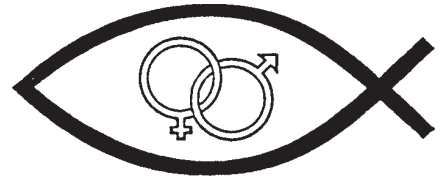


Priscilla Papers



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

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OVERCOMING BARRIERS

Jennifer Sudderth

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28 NRSV

Jesus Christ wants his body to become one—every church, every person. He wants his body to experience the unity with him and with each other that he experiences with his Father. But this unity is hindered by barriers of many kinds.

These barriers may take tangible and intangible forms. But whatever their form, they are always accompanied by one thing—fear, fear of our differences and the unfamiliarity which those differences bring.

In order to become one, we first have to overcome our fear of differences by facing them and by changing the way we perceive them.

"THERE IS NO LONGER JEW OR GREEK..."

As an African-American, I have experienced, too often, the sting of racial discrimination. I have seen in the eyes, heard in the words, felt in the deeds of others their contempt, yes, even their hatred of me. Yet, I know that it is not me that they are hating; for the barriers they have erected between us have not allowed them to know me, to find out who I really am.

No, it is their lack of information about my heritage, their insecurity about my freedom, their fear of everything my skin color represents in their minds that keeps them from seeing and appreciating my worth, and makes them respond differently toward me than they would to their own kind.

The beginning step in overcoming barriers is to recognize our differences and see them as helps, not

hindrances; channels, not barriers. There is value in learning to love and appreciate the rich heritage and unique experiences that come with different cultures, different people. The Apostle Paul expressed it best when he said: "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews...I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some." As Christians representing Christ in the world, we should be willing to accommodate ourselves to the culture of others in order to save some.

My own childhood was a living example of Paul's ideas. I was raised in the *barrio* of the city and attended a predominantly Mexican-American elementary school. I spoke Spanish and attended weddings, funerals, and birthday parties with my Mexican neighbors. I cooked and ate Mexican food and sang, danced, played, and learned among people whom I found to be more like me than unlike me.

Though our skin color was different, our racial barriers were down. I knew these people, they knew me. We had no reason to fear each other. To each other, we were no longer "those people," but brothers and sisters. Later I was able to share the gospel with people from communities like these because I was able to become like them to win them for Christ.

"...NO LONGER SLAVE OR FREE..."

The factors which segregate our communities vary. Some are social factors—people who share a history, an ethnicity, a heritage tend to flock together. That's why we have *barrios* and ghettos in most major cities throughout the United States.

This segregation is often the result of economic factors—people live where they can afford to live. This usually means that poor people live among poor people, middle-income people live among middle-income people, and rich people live among rich people.

There in the midst of our independent, isolated, self-

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contained communities, stand our Christian churches, independent, and isolated, and self-contained.

As followers of Jesus, this isolation should greatly concern us! The goal of unity among Christians is to reflect Christ's love for the world through our love for each other. Trustful cooperation between churches is a significant way to show our unity. And yet, too often, we remain isolated and removed from each other. Why?

Why can't we come together for worship and fellowship? Think of the potential for evangelistic outreach if we would only risk joining those who we see as a little different from us. What a statement we could make if we could work with those unlike us to build something together like a home for the elderly, a drug rehabilitation center, a hospital, or a school that would stand as a symbol of our unity with Christ and with each other.

"...NO LONGER MALE AND FEMALE..."

One of the harshest and most painful barriers which I have encountered in ministry is the one between men and women. As a woman in ministry, I have seen my sisters labeled feminists, accused of being aggressive, said to be in competition with our brothers, and viewed as oddities. Many times our ministry is not taken seriously but written off as frivolousness by some, non-scriptural by others, and even an assault on the divine will of God by a few.

Ministry is more difficult for a single woman. Often her motives for ministry are in question. Is she in ministry to fill some deep, dark void in her life? Is she just marking time, waiting for something or someone special to come into her life so that she can become a "regular" woman? Or, is she having a difficult time accepting or coming to grips with her womanhood?

I have felt the pain of discrimination more as a woman in ministry these past 12 years than I ever have as an African-American over the span of my entire life. I have suffered insult and injustice, endured disregard and indignity, and experienced loneliness, isolation, and sometimes even despair. I must admit that there have been times that I have thought how much easier it might be for me if I were just a "regular" woman, doing and being whatever it is that "regular" women do and are.

But women in ministry are not "regular." No one in ministry is "regular." We have all been called by God to step out from where it is comfortable, safe, and acceptable and to step into the risky, uncomfortable, often unacceptable zone. For women, the barriers encountered make this step an even larger step of faith.

It has been a long process for me, but I have come to terms with my ministry and my life. The process required me to let go of all the things that I thought I wanted and needed. It required me to take hold of those things the Lord desired for me. The process required me to rebuke those things that are not of God: the fears, the bad feelings, and

the attacks waged by the Accuser that used to make me doubt, dread, and fear the challenges that lie ahead.

