

Women, God of

A BIBLICAL POSITION PAPER:

THE ROLE AND STANDING OF WOMEN IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

by

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INTRODUCTION

The question of the role of women in the Christian church is almost as old as the church itself. It is clear from the statements of Paul in his letters to the congregation in Corinth and to his colleague Timothy, that this issue was significant in more than one local congregation of the mid-first century. It is also more than probable that this concern engendered disagreement and even controversy among early believers.

The Christian writings of the second century and later, as well as those of the middle ages, provide us with insights into a sporadic yet continuing and often lively discussion of the question. Nor did the dialogue cease with the coming of the Protestant Reformation. Both Luther and Calvin spoke to the issue. In succeeding years, this variance over the role of Christian women in the church continued. In the last two decades it has received unprecedented attention, particularly in the United States.

In Adventism, especially in the last decade and a half, much official and unofficial dialogue has gone on surrounding this issue. Seventh-day Adventists may take encouragement from the fact that we by no means stand alone in our struggle to find unifying answers to this particular question.

Many approaches can be taken as the issue of women in ministry is discussed. In approaching the question from a Biblical-theological viewpoint we by no means wish to ignore the writings of Ellen White or

the historical, cultural, sociological, and psychological aspects of the subject. Neither do we wish to neglect the international or local ecclesiastical dynamics. We do feel, however, that the Biblical approach is absolutely foundational.

As one assesses the present climate of the church, it appears that much of the disagreement surrounding the Biblical passages dealing with the standing of women has to do with the basic hermeneutical approach of one person versus that of another. This hermeneutical question is not merely academic. It lies near the heart of our struggle to understand one another as we dialogue over the question at hand.

For this reason the paper will begin by briefly discussing some of the hermeneutical aspects involved. We will then proceed to discuss the relevant parts of Genesis 1-3, moving from there into the New Testament and particularly to some of the most controversial of the pertinent Pauline passages. We will attempt to feel the full weight of all of the passages involved from every side of the question.

Much excellent material has been written about the issue of women's role in the church by Adventist scholars and others in the church. I have tried to reflect their thinking to some extent in this position paper, while moving ahead with a degree of originality. Because brevity is a constraint, I do not profess to deal exhaustively with the subject.

CHAPTER I

THE HERMENEUTICAL QUESTION

For many Christians, using the Bible to settle a particular question of personal ethics is not as difficult as using the same Bible in settling an issue of social ethics. The Christian community constantly grapples with the question of how it is to make use of the Bible in contemporary society when in fact Christian existence in the twentieth century is considerably different from that of the first century. Most Seventh-day Adventists are keenly aware of a sense of discomfort or uneasiness about the shifting culture of the last few decades. Questions of increasing social and ecclesiastical urgency wait in line to be answered satisfactorily with expressions of thought resting responsibly upon clear Biblical data. Yet, inevitably, as attempts are made to articulate the Word of God concerning these questions, disagreements arise as to what the Word is in fact saying. Deeply sincere Christians find themselves entrenched on opposing sides of a problem that the church was not even conscious of 20 years ago.

This divergency of views is due in part to the fact that much of what is faced in our century was not faced as such at any time in the centuries that cover the Biblical time frame, or even in the centuries since. For this reason we must take Scripture and apply it perhaps more adaptively than before. It is almost inevitable that we will tend to disagree as to how this should be done.

The crucial question thus becomes, how should the Bible be used in relation to the various social and ethical concerns confronting the church today? To word the question differently: What is the best way of taking the Biblical data and laying it upon the contemporary scene so that it becomes clear to us what course should be taken in dealing with a particular issue?

At least two distinct hermeneutical approaches (1) emerge as we ask this question. The first school of thought advocates what might be described as an "atomistic" way of applying Biblical data. The proponents of this method of interpretation tend to focus upon specific Biblical statements and particular Scriptural cases that seem to relate to the contemporary issue under discussion. These Biblical cases or statements are then taken and applied in such a way as to cast light on the question faced by the church. Proponents of the second hermeneutic tend to process the Biblical data in such a way as to expose the general ethical principles they find inherent in Scripture. They do this by looking at the Bible as a whole, concentrating upon its central events and issues. They also search out the historical and cultural dynamics that might have influenced the approach of the inspired writer. Taking their findings, they attempt to apply them to any contemporary ethical or social concern under discussion.

It can readily be seen how two divergent, even opposing positions may be taken upon a given question if two different means of arriving at an acceptable interpretation are employed. Those who follow the first hermeneutic tend to view the others as ignoring clear Biblical

data and thus as rationalizing or compromising undeniable Scriptural evidence. Those who follow the second hermeneutic tend to see their counterparts as ignoring the central thrust of the combined Biblical and historical evidence while they adhere dogmatically to a position the Bible never intended to be of eternal import.

These divergent hermeneutical approaches are characterized by other significant differences. Those whose hermeneutic emphasizes a more statement or case-oriented approach tend to accentuate the demands of law in Scripture. Their view of ethical questions tends to be dominated by their view of God's law. Conversely, those who adopt the approach to Scripture that settles ethical questions by holistically searching out Biblical principles, tend to accentuate the effects of grace in Scripture. Their view of ethical questions tends to be dominated by their view of God's grace.

