftiness, deception and greed.

What a glorious era it was wherein the beast-half forced the beauty-half to be his slave. It now fell to me merely to prey on man's vanity and perpetuate the myth that woman was, and women are, to blame. The Jewish Talmud, early philosophers, even pagan writers shouted the same lie: Women are inherently defective, less than the Enemy's image, somewhere below kine and slightly above swine — never let them instruct again, for they did once and all is ruined!³

Admittedly, there were some fearful decades during that hideous thirty-three year visitation of Enemy Number Two (or are They really both Number One?). Had He stayed much longer, pleasantly accepting prostitutes as equals to royalty, our cause might have fully unraveled. It annoys me to remember how He used women so prominently to observe and announce His return to them after His wretched visit to us. Frankly, His obvious penchant to gender equality has cost us dearly. Fortunately for us, the paternal societies to which He came required an all-male team of apostles, a fact we must continue to market mercilessly.

Then there was that dangerous Jew from Tarsus whose prolific contribution to the Enemy's Manual has done us as much damage as the Enemy's Son. The nerve of this half-blind hunchback to suggest that women and men are equal both in marriage and in the church! For him to defy all we had tried to accomplish for thousands of years and in one fell swoop declare Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female *all equal!* To think of inviting women to sit in the assembly, pray, prophesy — and — and *command that they be taught!*⁴ And then his greatest stroke of genius: to redefine "headship;" to wrench from its age-old meaning all hint of domination and oppression and expect men to *love* and *serve* and — yes, even *die* for the very one who caused their condemnation! I slept little those nights and imagined centuries of male dominance slipping away and the ushering in of some putrid form of mushy, equal, *agape* love among the Enemy's troops, not unlike what He originally had intended.

One small comfort remained: All of "fallen" humanity dies after three score years or so. And that persistent fellow Paul died none to soon, leaving us merely with his writings. Had he lived, I have no doubt he would have fleshed out his ridiculous ideologies and brought about full-scale equality. But once free of his inimitable personality, the work of his pen was easier to quell.

I set about to find learned men (philosophers, theologians, early church fathers) to sufficiently pepper their writings with quotable criticisms of women. Fully persuaded the Manual taught these criticisms, they unwittingly advanced our cause. Then Augustine, Luther, Calvin and scores of others aided us immeasurably by perpetuating a teaching so naturally palatable to the male gender.

Of course, many such slanted statements on women worked equally well for slavery — another glorious man-made institution which has served our cause well until recently. But who would have thought that the Other Side would have won that round through the efforts of a lanky, black-bearded American President — even in the face of much opposition from the Enemy's troops! For it was they who had convinced themselves of the "Divine Order of Slavery" or some such thing. I recall one of their most respected clergy vociferously arguing that efforts to overthrow slavery were "assaults of mistaken philanthropy, in union with infidelity, fanaticism and political expediency."⁵ But the public tide surged forward, and His officers soon reevaluated their theological moorings, found them sorely wanting, and *reinterpreted* the Manual.

Hence, my dire concern today. Through no thanks to His troops, *society* has decided that it will no longer tolerate inequity shown to any group. Oh, I envision such a philosophy bringing us many small victories, for soon every rag-tag band of the most perverted will be labeled a "minority group" and eligible for grants and protection governments can ill afford to give. But mounting societal pressure for women's equality may yet bring the Old Boys' Club to their knees. While one could only hope that club would tenaciously hold to their antiquated beliefs regardless of persecution, yet

their financial existence depends on the sanction and tax breaks of a society which labels them "chauvinistic bigots." Poor souls! Again, they will blushing rewrite the interpretations of their Manual. And ironically, as with slavery, the rewrite will be right.

Lords of Iniquity, our future has never been more perilous. Women *must* not be commissioned into His army. Oh, emancipation of slaves has not significantly increased the Enemy's fighting force — in fact many of those downtrodden beings clung closer to their Redeemer in past affliction than in present affluence. But a world-wide force of fully commissioned, educated, Spirit-filled women may easily spell ultimate doom to our glorious forces of evil!

Enough preamble. Read carefully now as I personally instruct you in how to keep the Enemy's followers true to their man-made traditions and blind to the truth. Let me explain several tried and true tactics that require your full proficiency if we are ever to maintain dominance over this planet.