God has given me the assurance that I am within his will. He has given me the assurance that he will be with me always—completing in me the work that he has started. He has given me the assurance that I need not fight for nor defend my ministry—that I need only to stand firm, be still, and wait for the Lord to gain glory for himself through my life.

This action—to stand firm and be still in the confidence of the Lord—is the beginning of overcoming barriers, barriers laden with fear and anger, barriers that cripple and destroy. God will change attitudes and hearts if we stand firm and are still. He will open doors to ministry. He will gain the victory over our adversaries. He will awaken and revive the Church in the 21st century...and he will use both men and women to help do so...if we stand firm and are still!

"...FOR ALL OF YOU ARE ONE..."

Christ prayed for the unity and oneness of believers (see John 17). His divine will and desire for believers is that we transcend the economic, racial, and gender barriers that divide us and prevent us from moving as a single unit. God's desire is that we view ourselves as one entity, composed of many distinct components with different functions.

To complete this task Jesus has set before us, we must work in harmony with unity and consistency in purpose "so that the world may believe... so the world may know" the love of Christ as reflected in our unity and in our love.

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WOMEN AND OTHER CREATURES

THE GENDER DEBATE¹

Joe E. Trull

In the early 1800s, Texas was frontier territory. As one historian noted, settlers believed “Indians were to be killed, African Americans were to be enslaved, and Hispanics were to be avoided.” In the 1830s these “Texicans” built a Baptist church at Independence that had two doors: one for white males and the other for “women and other creatures.”²

The status of “women and other creatures” has been a topic of constant debate ever since the woman ate the forbidden fruit and the man blamed her and God for the consequences (Gen 3:9-12).

The devaluation of females has been a recurring episode in every generation. In the nineteenth century, however, a reversal of the trend began. The American feminist movement, closely related to the abolitionist movement, was directed almost exclusively by women who were basically Christian in their religious outlook. The main opposition to the feminist movement also came from religious groups, primarily male clergy who used the Bible to support their disagreement.

In the twentieth century, equality for women has moved toward becoming a reality. The current debate among evangelical Christians concerning gender issues focuses on three major areas: the history of female roles, the interpretation of biblical passages, and the appropriate ministry for women in the church. Two distinct camps have emerged within the church—Christian feminism (“biblical egalitarians”) and traditionalism (“complementarians”).

THE DEBATE ABOUT HISTORY

The approach of the church toward women’s roles has too often been to adopt the views of society as the “biblical” stance. One cultural viewpoint toward gender roles has been constant: the subordination of women to male authority.³

The debate about history has focused on the record of gender roles in the past. Traditionalists insist that from the beginning, God ordained separate functions for male and female. According to this paradigm, the husband works outside the home to provide financial support, while the wife attends to the household and the children. In the “traditional” family, the wife is dependent on her husband not only financially, but also for identity and social status. A career outside the home for a female is a threat to the well-being of society. Traditionalists believe this understanding

of gender roles is corroborated by the Bible and church tradition, therefore all “feminist thought” is a direct reflection of modern culture.

Christian feminists challenge this argument. Biblical egalitarians contend that much of what is billed as “traditional” is not traditional at all, but was actually developed in middle-class Victorian society and revived in the suburban domesticity of the 1950s. Christian feminists argue that to cling to this model and claim it as the “traditional” biblical ideal is to misread history, misuse the Bible, and conform to culture, albeit a culture of the past.

Which group is correct about the history of gender roles? Let us attempt an answer by taking a brief look at social changes affecting gender roles during the last two centuries.

For hundreds of years before the Industrial Revolution, the home served as both economic producer and consumer. Of necessity, women and children labored alongside their husbands and fathers at home. Life was a struggle. Marriage was more an economic arrangement than a romantic relationship.

With industrialization the home was no longer essential to economic production and thus the woman’s role was redefined. The Freudian credo that women’s domains were “Kinder, Küche, und Kirche” (children, cooking, and church) summed up the new nineteenth-century Victorian mentality.⁴ This Victorian middle-class family model remained dominant in American culture through the 1960s, even enjoying an upsurge of popularity in the 1950s.

However, the status of women also underwent several significant alterations during the twentieth century:

- Contraceptive technology led to fewer children, increased health, longer life, and more personal time.
- Growing economic prosperity allowed many women to rely entirely upon their husbands for financial needs.
- Sexuality became perceived as a woman’s true identity.⁵

Although early twentieth-century feminism encouraged women to embark upon vocations, by mid-century careers for married women were considered “unfeminine.” Following World War II, women were encouraged to drop out of the workforce because of returning male veterans who needed jobs. By the 1950s women had fled the professions to concentrate on motherhood, accepting the judgment of culture that their sole significance in life was to bear children.