Related to our differing use of law and grace in applying Scripture is what might be described as our divergent use of the creation and Old Testament way of thinking versus the redemption and New Testament way of thinking. In speaking of this divergence and the question of an acceptable hermeneutic when dealing with sexual roles in the ministry of the church, Richard Longenecker says:

At the heart of the problem as it exists in the church is the question of how we correlate the theological categories of creation [that is the creation-fall event] and redemption. When the former is stressed, subordination and submission are usually emphasized...where the latter is stressed, freedom, mutuality and equality are usually emphasized. What Paul attempted to do in working out his theology was to keep both categories united--though I would insist, with an emphasis on redemption. (2)

It is crucial for our purposes to note the two main points of this statement: 1) At the heart of the ethical problems that confront the church is the matter of how we correlate theologically the creation and fall of humanity in Adam to the redemption and justification of human beings in Christ. In other words, how do we relate these two foundational Biblical events, giving them each their due weight in settling ethical questions? 2) There is the suggestion that Paul attempted in his theology to keep the two categories united, yet in this unification he saw redemption and its ethical implications as transcendent over what was true because of creation and the fall. Both of these points are critical in our approach to the Bible.

As we deal with ethical questions in the light of Scripture we must try to be eclectic, adopting what is helpful in both hermeneutical approaches. This suggestion is made not only because we need to come together hermeneutically and ethically, but also because we are required to listen carefully and honestly to all that is in the Bible relating to our question, both by way of specific statements and universal principles.

In summary, as we approach the question of women's roles in the formal ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church we must first honestly attempt to actually correlate the specific, literal, didactic, more law-oriented statements (such as 1 Tim. 2:11-15) with the broad principles of Scripture (such as the one enunciated in Gal. 3:1-4:7, specifically 3:28). Second, within this unified hermeneutic we must, consistent with the flow of sacred history, recognize the transcendence of the redemptive act of God in Christ.

For although in such Scriptures as I Cor. 11:7-9 and I Tim. 2:13 & 14, Paul appeals to the pivotal creation-fall event, in other places, such as Galatians 3, Paul is consumed with the magnificence of God's surpassing redemptive act and its down-to-earth application to the social questions of his day such as Jew versus Gentile, slave versus free, and male versus female. We must match Paul in this concern.

Finally, we must give due weight to the social, cultural, geographic and ecclesiastical concerns that Paul had to consider as he wrote. This is crucial to a full understanding of the text itself and thus to our ability to accurately and legitimately apply the text to our situation.

In studying this subject, I have carefully reviewed a number of the papers available from the General Conference Archives and the Biblical Research Institute. In writing this paper I have not ignored the prevailing hermeneutic present in the clear majority of these papers or the essential conclusions evident in the material.

CHAPTER 11

THE IMPLICATIONS OF GENESIS 1-3

Three passages pertinent to our topic appear in the opening chapters of the Bible. Gen. 1:26-28, 2:18-24 and 3:1-20. We will briefly discuss the relevant aspects of each of these passages as they relate to the nature of the equivalence, or lack of it, existing between male and female. The implications of this to the role of women in ministry will be apparent.

A. Genesis 1:26-28

This passage describes the activity of God in planning and accomplishing the creation of "man." God's intention is to make "man" (that is humanity) in His own image and likeness. In this description of God's crowning creative act, "female" is included with "male" within the clearly generic term, Adam, "man." Verse 27 says, "male [zakar] and female [neqebah] created He them." So male and female together make up that which is created and described as "man" (see Gen. 5:1, 2). Only in the partnership of the sexes is seen that which fully encompasses and identifies humanity. As male and female, Adam and Eve together make up the image and likeness of God on this planet. Neither one nor the other of the sexes can independently claim to be in the image of God.

Verse 28 points out that God said to both of them--that is not only to Adam--that they were to fill the earth, subdue it and rule over it. They were to share in all of the aspects of governing this

planet under God. This fact has obvious implications for the standing of women in ministry.

B. Genesis 2:18-24

This passage comes as a supplementary account to Gen. 1:26-28. Here it becomes clear that the male was created before the female and a description is given of why and how Eve was created. In verse 18, and again in verse 20, the word "help" (KJV) or "helper" (RSV, NIV) or preferably "partner" (NEB) is used in regard to Eve. This helper was to be "meet" (KJV), "fit" (RSV) or "suitable" (NIV) for Adam.

Some have pointed out that Eve was Adam's helper and not Adam Eve's helper; and they have deduced from this that even before the fall Eve was in some way, though equal, not on quite the same footing as Adam was (3). But neither the Hebrew word for "help" (4), nor the context surrounding this word makes any such suggestion. Instead, the reason for Eve's creation is given as that of providing the man with someone like him and complementary to him. Only an equal could solve the problem of Adam's loneliness. God recognizes that it is not good for man to be alone, and therefore provides a true partner, a consonant companion (5).