First and foremost, we must keep emphasizing what traditional theologians call the "Created Order." At all cost, keep them convinced that Adam's direct creation from dust shows ownership and superiority over Eve, who merely came from Adam's rib. Impress on them the logic of that thought; woman is merely an *appendage* to serve man. Never once let them see the equal dust to which they both returned! This creation teaching can be neatly augmented by the hunchback's letter to the Corinthian followers where he says woman came *from* man and is *for* man. Do anything to distract them from Paul's correction of their historic bias where he says that in their "Lord" woman is no longer independent of man nor man of woman.⁶ And by all means, don't let it cross their minds that the Enemy (too generously, I think) gave both genders an equal mandate to rule this planet before they chose my rule!⁷

A close cousin to the "Created Order" fallacy, and one of equal success up to now, revolves around the matter of authority. The longer we can keep the Old Boys' Club mentality around the better (it has worked well in service clubs for years). Keep them convinced that all of their officers (elders, presbyters, clergy) *must* be male. It helps to remind them that many of the significant leaders on their side have been male.

Authority is such an easy doctrine to expound, for it quite naturally caters to male pride. As "head of his house," each little Napoleon stands in daily danger of wanting more and more power until he is like his Maker (a concept that interested me greatly at one time...).

As pride grows, men will redefine legitimate male uniqueness as superiority and consequently minimize female attributes as inferior. Oh yes, there is great advantage in accentuating gender differences. Encourage their rugged, bossy, *macho* cravings in everything from after-shaves to muscle cars to combat rifles. At the other end, let tears, empathy, compassion, intuition and relationships continue to be the sole domain, even attractiveness of, the "weaker" sex. With very little coaching and only imagined justification from their Manual, both sides will stay convinced that coolness, objectivity and brute force are needed for leadership and, therefore only possessed by the male. If all goes well, the fools will never see the abundant so-called feminine qualities in the Enemy's Son — oh, how it galls me to recall how tender and compassionate He could be!

Indeed, among **Christian** men these days, there is a growing trend toward relationships, "twelve-step programs" and the like. How embarrassing to see males be vulnerable, accountable, admitting their dysfunctionality in front of an entire group! Some of them are even finding pleasure in staying home and *enjoying* an evening with their own children while Mother is out. This blurring of "roles" can only damage our carefully honed image of the aloof, authoritative husband-father who merely condescends to occasionally baby-sit. Our world is in deep trouble.

Now let me raise a further delightful twist to "male leadership." With very little coaxing on our part, any sincere young husband desirous of being a firm but loving "head" can easily be made to act less like them and more like us. All it may take is a teething baby, a sexually unyielding wife, a layoff at the office, or a fight with the in-laws, and those attributes which put him in charge will make him a monster. Psychological or physical abuse of wife or child can easily follow as his power becomes corrupted. Similarly, a wife who initially chose to "joyfully submit" can be pushed through enough bumps of marriage so that she sees herself as a helpless slave. Whether she then divorces or stoically accepts her fate, our cause has once again benefited.

Such teaching over the years has developed an interesting side effect. Women have come to believe they have no mechanical prowess or objectivity, but must rely on their men in these areas. So they have fallen upon manipulation to get their way, undermining male authority with the promise of demurely meeting every male desire, from office to kitchen

to bedroom. So the "head" stays convinced God has endowed him to lead while his cold objectivity lacks the intuition to see that the neck is forever turning the head!

Another amusing but effective way to accentuate male importance is to meticulously divide meetings of each denomination's Annual General Conference, Convocation, Synod, or General Assembly into male sections and female sections. Ensure that at least one long hot sunny day be lost to "Ladies' Society" meetings wherein the fairer sex don their finery and elect each other to committees of no consequence to our cause — just be sure that everyone either gets a position or a plaque for something. For weeks ahead, create an aura of mystery about the speaker, but be sure her topic turns out to be as harmless as "Embroidering Communion Tablecloths" or "Making Yourself Attractive to your Man." Meanwhile "their men" will receive solid spiritual food from a renowned imported exegete. Now and then one of the stronger weaker vessels may momentarily wish to sample the male fare, but propriety and tradition will ultimately keep her in her place. Hence, both will return from the conference with exuberant reports of how they were singularly blessed.