During the 1960s and 1970s when secular feminism was most militant, the Supreme Court legalized abortion in all states, sexual norms changed, divorces increased, and moral values deteriorated. To a large degree, the traditionalist movement has been motivated by the belief that feminism

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was a causal factor in this breakdown of society.⁶ Thus many evangelicals and social conservatives have called for a return to the “traditional” family.

Few would deny that feminism has played a major role in bringing equality, including women’s suffrage, to twentieth-century women. However, a radical feminist ethic emerged which taught that the way to alleviate the plight of women was for women to achieve total autonomy—political, economic, sexual, and in the area of reproductive freedom.⁷

Many observers have noted a split in the Christian feminist movement, not unlike the way secular feminism has separated. The more radical “gender feminist” theologians emphasize the meaning of femaleness and the need to “re-imagine” traditional beliefs, while “equity feminism” (“biblical egalitarians”) affirms that our understanding of orthodox Christianity is essentially correct but needs structural reform to achieve biblical equality and basic rights, and to end discrimination.

THE DEBATE ABOUT THE BIBLE

This brings us to a second consideration—the debate over biblical teachings regarding gender.⁸ Among evangelicals, gender issues are storm centers in biblical studies.

A growing number of Christians are calling for a return to biblical equality, contending that false exegeses of Scripture have misled many conservatives to uphold gender roles derived from culture rather than biblical revelation. Biblical egalitarians are committed to the authority of the Bible, pointing to a wealth of solid exegesis in this century that questions many of the conclusions of Christian traditionalists and rejects the unbiblical approach of secular feminists.

In response, a number of “complementarians” contend that Christian feminists have succumbed to cultural pressures and the influence of secular feminism. Quoting various Bible passages which they believe support their position, these traditionalists view Christian feminism as simple conformity to “political correctness” and denial of biblical authority.

The creation story in the first two chapters of Genesis offers the first puzzle in male and female roles and illustrates the depth of the debate. The first creation narrative seems to present woman as equal with man (1:24-30); the second story seems to subordinate woman to man (2:7-25).

The first Genesis record stresses that both sexes were created in the image of God (1:26-27). Christian feminists consider this a key passage in support of equality. However, some complementarians argue that the woman *with* her husband is the image of God, but that she alone is not.⁹

In the second account of Creation (2:4-24), God formed “man” [*ha adam*] from the dust of the ground, and man [*ha adam*] became a living being (2:7). Hebrew language scholars point out that the use of the definite article *ha* before *adam* usually indicates “humanity,” both male and female (Gen 1:27; 5:2).

However, traditionalists have contended that since the man (*ha adam*) was created before the woman, some sort of predominance is implied. The response of biblical egalitarians is twofold. The argument fails etymologically because the Hebrew word *adam* (*adamah*, “earth”) could more accurately be translated “earth creature,” a human being originally without gender.¹⁰ The argument also fails logically—just because the animals were created first does not mean animals are superior to humans.

In the third chapter of Genesis a new element appears—sin. Traditionalists often quote the statement found there, “Yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (3:16b), as a command or mandate from God. Biblical feminists counter that this statement, like the parallel imperatives about pain in childbearing (3:15a) and work as burdensome labor (3:17b-19a), is a *description* of sin’s effects, not a *prescription* from God.

Traditionalists often point to the male-dominated society of Israel as further proof of God’s intent. Christian feminists read this history in two ways. First, the Old Testament world was patriarchal and hostile toward female leadership, but the reason for this was human sin, not divine intent. A second observation points out that even in that male-dominated society, a number of women emerged as leaders: Miriam the prophet (Ex 15:20-21); Zipporah, who assumed the role of priest (Ex 4); Deborah the judge-general-prophet-poet of Israel (Jg 4-5); and Huldah the prophet, who triggered the great revival under King Josiah (2 Kgs 22-23).

The biblical debate over gender tends to focus on several New Testament passages. An important aspect of biblical interpretation is cultural setting. In both Jewish and Greco-Roman societies of the first century, cultural norms prescribed very definite roles and codes of conduct to women.

For example, Paul directs wives to be submissive to their husbands in the home (Eph 5:21-33), women not to teach or have authority over men (1 Tim 2:12), and men alone to serve as pastors or deacons (1 Tim 3:2, 12). Most traditionalists consider these to be permanent precepts.

Biblical egalitarians, however, believe these passages must be interpreted within their cultural contexts. A correct understanding of Greek domestic life and language,¹¹ of the Gnostic threat in Ephesus,¹² and of the cultural options open to the biblical writers¹³ is absolutely imperative. When these factors are excluded from biblical interpretation, we reproduce first-century culture as the divine norm.

Of primary importance to evangelical feminists is the example of Christ. In stark contrast to the universal denigration of females in the first century, Jesus’ attitude toward women was totally counter-cultural. Sweeping aside centuries of tradition and prejudice, Jesus’ treatment of females was revolutionary. Christ related to women in the same way he related to men, never regarding them as inferior in any way.

A final area of debate among Christians about gender roles is over ministry. Females today do occupy a variety of ministry positions—including pastors, chaplains (military, hospital, correctional), pastoral counselors, and associate ministers (children, youth, education, and music).

The most conservative Christians prohibit any type of ministerial service by females. Others allow women to serve as lay or associate ministers, as long as they are not ordained. Some groups make a sharp distinction between deacon service and pastoral ministry, believing the latter involves authority not intended for females. Although many evangelicals are taking a new look at this entire issue, the majority of conservative churches resist ordaining a woman or calling a female as senior pastor.

Many church leaders would argue that there is no scriptural basis for ordination at all—it is more a product of church tradition than biblical precedent. Nevertheless, traditionalists refuse to ordain women as ministers, mainly because they believe the Bible prohibits females from the office of pastor.

Christian feminists contend that Scriptures do not prohibit females from serving as deacons or pastors. The key passage quoted by traditionalists is that the pastor should be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2). However, this text, like commands to slaves, must be viewed in light of cultural options available to the biblical writers.

What does the future hold for the gender debate among evangelicals? Although the tide of culture is on the side of feminism, most evangelical Christians are social conservatives. Since both groups hold a high view of biblical authority, the gender debate will focus on biblical interpretation.

¹ Derived from chapter 8, “Human Equality—Gender and Race,” in the author’s text Walking in the Way: An Introduction to Christian Ethics (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Press, 1997).

² Baptist Standard, 16 June 1993, 3.

³ Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, Women Caught in the Conflict: The Culture War Between Traditionalism and Feminism (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 1.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵ Groothuis, 14. In 1963 Betty Friedan dubbed this trait the “feminine mystique.”

⁶ Brigitte Berger and Peter L. Berger, The War Over the Family: Capturing the Middle Ground (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 26, who note it is difficult to determine whether feminism *caused* or merely *legitimized* social changes already in motion.

⁷ Margaret A. Farley, “Feminist Ethics,” The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics, eds. James Childress and John Macquarrie (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 229-231.

⁸ Recent works include: Sheri Adams, What the Bible Really Says About Women (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys, 1994); John Temple Bristow, What Paul Really Said About Women (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); Stanley J. Grenz, Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry (Downers

Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); Alvera Mickelsen, ed., Women, Authority & the Bible (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

⁹ Ruth A. Tucker, Women in the Maze (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 35-36.

¹⁰ Morar M. Murray-Hayes, “Emancipation of Women.” Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics, ed. R. K. Harrison (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 129-131.

¹¹ Joe E. Trull, “Is the Head of the House at Home?” The Theological Educator, Fall 1996, 83-94.

¹² Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroeger, I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

¹³ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, How to Read The Bible For All Its Worth (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 68.

IN LOVING MEMORY

of FRANCES F. HIEBERT

Frances Hiebert, a long-time friend of CBE, passed away on April 16 after a battle with breast cancer. She and her husband Paul considered CBE a very important part of their lives, as it gave them a voice in helping young women follow their God-given calls and ministries. Frances’ contributions to Priscilla Papers include *Why We’ve Missed the Mark* (Spr ’89); *Imagery for God in the Old Testament* (Spr/Sum ’92); *Good News for Women is Good News for Men* (Sum ’93); and *Cultural and Ideological Influences on the Role of Women* (Sum ’98).

Frances Flaming was born on August 22, 1934, at El Reno, Oklahoma. She had the lasting memory that at the age of four she went to the altar at revival services in her church and accepted Christ as her personal savior. This commitment to following him remained the dominant motivation throughout her life.

Frances graduated from Corn Bible Academy and studied at Tabor College, where she met Paul Hiebert. In 1954 they were married. In 1960 Frances and Paul sailed to India with two daughters to serve as missionaries in Bible and pastoral training. Their son was born during their years of ministry.

Frances completed her BA at Kansas State University, her MA in Bible at Fuller Theological Seminary, and her Doctor of Ministries in Missions at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. She served on the Mennonite Brethren Board of Missions and Services for nine years, as Director of Women’s Ministries at Fuller, and as Director of International Student Affairs at Trinity. She published widely in the area of missions and women’s ministries.

Frances leaves behind her husband, three children, three children by marriage, and five grandchildren. Above all she leaves behind the fruit of her ministry which was to serve the Lord all her life.

WHO IS WORTHY TO MINISTER?

Madeline S. Johnston

Denominations struggle with the role of women in the church. Is it appropriate for women to serve as ministers in God's church? Are women worthy even to receive ordination as local elders? In some of our churches these questions have never arisen. In others they have long since ceased to be an issue at all. In still others, they are centers of hot debate. Antagonists on both sides continue to marshal arguments in hopes of convincing the church of "the truth." Some observers of the strength of conviction on both sides fear that this issue could split the Christian community.