Oh yes, I almost omitted one of the greatest weapons in your arsenal: that of Original Language Debates. Take that delightfully simple Greek word *kephale*. Oh the satisfaction it has brought me to see His best scholars waste months, years, lifetimes in the relentless pursuit of early usages of that word to support their cause. Their obsession to know what "man as head" means has kept both sexes from letting the Enemy's Son be *their* head! Exquisite joy! Keep them bickering over such minutiae as to whether prophecy is inferior to preaching, what the "early traditions" really are, can the extant manuscripts be trusted — and, oh yes, the head-covering and "because of the angels" passage.⁸ How delightful to watch their world embrace us at an unprecedented rate while their best "authoritative preachers" use all their time to defend their male turf! It all reminds me of the Most Venerable Screwtape's sage advice to Wormwood some years ago: "Leave *them* to discuss whether 'Love,' or patriotism, or celibacy, or candles on altars, or teetotalism, or education, are 'good' or 'bad.' Can't you see, there's no answer."⁹

Of great consternation to me these days is the unexpected increase of women in seminaries — those pesky institutions which serve as boot camp apprenticeships for the Enemy's full-time Army. True, we have successfully disarmed the firepower of most of these schools so that they are little more than a religious presence with curricula so helpless that their graduates, male or female, pose no real threat to us. But now the so-called "evangelical" seminaries are accepting women — keen, intelligent, committed students bent on dragging earthlings out of our darkness into His despicable light.

Our strongest hope is to fall back on the "authoritative preaching" tactic. Oh, let women be employed as teachers of children and other women, as leaders of day care centers, as "parish workers." Most of them still have vestiges of guilt about even being in the full-time Army, so will never aspire to the higher ranks reserved for males. You will notice much similarity between this and how we have abused missionary women for decades.

For those churches who are progressive enough to hire a female pulpit pastor, it would be wise to steer a certain type their way. I'm thinking of the striking, well-dressed dramatic type who knows how to coordinate dress and color to accentuate her attributes. Better yet if she be a shallow thinker who will use the pulpit to spin doctrinally true but harmless homilies with just the right amount of wholesome innocence and seeming flirtatiousness. In no time wives will hate her, men will lust after her, traditional leadership will say "I told you so" and the era of authoritative female preaching in that church will abruptly end!

Less superficially attractive women, or those few who blend beauty with modesty and discretion, are of much greater concern, especially if they are also deeply spiritual and forceful exegetes of His Manual (and many are!). Here you must unearth some tangential malady and magnify it: a lisp, perhaps, or a physical deformity, or some annoying but harmless habit of throat-clearing — the best is to have her young child keep toddling up to the pulpit. Whereas the faithful have dutifully endured years of tepid ramblings from the previous male shepherd under the now tattered rubric "Thou shalt not touch the Lord's anointed!", the slightest blemish in the shepherdess will soon have her looking for other sheepfolds.

Likely as not, those sheepfolds will be less evangelical. It falls to our benefit that many of these gifted, brilliant women finally despair of the undue criticism railed against them from traditionalists. Yet, convinced that they can, want to and even are called to lead and preach, they may compromise their theological tenets and brokenly seek the employ of some waffling liturgical group, New Age gathering, or cult. It matters not; once again, we score!

My epistle grows too lengthy. Comrades, I trust I have inspired you to new levels of service. Try not to yield to depression as you contemplate the worst of scenarios. Should the Enemy's side ever attempt to initiate gender equality,

there may yet be a heretofore unmentioned blessing for us. Remember that these same bright, gifted women are yet dual-natured creatures of what they call "the Fall." We can only hope that the headiness of equality may stir in them a lust for retributive dominance over those who have so long oppressed them. Who knows but that we may yet enjoy centuries of *female* authority! Swings of the pendulum are common among earthlings, both in political and religious arenas.

Yet one day the inevitable will surely happen. You too should shudder to think of the accuracy of that wretched Manual and its Author. His sons *and daughters* will prophesy before that final holocaust. Leave me now to reflect on the past triumph of wounding that most perfect of heels. The clouds gather, and ultimately we all shall feel the inevitable crush of her offspring....¹⁰

In the meantime, I remain

Your Affectionate Father Below

Endnotes

¹ C.S. Lewis, Screwtape Letters (New York: MacMillan Co., 1961)

² The writer is suggesting a possible interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12 (Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived...) as meaning that the Deceiver chose to tempt Eve, perhaps because her "lesser knowledge" made her an easier target. Ironically, Adam still chose to sin, even though he was commanded directly by God not to eat of the tree and did not have to face the Deceiver personally as Eve did. This would be in agreement with Scriptures suggesting greater culpability on Adam's part (1 Corinthians 15:22).