Not to worry—we have a precedent. One of the earliest splits in the church, born of uncompromising convictions, came precisely over the issue of who was worthy to minister, and the body of believers survived it! Looking back, historians and theologians view this split as a blessing for the church, because it doubled its ministerial force.

A sharp disagreement arose between good friends, coworkers, and leaders in the church. Their association spanned several seasons and had been cemented by shared hardships as well as mutual joys. It began soon after the Jerusalem church had sent Barnabas to Antioch to investigate reports of many Gentiles joining the church there. Satisfied that these conversions were genuine, but recognizing a need to establish the new believers, Barnabas had gone to Tarsus to find Paul. He brought Paul to Antioch, where together they taught for a whole year (Acts 11:22-26).

Then prophets from Jerusalem came to Antioch, predicting famine (11:27-28). The Antiochan church sent Paul and Barnabas to deliver help to its brothers and sisters living in Judea (11:29-30). After completing their mission, they returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, bringing John Mark with them (12:1-17).

Mark came from a good home and showed promise of becoming a good worker. It was his mother who opened her home for prayer meetings and welcomed Peter there after an angel released him from prison (12:1 ff.).

Later, the Holy Spirit told the Antiochan members to set apart Paul and Barnabas, so they ordained them and sent them off on a missionary journey (13:2-3). Taking John Mark as their helper (13:4-5), the men visited Seleucia and then sailed to Cyprus. From Cyprus they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where Mark deserted them and returned to Jerusalem (13:13).

Madeline S. Johnston is a free-lance author and editor who also serves as faculty advisor for the weekly student newspaper at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. A member of the university's Women's Scholarship Committee, she has also been active in promoting the ordination of women in her denomination and is a local elder in the campus church.

THE SPLIT DEVELOPS

Sometime after Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch (15:30, 35), Paul suggested a return visit to all the towns they had preached in (15:36). Evidently he liked working with Barnabas and valued him as a colleague in ministry.

But this is when the dispute arose. Barnabas wanted to take Mark, his cousin (Col 4:10), with them again. Paul did not. Apparently Barnabas thought Mark deserved another chance. Paul felt he was unworthy because he had deserted them on the previous journey.

Either could have said, "I disagree with you, but I'll do it your way to maintain unity." But apparently these weren't just opinions—they were convictions. Paul felt strongly that Mark, who had already failed by proving himself undependable, would definitely be a liability to the work of the church. Barnabas, on the other hand, felt that denying Mark a role in ministry would unnecessarily stifle the growth of the church and of Mark himself, perhaps blocking the will of God for a more complete ministry. With each feeling so convicted, the disagreement became sharp enough that these two long-time friends and colleagues parted company (Acts 15:39).

THE OUTCOME

What were the results of the parting? First, there were two teams instead of one. Paul chose Silas and headed for Syria and Cilicia to strengthen the churches there. Barnabas and Mark sailed for Cyprus (15:39-41).

Notably, Paul and Barnabas kept their principal focus on the spread of the gospel, and each allowed the other freedom to accomplish that goal as he saw best. Neither condemned the other as less committed to the Scriptures. Further, Paul and Barnabas did not allow their diametrically opposite opinions to create a permanent wedge between them.

Many years later Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem with Titus to explain their practice of preaching to Gentiles (Gal 2:1). The leaders there—James, Peter, and John—agreed that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles (2:9). Paul still spoke directly, though, when he thought his colleague was wrong. He stated, for example, that Peter's hypocrisy had led even Barnabas astray when, in Antioch, he wouldn't eat with Gentiles (2:11-14).

Second, Mark developed into a seasoned worker. Even Paul admitted this when he requested of Timothy, "Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry" (2 Tim 4:11). In Philemon 24, Paul added greetings from Mark, his fellow worker, and Peter called Mark "my son" (1 Pet 5:13). Obviously, Mark had become a valued fellow minister.

ARGUMENTS PAUL MIGHT HAVE USED

Perhaps it would be instructive to take a few moments to imagine some of the arguments that Paul *could* have used to defend his initial decision that Mark, being immature, was unfit to join the ministerial force. (Any similarity to arguments heard today against the ministry of women is purely intentional.)

Paul might have said to Barnabas:

“Mark is weaker emotionally, and he already let those weaker emotions get in the way and make him undependable.”

“In his youthfulness Mark could hardly fit the representative paternal role God’s spokesman should uphold. He could neither represent God to the people nor represent the people to God.”

“Mark’s interest in getting involved is really just an outgrowth of the trends among youth in the secular society around him. Over in Greece, they get all excited about running races. In Rome, it’s the army. Youth-libbers feel they have to be doing something. But the church should keep itself wholly pure from any such humanistic ideas.”

“Furthermore, Mark shouldn’t aspire to a higher sphere than God has assigned him. By attempting to climb higher, he will only fall lower. Let him stay at home with his mother Mary and set up chairs for her prayer meetings. Maybe next time Peter is miraculously released from prison, Mark can even answer the door before Rhoda. This, too, is service for God, and he will find a great blessing in performing it. No young person should seek a higher sphere.”

“The fact that other religions use young men as priests is no reason for us to do so. They also sacrifice infants. If we follow the religions of the world in ordaining young men, we will open the door to sacrificing our babies, sexual promiscuity, and other problems.”

“The precedent was set way back in Genesis, where we read that a mature man was made in God’s image. And we all know God is not a youth; He is the Ancient of Days.”

“Jesus chose sturdy, experienced fishermen and even a tax collector for his disciples. If he had wanted mere kids in ministry, he would have chosen some as disciples.”

“It’s a matter of authority. After all, I received my call directly from God.”

“The older generation was created before the younger generation, and children are commanded by God to obey their parents. Therefore, logically, of course, no young person is fit to usurp authority over an older person. If God had wanted young people ministering in the church, he would have created Adam and Eve as babies (or Cain and Abel first, and then given them parents).”

“It isn’t a matter of education, either, because some young people may have more education than their fathers. It is simply that youths are not to have authority.”

“Scriptures support the participation of youth—but not in leadership roles as pastor/evangelists.”

“True, God is no respecter of persons as far as salvation is concerned. But he clearly has assigned differing roles and functions to different ages. I see no tension between this oneness in Christ and the functional subordination of young people in the church.”

“Throughout Scripture there is a special symbolism attached to the ‘firstborn.’ It may seem arbitrary of God to choose age to represent himself, but he has that right, just as he chose the Sabbath as a symbol of creation and sanctification.”

It is easy to see the fallacies in these arguments when they are applied to age rather than gender.

LESSONS FOR TODAY

Paul’s later acceptance of Mark in ministry may suggest lessons for us as we seek the full acceptance of women in ministry:

- 1) It took time. Mark had to prove himself.
- 2) The opposition felt he wasn’t ready for worldwide service.
- 3) An already-established worker had to fight for him, give him a second chance, and support him against the opposition.
- 4) Accepting his ministry did cause a split. But because of the way the dispute was handled, the church grew as a result. Focused on spreading the gospel, Paul still allowed Barnabas to supervise Mark and waited for time to test and prove Mark’s call to ministry.

Perhaps today God is waiting for his church to expand its ministry to a dying world by allowing women to prove their calling. We need not wait until every church in the world is ready to accept women’s ministry. Perhaps all we need is to let women work alongside established and supportive pastors in those churches that welcome their service. Let us all focus on the spread of the gospel, allowing God and time to reveal the results.



JESSIE PENN-LEWIS

REVIVAL AND GOD'S WORD ON WOMEN

Mimi Haddad

Perhaps the most influential woman associated with the Welsh and Keswick revivals in Great Britain at the turn of the Twentieth Century,¹ Jessie Penn-Lewis overcame a shy disposition, a victory she credited to the power of the crucified Christ. Preaching throughout Great Britain, Scandinavia, India, Russia, and North America, Penn-Lewis taught the Bible's affirmation of women in public ministry. Penn-Lewis believed the movement of the Holy Spirit, poured out on women and men throughout history, is always in harmony with Scripture. A prolific writer, Penn-Lewis wrote more than thirty books; many were translated into over one-hundred languages and dialects. Her journal, The Overcomer, remains in print today. Acknowledging the power of Christ to abolish the 'old Adam' and the hierarchy of men over women, Penn-Lewis wrote The Magna Charta of Women, a defense of women's public ministry.

BACKGROUND

Penn-Lewis, the granddaughter of a Calvin Methodist minister, was born in Neath, South Wales in 1861. Her mother was active in the Temperance movement. After Jessie's marriage, she and her husband William joined Holy Trinity Church in Richmond, Surrey.

Encouraged by the holiness preaching and teaching she encountered there,² Penn-Lewis acknowledged her own spiritual ineffectiveness and prayed for greater empowering by the Holy Spirit. Shortly thereafter she embarked on an influential ministry, drawing crowds in the thousands, and addressing audiences around the world.

INTERNATIONAL WORK

Early in her ministry Penn-Lewis was invited to Russia where she addressed gatherings of youth, German workers, and Russian nobility. She challenged her audience to end class barriers because all believers are now one in Christ.

In 1898 Penn-Lewis addressed the First Scandinavian YWCA Conference with the message "God's Army of Women who Publish the Tidings." Many of the women attending had endured suppression resulting from gender bias, and Penn-Lewis' message was a welcome encouragement.