³ Leading church father St. John Chrysostom (345?-407) is quoted as saying, "The woman taught once and ruined all. On this account ... let her not teach. ...The whole female race transgressed.... Let her not, however grieve. God hath given her no small consolation, that of childbearing..." From Works of Chrysostom, Homilies on Timothy, in Select Library of Nicene Fathers, ed. by P. Schaff (NY 1889). This and many other amazing quotations have been collected by J. O'Faolain and L. Martines in Not In God's Image (NY: Harper and Row, 1973).

⁴ That women are commanded to teach finds its basis in 1 Timothy 2:11, usually translated "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission" (NIV). However, it should be noted that the Greek *manthaneto* ("should learn") is present active imperative, and could legitimately be translated "I command that women learn/be taught." In the verse following ("I do not permit a woman to teach...") one could also translate this present active indicative as "I am *presently* not permitting women to teach" — that is, until they have been taught. Then they may teach.

⁵ Over 100 years ago, the Rev. B.T. Roberts wrote a delightful little book called Ordaining Women (Rochester, NY: Earnest Christian Publishing House, 1891) in which he quotes an author from the 1860's. The entire passage is very contempo-

rary and appropriate to today's discussions, and deserves to be quoted in full. "About thirty years ago the Right Rev. John Henry Hopkins, D.D., LL.L., one of the learned men of his day, and the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of the diocese of Vermont, wrote and published a book in which he endeavored to prove that human slavery, as it then existed in these United States, was supported by 'the authority of the Bible, the writings of the Fathers, the decrees of Councils, the concurrent judgment of Protestant divines, and the Constitution.' The efforts to overthrow slavery he characterized as the 'assaults of mistaken philanthropy, in union with infidelity, fanaticism, and political expediency.'" One can only ponder how much of the traditionalists' arguments of today are fueled by similar factors.

⁶ Many traditionalists seem to relish quoting 1 Corinthians 11:8, 9: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." But little is made of Paul's apparent restatement of this probable Jewish interpretation: in the Lord, neither are now dependent on or independent of the other (v. 11) "...for as woman came from men (true) so also man is born of woman (also true)." The unnecessary inclusion of the definite articles in Greek in this ninth verse makes the inference even stronger: *the* woman (Eve) came from *the* man (Adam), but now *the* man (Christ) is born of *the* woman (Mary).

⁷ Genesis 1:28. It seems more than accidental that the mandate to rule all things was given jointly to Adam and Eve.

⁸ The current outstanding case in point would have to be J. Piper and W. Grudem's traditionalist tome, Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1991). One can only speculate how fearful the "Father Below" would be if these 566 pages of painstaking research encouraged full, equal ministry for women!

⁹ C.S. Lewis, Screwtape Letters, p. 98.

¹⁰ A subtle reference to the prophetic properties of Genesis 3:15.

THE SONG OF DEBORAH

WOMEN LEADERS IN JUDGES 4 & 5

Arthur H. Lewis

The Old Testament authors did not hesitate to show the prominent role of women in the history of Israel. Within the narratives of the Hebrew patriarchs, it is clear that the people honored the deeds of Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel. Miriam, the sister of Moses, was esteemed in spite of her untimely rebuke of her brother (Num. 12). Even the Canaanite women like Rahab and Tamar, along with Ruth, the Moabitess, were retained in the historical records of the nation.

The best example, however, of a woman in leadership over Israel is Deborah, one of the judges, all of whom were responsible for keeping the Promised Land free of foreign domination. Judges 4 is the prose account of Israel's victory over the Canaanites from Hazor. Judges 5 is the "Song of Deborah" which tells the same story in poetic form. In these biblical accounts of Deborah's life and exploits, two other women play leading roles: 1) Jael, who killed Sisera, the enemy general, and 2) Sisera's mother, waiting at home for her son to return.

DEBORAH

This remarkable woman who led the Israelite nation in the thirteenth century BCE, during times of war, had a name meaning "honeybee." She is listed with the six most outstanding leaders in the book of Judges, when measured by the amount of narrative and detail given for each one. The Hebrew term for judges is *shophetim*, rarely found as a noun, but often used as a verb for the act of leading or ruling. Judges 4:4 reads "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time." But the verb is *shophet* and could be translated "judging Israel." The Ras Shamra (Ugaritic) tablets have a parallel term that clearly means "to rule." The judges were, therefore, political officials in charge of the national well-being, and were often military heroes as well.