I did not know then that our sisters were yet in the battle of strong prejudice against the handmaidens' prophesying. Strong prejudice based upon a misunderstanding of Paul's word of rebuke to the chatters of his day, the women who would persist in taking questions at the wrong time and in the wrong place; while in the same letter he gives instructions to the women who did prophesy and preach, how they should dress when so engaged.³

Asked to speak at a Workers Conference held at Moody Bible Institute, Penn-Lewis traveled to the United States in 1900. "People stood in the doorways, and along the passages" as she spoke to faculty and students on the meaning of the cross and the Spirit of God.⁴

In 1903 Penn-Lewis was called to serve in India, and there she also beckoned Christian leaders to embrace the power of the cross of Christ. While in India, Penn-Lewis completed The Word of the Cross, perhaps her most influential book. The Foreign and British Bible Society requested 100,000 copies,⁵ reportedly the first gospel booklet to reach Tibet. Oswald Chambers wrote to Penn-Lewis, "Your book teaches clearly and grandly what the Spirit witnesses to in the Bible and in our hearts..."⁶

KESWICK & LLANDRINDOD WELLS CONVENTIONS

Jessie Penn-Lewis was active in the Keswick Conventions held in England, Scotland and Wales,⁷ and in 1902 she was among those who preached at the first Llandrindod Wells Conventions.

The Llandrindod Wells Convention of 1927 was her last public appearance, remembered with these words:

When Mrs. Penn-Lewis arrived at Llandrindod, we saw how weak and frail she was... I was distressed to see her looking more like an invalid than one come to undertake a service... but when I led the congregation in the chorus, "There is power in the Blood of the Lamb," I saw her stirring! She pulled herself together, and in her characteristic way threw off her cloak and walked up to the platform... "We are made nigh by the Blood, we have access to God by the Blood, we are redeemed by that precious Blood, we enter into the Holiest by the Blood" ...She spoke with wonderful power, holding the whole congregation in intense interest... for over an hour... We shall never forget that visit...⁸

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Overt prejudice prevailed against the ministry of women at the Scottish Keswick of 1901, and thus Penn-Lewis was engaged to address only the ladies' meetings. However, just before beginning her message, Penn-Lewis was asked to preach at the men's meeting because their scheduled speaker failed to arrive. So powerful was her sermon that whenever Penn-Lewis attended the Scottish Conventions in the years that followed, there was never any mention of limiting women's ministry!

The man who initially convened the Scottish conventions wrote to Penn-Lewis in appreciation:

I am your son in this service. You have seen what I did not see, and believed for what I did not think to be possible, and have cheered and helped me when all was dark and blank... It was like the "mighty ordination of the pierced hands."...It is difficult to explain the influence of your teaching on my mind, but somehow it is teaching that teaches, and I find that few do that now.⁹

After hearing Penn-Lewis preach at the Scottish convention, the man most opposed to women preaching admitted that he had not believed it was possible that God would use women as God had used her. Penn-Lewis reminded him that "God never does use a woman like that, or a man either! God only uses the new creation."¹⁰

SPIRITUAL CONFLICT AND THE ATTACK ON WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Penn-Lewis dealt extensively with the topic of evil and spiritual conflict. She believed God had given her the task of exposing Satan's attack on revival and the instruments of revival—many of whom were women. In collaboration with Evan Roberts, Penn-Lewis organized her understanding of spiritual conflict into a classic work entitled Warfare on the Saints, printed in 1897. She wrote:

Revival is the hour... of God, and of the devil, for the descent of the Divine power brings the accompanying onslaught of evil supernatural powers. It means movement in the spiritual realm... the insidious creeping on of the powers of darkness, unrecognized, and yielded to by the people of God through ignorance...¹¹

As revival accelerated Penn-Lewis was careful to note the counter-acceleration of evil. She identified many tactics Satan uses to discourage revival. Two frequently leveled against women in ministry include an ignorance of theology and Scripture, and shallow exegesis, leading to deception.¹²

All her life Penn-Lewis struggled to obey Scripture and God's call to ministry. Compelled to articulate the harmony between Scripture, the Holy Spirit's movement in revival, and the public preaching of women, while also exposing Satan's attack on women, she wrote The Magna Charta of Women. In it, she declared:

I saw that God had given me a specific commission to proclaim the message of the Cross... God miraculously opened doors before me... the one objection was that I was a woman. There was no quarrel with the message, there was no denial of the divine seal, there was no getting away from the evidence of the results. But none of these did away with the fact that I was a woman... Whilst God opened doors for me in some quarters, others were fast closed to the message I bore purely and only because I was a woman... I knew only too well... the Apostle Paul's writings... but I was certain... if we only knew the exact original meaning of those passages, they were bound to be in harmony with the working of the Holy Spirit in the 19th century.¹³

The Magna Charta of Women was a summary of Katherine Bushnell's more technical treatment of the difficult biblical passages on women in God's Word to Women.¹⁴ While simplifying Bushnell's work, Penn-Lewis raised several of her own concerns, especially her desire to reconcile the Pauline passages with her own experiences of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

Penn-Lewis suggested that while the secular world continues to liberate women, the church increasingly restricts them. Ultimately, she wrote, women will question the goodness of God and the validity of a theological system that leads to such gender inequities.

It cannot be that the women of today are to be liberated for full share in the work of the world and at the same time have restrictions placed upon them in the work of God... In this matter the Bible itself is challenged... It has consequently become imperative that Christian women themselves should now search into the question and explain themselves and their true status from these Scriptures, so that it may be seen that the Bible is not an antiquated Book, out of harmony with the present times.¹⁶

The day has come, asserted Penn-Lewis, for women to do their own exegetical work¹⁷ in order to restore women's confidence both in Scripture and in God. In the introduction to The Magna Charta of Women, Penn-Lewis wrote:

...It will be a cause of unspeakable thankfulness to multitudes of Christian women when they know the truth, for the dark shadow of Paul's (supposed) relegation of them to perpetual subordination on account

of Eve's deception has clouded their spiritual sense of the justice of God and their apprehension of the fullness of the gospel message. Christian men, too, who have known the truth in their inner consciousness will rejoice in the light now given.¹⁸

In the church, the mystical assembly of Christ's Body, hierarchies of Jew and Greek, bond and free, and male and female, were slain on the cross. (Eph 2:11-19).¹⁹ Thus The Magna Charta of Women warned that gender bias eventually quenches the Spirit by disobeying what she called "the laws of the Spirit."

With a profound emphasis on Christ's work at Calvary, Penn-Lewis asked whether the cross removed the stain of sin and the Fall:

Is it honoring the blood of Christ to believe that God bids a redeemed woman always enter His presence with a reminder of Eve's "fall" upon her head, or is she to point to the atoning blood and to the Cross of Calvary where the old creation life was slain and stand in God's presence under her new Federal Head—the Last Adam, the Lord from heaven? And stand also towards her fellow members of Christ's Body in the carrying out of the will of the Head in testimony and service for God?²⁰

Language like "let your women keep silent" was simply Paul quoting the (trouble-making) Judaizers, reasoned both Penn-Lewis and Bushnell. For how can God tell women to be silent in one part of Corinthians (1 Cor 14:34), while just a few chapters before, telling them how to dress when prophesying (1 Cor 11:5)?

...For it is obvious that the Apostle would not speak at one moment of the "spiritual" status of the "Body," and each member as a channel of the Spirit and in the next moment lapse to the dealing with one section of it [women] on the status of the Fall!²¹

Penn-Lewis concluded The Magna Charta of Women with an exhortation to see that the Word of God is in harmony with the Spirit's leading in the life of a Christian.

A woman who is called to preach is likewise called to an understanding of the Word which will agree with the inward voice. It is the Word and the Spirit by which we must be led...²²

Penn-Lewis argued that the Spirit of God was no respecter of persons, either within the early church or in the revivals of the late 19th century.

...God's purpose for redeemed women, as well as redeemed men, was unmistakably expressed in the prophecy of Joel

foretelling the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost... And so it has been all down the centuries ever since.²³

Penn-Lewis called the church to embrace the power of the crucified Christ, where distinctions of class, race and gender died with Christ on the cross. Believing that Christ's work on Calvary accomplished "more than we can think or imagine," Penn-Lewis ministered in many countries in the face of enormous opposition. Her challenge remains: In Christ we are a new creation, and the old has passed away. As in the day of Pentecost, so now let all Christian women learn that God's call is consistent with God's Word.

¹ David Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730's to the 1980's. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker 1989), p. 175.

² J.C. Metcalfe, In the Mould of the Cross. (Dorset England: Overcomer Publications 1947), p. 16.

³ Mary Gerrard, Mrs. Penn-Lewis. (Leicester, UK: Alfred Tracey Ltd, 1947), p. 73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁵ Metcalfe, p. 65.

⁶ Gerrard, p. 220.

⁷ Bebbington, p. 175.

⁸ Gerrard, pp. 300-303.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

¹¹ Jessie Penn-Lewis, War on the Saints. (Leicester, UK: Excelsior Press, 7th ed), p. 282-283.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 282-283 and Jessie Penn-Lewis, The Magna Charta of Women. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), p. 58-60, 101-102.

¹³ Gerrard, pp. 267-268.

¹⁴ Katherine Bushnell, God's Word to Women. (Piedmont, California: Published via reprint, ed. Ray Munson, Box 52, North Collins, NY 1976).

¹⁵ Gerrard, p. 267.

¹⁶ Jessie Penn-Lewis, The Magna Charta of Women. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²² Gerrard, p. 268.

²³ Penn-Lewis, The Magna Charta of Women. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany Fellowship, 1975), p. 102.

CHRISTIANS FOR BIBLICAL EQUALITY

CBE is an organization of Christians who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teaching of Galatians 3:28—*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

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.

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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