A graduate of Wheaton College (B.A.) and Brandeis University (Ph.D.), Arthur H. Lewis is professor emeritus of Old Testament Studies at Bethel College and a past national president of the Evangelical Theological Society. Specializing in Hebrew, Akkadian, and Ugaritic, he was a translator for the Old Testament division of the New International Version of the Bible and he has contributed many articles to scholarly journals.

Deborah was also known to have the prophetic gift, commonly reserved for men in Israel. She could speak for God and convey to the people the word and will of God. The men of Israel did not know what God wanted them to do, until Deborah told them! Because she was known to be a true prophet, the people came to her with their disputes and legal complaints. Of all the judges, only Deborah is pictured in the actual work of jurisprudence. "She held court under the palm of Deborah ... and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided" (4:5).

Deborah had not always exercised these duties of high authority over the tribes of Israel. She reminds us in her song that the LORD had raised her up from being "a mother in Israel" (5:7). This should not surprise us. In this century too there have been a number of prominent and capable world leaders such as Golda Meier, Indira Nehru and Margaret Thatcher, all of whom had been mothers before they entered into political life, and — like Deborah — could understand the fears and feelings of the people in both times of war and peace.

Most Old Testament scholars would credit Deborah with the authorship of Judges 5, recognized as one of the most brilliant and exacting examples of early Hebrew poetry. This places her among the inspired authors of the sacred Word of God. Her skill with the language, as displayed in this poetic version of the defeat of the Canaanites from the north, is widely admired and certainly worthy of praise.

Deborah agreed to accompany Barak, captain of the Israelite troops, to the battlefield which was west of Mount Tabor in the valley of the Kishon River and on the plain of Esdraelon. The foot soldiers from the tribes could not hope to defeat Sisera's 900 chariots of iron, but the LORD entered the conflict with torrents of rain and hailstones. "From the heavens the stars fought" (5:20), and "the river Kishon swept them away" (v. 21). When the Canaanites saw their chariots mired in water and mud, they fled on foot and the battle was won, as Deborah had predicted.

JAEL

The story is not yet over, for the enemy general, Sisera, was still alive and running away in the opposite direction.

There would be no victory for Barak until Sisera was found and punished with death. We read that "he fled on foot to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber, the Kenite" (4:17). Most Kenites were down in the land of Median or in the Sinai, related to Jethro and the family of Zipporah, Moses' first wife. But the family of Heber had migrated northward and settled in Galilee, near Kadesh.

When Jael (a Hebrew name meaning "mountain goat") saw Sisera approaching, she must have recognized him, because she cleverly made a plan to end his life. First she made him feel welcome and safe in her tent, giving him milk to drink. After making him comfortable in a bed on the floor, she promised to watch over him. She then came in with a tent pin and hammer and pinned him to the ground, causing his death. Finally, she showed Barak what she had done, thus fulfilling Deborah's prophecy that a woman would rob him of the victory (4:9).

Jael was honored for years by the women of Israel for her resourcefulness and courage, and perhaps served as a model for women who entered into warfare beside their husbands. Many documents from the Near East tell us that there were women on the battlefields (viz. Deut. 21:10-14). Although it is assumed that they are there either to bring supplies, or to serve as prostitutes, some may have engaged in armed conflict and combat in support of the men of their tribe.

THE QUEEN MOTHER

Deborah is not content to close her song with the account of the battle and defeat of the Canaanites. She adds a few lines to taunt and shame the mother of Sisera, whom she pictures looking anxiously out of the palace window, waiting for the son who will never return. Interestingly, not the enemy general's wife but his mother is chosen for this scene of pathos and grief. She asks her servants to explain why "his chariot is so long in coming," then, impatient with their answers, she tells herself all the probable causes for his delay, not knowing that he has been killed.

In every clan of the East there is a "great lady," one of the grandmothers who is responsible for sustaining the members of the clan and for directing the life of the family. Bathsheba played this role to make sure that Solomon, her son, was crowned king after David (1 Kings 1:1-21). Another example is that of Maacah, a "queen mother" removed from her position by Asa for her idolatry (1 Kings 15:11-13). This shows that the men (elders) did not have all the power in ancient Israel, but that certain women also exercised authority over their respective homes as well.

CONCLUSION

Deborah was an exceptional woman. She is also the exception that kills the rule. If at one time God called a gifted woman to lead his people, then God can do it again. The rule of male domination over the offices of the church has been broken. Women, like Deborah, with Spirit-given gifts for pastoral work or teaching, cannot, on biblical grounds, be denied appointment to posts of leadership of God's people.

OUR FOREMOTHERS: KAPIOLANI

Jo Ellen Heil

Have you ever met someone who quietly yet vividly made an impact on you? Let me introduce you to Kapiolani of Hawaii (??-1841). High chief, breaker of taboos, Christian champion, this heroic woman ruled both politically and spiritually. Her courage was internationally acclaimed though her greatest battle was private.

In December 1824, accompanied by frightened attendants, Kapiolani hiked nearly 100 miles to the Kilauea volcano. Ignoring the pleas of her husband and the priestess of Pele, she descended fifty feet into the boiling lake of lava. Determined to strengthen Christianity and break the volcano goddess' hold upon her people, she defiantly ate sacred ohelo berries, then threw the stones into the steaming pit, announcing that "I do not fear Pele." She returned home to Kona unharmed.

Afterward, Kapiolani and American missionary Laura Fish Judd broke long-held sexual taboos by being the first women to enter the sacred heiau (City of Refuge). As a result, the temple and fence of wooden idols were demolished and the corpses buried. Her response to these confrontations of deep religious/cultural traditions was: "If I am destroyed, you may all believe in Pele; if I am not destroyed, you must turn to the only true God."

Kapiolani's zealous faith also strengthened her nearly two decades later in her greatest battle against a private enemy - cancer. This courageous Hawaiian sister underwent a complete mastectomy without anesthetic. As her right breast was cut out and removed, Dr. Judd and friends testified of her unbelievable dignity throughout the ordeal. Kapiolani turned to "the only true God" and found courage to win her battles. So may we.

Jo Ellen Heil writes and teaches on subjects relating to women's history.

FROM MY POINT OF VIEW:

MARY'S STORY: GIFT AND CHOICE

AFTER THE AMEN, ALLELUJAH, THEN WHAT?

Evelyn Bence

Several years ago I got an idea for a biblical novel; Placing myself in the world of Mary the mother of Jesus', I would write in her voice — a diary spanning thirty years and titled *Mary's Journal*.

Once my editor gave the go-ahead, I started at the beginning of the Gospel story. I filled a page, then two, giving Mary's account of the angel's announcement: "Rejoice. Don't be afraid. You are favored. You will have a son ... the Son of the Most High." And Mary's quick response to the gift she'd been offered: "I am the Lord's servant. Let it be as He says." *Amen*.

By page four of *Mary's Journal*, she had traveled south and been welcomed by Aunt Elizabeth who had confirmed the angel's blessing. Mary could not contain her joy: "My soul praises the Lord. My spirit rejoices in my Savior, who has seen the willing heart of His servant...." *Allelujah*.

I paused in my writing. "Yes, Lord, and I thank You — for planting this book idea in my mind. For giving me a willing heart."

But at this point on page six of the manuscript I had a hard time finding words. What was next? I had a vague vision of, and even a contract for, a one hundred eighty-page book. In five pages I had covered the great *amen* — *so be it* and the great *allelujah* that have traditionally defined Mary's life of faith. Now what?

Now it was time to face the fact that in one significant aspect Mary's life was amazingly similar to mine. She, the most favored of all women, living in primitive Palestine, and I, an "ordinary" twentieth-century believer starting out on a "mission," shared common ground. We had been graced with the faith to say "yes" to a seed-gift. Now we had to rise to the challenge by making the hard daily choices required if the entrusted gift was to grow to full maturity in our care.

The Gift Becomes the Work

The angel had given Mary precious few details. She had the promise that her son would grow up to be a king who

would rule Jacob's house, but in the meantime what did she do when she got up the next morning?

I recently read an old German saying, "The gift becomes the work." I wanted to protest: *no, unfair*. Then I thought of the Tinkertoys I got for Christmas as a young child. "Just what I'd wanted. Thank you, Mom and Dad." After receiving the gift, I could have spent Christmas afternoon admiring them, but as soon as we'd eaten the turkey dinner, the work began. My brother and I read the directions, fit together sticks and spools — building a windmill that actually spun.

The German paradox mirrors the truth of Paul's writings. While in Ephesians 2:8 he makes it clear that salvation is a gift of God, in Philippians 2:12 he tells Christians to "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." Yes, in a mysterious way, God's gift to us becomes our work for Him, even as He works in us.

In his book *Laugh Again*, Charles Swindoll illustrates the work involved in the nurturing and maturing of a seed-gift. "When a musician has a fine composition placed before her, that music is not the musician's masterpiece; it is the composer's gift to the musician. But it then becomes the task of the musician to work it out, to give it sound and expression and beauty as she applies her skills to the composition. When she does, the composition reaches its completed purpose and thrills the hearts of her listeners."

An aspiring writer asked me for advice. He had a great idea for a play, but he just hadn't been able to get anything down on paper. "Do you think it would be helpful if I got a group of people together to flesh out the idea?"

I thought a second before I answered: "Well, yes — maybe. It might give you some clarity. But ultimately a committee isn't going to write your play. Someday you'll have to sit down and stare at an empty sheet of paper or an empty computer screen and fill it with words." Like the Rich Young Ruler, this man's face fell. It wasn't what he wanted to hear. He wanted a gift. He was willing to organize a support group but the gift itself would require a personal struggle he didn't want to face.

*Evelyn Bence is a writer and editor. In this article, the material in italics is taken from her recent book, *Mary's Journal: A Mother's Story* (Zondervan, 1992), and is used by permission.*

But think. The gift of a child — even the unique child Jesus — required of Mary thirty years of motherly chores: serving meals, weaving cloth, laundering swaddling rags and then tunics, keeping a fit house.

Waiting Is Part of the Work

Mary's tangible actions were preceded by and accompanied by an internal work that was no less difficult for her. Even in an uncomplicated pregnancy the wait is hard; the physical and emotional weight can be overwhelming. The Hasidic Jews have a saying: "When you discover a new way of serving the Lord, carry it around for nine months, under your heart."

I grew up in the home of a gardener who took great pride in the perfectly ripe tomatoes served at our table. The pale force-ripened fruits I now see in the grocery store may be shaped like tomatoes, but they do not satisfy my sensory expectations — color, texture, and taste — of the real thing. Similarly, your seeking God's direction and God working in your spirit, that quiet, solitary work that brings seed-gifts to maturity, cannot be rushed.

After Mary's *amen* and *allelujah*, she faced nine months of waiting before she heard the first lusty cries of an infant. I imagine some of those months as days and nights of confusion, perplexity, even pleadings that an angel might return and fill in missing details.

All of a sudden my future is a haze. What was I thinking? A real baby delivered in real time will cause real complications.... Elizabeth may believe my story — because she's received a miracle of her own. But who else is going to believe it?

Has a day ever passed that I have not prayed — that my womb would be blessed to bear the anointed one? Now my eyes, my spirit, my body — all agree that I have been favored of all women.

Yet in these secret pages and before the Name I admit that this, a wombed child claimed by no man, is not the answer I had in mind.

God of favor grant me favor with Joseph. Prepare his ears and his heart as You did mine ... and Elizabeth's.

Will a child conceived of heaven be born of earth — in blood and pain? Or might I be spared? The messenger promised a son, nothing more about tra-

vail or its absence. If I think of the worst scenario, he did not say that I would live to know the joy of counting fingers and toes.

So now I must wait — and pray that I am delivered from the depths of Eve's curse.

But what do I have to give this child?

When I first asked myself the question my mind went blank. There will always be a demand for Joseph's carpentry. I expect there'll always be food on our table. But aside from the bare essentials, what do I have to give this child?

I'll start a list and add to it as I think of things. What was it that my mother gave me? I can give him:

my womb

my arms

my years

my example

my laughter

my song

That's it, I'll give him my song.

The Birth is Just the Beginning of the Active Work

Luke poetically records the nativity account, "The days were accomplished that she should be delivered."

A friend recently told me that the hardest week of his marriage immediately followed the birth of their first child. The "big event" for which they'd been waiting, taking classes, reading books, had turned out to be the invasion of a squirming creature that didn't speak English, dirtied diapers, and cried day and night. The birth was just the beginning of their larger mission — to raise this child to adulthood.

His story took me back twenty years. As an attendant in a wedding party, I accompanied the bride as she left the reception to change into street clothes and steal away with her true love. With the break up of the party, she lamented, "I can't believe it's over," as if the wedding itself — the gift of a ring and a husband — were the end of the story, not the first milestone and most public aspect of the day-in-day-out venture. (I must admit the marriage was not long-lived.)

I woke this morning from a dream: washing rags. What makes the duties of a day echo loud through a night?

This holy one grows up here in Nazareth studying with our rabbis of no acclaim, eating bread kneaded by my palm, learning how to earn an honest living — joining corners of hewn wood.

King David grew up in a sheepfield, as did prophet Amos. The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and even Moses felt unprepared and were, except for the anointing of the Spirit. All this I know and yet I wonder still: Are we doing enough? Should we send him away to school, as the rabbi advises?

I can ask the question here in these private papers, but actual good-byes ... that I am not ready to face.

Jesus, thirteen, beardless, yet counted among the bearded men reading, praying, teaching at the synagogue. He read on the Sabbath and gave his commentary, quite extraordinary for a youth.

But I'm his mother, so maybe this warrants an outside opinion.

To send him to Jerusalem or not to send him? We make no decision and yet no decision is itself a decision.

Joseph wonders why God seems so silent in recent years. Will we be given no more clear instruction?

Amazed by Grace

Flannery O'Connor once wrote, "The greatest gift of the writer is patience." For one long winter (I call it "Mary's winter") I made a conscious choice every morning — to write and rewrite as much as a work-day would allow. Some days that meant paragraphs. On better days it meant pages.

I actively studied Scripture and researched early Jewish culture, but then I also spent hours waiting for words, searching for subjects, praying for predicates, sweating out sentences (write a sentence; delete it; think a while; write half a sentence; delete half of it...). Getting one sentence down made way for another, until I had not only filled the requisite number of pages, but I had finished the story I had set out to write.

The time also came for Mary when her mission was complete. Returning home to Nazareth after witnessing Jesus' first miracle at a marriage in the village of Cana, Mary let go of her son — as much as a mother ever lets go. Realizing her work was finished — as much as the work of a mother can be complete if a son or daughter still breathes — she knew she'd been favored to nurture a seed-gift she would never fully comprehend.

And now at the end of my winter of waiting and work, it was time for me to let go. After I had finished my manuscript, I set it aside a few days until I was ready. Ready to sit down with a pot of coffee and read, start to finish. Ready to make some subjective judgment as to whether or not my months of work "held together."

At the time I had no reasoned explanation for what happened when I got to the last word of the last page. I sobbed, overcome with what I later defined as amazing grace. All those words lined up in a row were an illustration of the mystery of Philippians 2:12: God's gift to me had become my work for Him, as His Spirit worked through me.

Fanning Your Gift Into Flame

God gives all His children gifts and asks that we use them, not simply admire them. Paul wrote to young Timothy: "I remind you to fan into a flame the gift that God gave you."

And Paul's very next verse to Timothy is still about God's gift, saying that it is not "a spirit of timidity or fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of a sound mind."

So God says to us: "Here's a gift. Now you have a choice whether or not you will fan it into a bright, warm flame."

God's gift. Our choice: Whether we are in a season marked by waiting, birthing, working, or letting go, will we accept God's gift and use it in the spirit God has given us?

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CBE is made up of individual members and local chapters of women and men who work together to promote biblical equality in their own areas and in their own churches and organizations.

Our mission is to make known the biblical basis for freedom in Christ. We seek to advance the cause of Christ and the work of the gospel by encouraging full development of the gifts and talents of all Christians in the service of God. We seek to educate Christians regarding the Bible's message about the equality of men and women of all races, ages, and economic classes in church, home, and society. We desire to reach out in a healing ministry to those who come from differing backgrounds and behavior patterns.

Membership is open to anyone who supports the Statement of Faith and the mission of the organization. Members receive *Priscilla Papers*, CBE's quarterly journal, and have access to all resources available from the national office which include: the speakers' bureau; audio and video cassettes of significant speeches on the subject of equality; discounts on books and reprints purchased from the Book Service; and assistance in beginning a local or regional chapter of CBE.

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Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.

We believe in the unity and trinity of God, equally existing as three equal persons.

We believe in the full deity and full humanity of Jesus Christ.

We believe in the sinfulness of all persons. One result of sin is shattered relationships with God, others, and self.

We believe that eternal salvation and restored relationships are possible through faith in Jesus Christ who died for us, rose from the dead, and is coming again. This salvation is offered to all people.

We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, and in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers.

We believe in the equality and essential dignity of men and women of all races, ages, and classes. We recognize that all persons are made in the image of God and are to reflect that image in the community of believers, in the home, and in society.

We believe that men and women are to diligently develop and use their God-given gifts for the good of the home, church, and society.

We believe in the family, celibate singleness, and faithful heterosexual marriage as the patterns God designed for us.

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