The manner in which God creates Eve (verse 21-22) is consistent with what goes before. While Adam is in a divinely induced sleep, Eve is created from his side. Ellen White sees a basic significance in this event:

Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal to be loved and protected by him. A part of man, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, she was his second self. (6)

The exclamation of Adam (verse 23) as God brings Eve to him confirms this interpretation. Adam sees Eve as of his very substance and in her, he recognizes companionship and oneness: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (NIV). This expression is an affirmation of unity and equality, with no allusion to superiority or inferiority in the standing of the sexes. There is no hint of Adam viewing Eve in any other way than as an equal associate. Their union is in fact the prototype of later unions in which a man and a woman become "one flesh" (verse 24).

One observation remains to be made. Although Paul refers to the fact that Adam was created before Eve and that therefore his practice is not to allow women to teach or to "usurp authority over the man" (1 Tim. 2:12-14), and although Paul sees an hierarchical system which places women below men (1 Cor. 11:3), it must yet be stated along with Paul's use of this part of the Genesis narrative, that the primary thrust of the creation account itself has to do with the husband-wife relationship and not directly with the overall cultural or ecclesiastical relationships of all males with all females (7). I recognize Paul's significant use of the Genesis story; I wish only to point to other factors evident in the account.

C. Genesis 3:1-20

Genesis 3 records the way in which sin came to the planet. It is not necessary to review the details of the Biblical account.

There are those who infer from this passage a certain moral inferiority in the female gender as a whole because Eve succumbed first to the serpent's promptings. This, however, is not in any way suggested in the Genesis account itself. Nor is it suggested by Paul.

Paul does say that Eve was the one deceived and that, therefore, he did not allow women to have authority in the churches (1 Tim. 2:14). But to assume from Paul's statement that he saw a generalized moral inferiority on the part of all women is to take a highly unwarranted step. Nothing in the Bible suggests such a thing. Further, to infer either from the Genesis account of the fall or from Paul's comments, that because Eve led her husband into sin, it is therefore dangerous to have any woman in leadership, is not at all justifiable. Neither Moses nor Paul advocate such a view of women.

It must be emphasized that Genesis 3 itself gives an objective, blow-by-blow account of the fall without assigning Eve any more blame than Adam (8). The narrative clearly includes Adam as a part of the act, and as "falling" to the same extent as Eve. Both male and female simultaneously discover their mutual nakedness (verse 7), both sew fig leaves for coverings (verse 7) and both hide from God (verse 8). Both also are held accountable by God (verses 9-13).

The fact that God confronts the man first (verse 9) could infer at least two opposing interpretations: 1) that the man, being the head of the woman, is first in the line of command and thus is the first to be called to task; or 2) that God in fact held the man ultimately responsible for the act of disobedience, thus relieving the woman of primary responsibility. In terms of the foundational issues of our discussion, these two interpretations, though both quite logical, align themselves on opposite sides of the question and thus their usefulness is cancelled.

Finally, God expresses a curse on both Adam and Eve. It is true that the curses are expressed in a certain order. Again, however, any

inference drawn from the particular order of the curses must ultimately be viewed as merely speculative, especially since inferential arguments can be made to support either side of the issue. For this reason any theological or ethical conclusions drawn by inference from this passage, or similar passages, must be viewed as tentative at best. Exceptions to this occur when a later inspired writer (such as Paul in 1 Cor. 11:7-9 or 1 Tim. 2:12-14) assigns a meaning to the creation-fall account. Such an interpretation must be looked at seriously. We will do this in the next chapter.

The "curse" of Eve (verse 16) is viewed by some as conclusive evidence for the subordinate or limited role of women in the culture in general and in the church particularly. Paul seems to adopt this view and apparently appeals to this text (verse 16) when he says in 1 Cor. 14:34, "Let your women keep silence in the churches; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." Paul's appeal to "the law" seems to refer to this Genesis 3 section of the Mosaic narrative (9).

The statement within Eve's curse over which there is particular controversy is, "your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." (NIV) Along with Paul's probable use of this passage to enjoin silence and submission on women in the church, it should be noted that in its own context this statement does not itself imply the general rule of all men over all women in all circumstances, but instead limits itself to the marriage situation.

In any case, the Inspired writer records that the divine declaration that man shall "rule" over woman is placed within the context of the man/woman relationship in marriage. This contextual setting of the ruling of man over woman must never be lost sight of. Note that the first part of the declaration, i.e. the multiplying of travail in pregnancy, is an experience that takes place in marriage. The second part, i.e. pain in childbirth, is likewise an experience which takes place within the sphere of marriage. The third part stresses the wife's "desire for your husband." Then, after this threefold reference to changes which are associated with the marriage institution comes the sentence, "He (your husband) shall rule over you"....the ruling of man over woman is restricted to the sphere of marriage. Accordingly, this divine declaration does not apply to all spheres of woman's life and activity. This sentence cannot be used to support male domination and supremacy in all spheres of life. It is reading into this statement what the context does deny. It is eisegesis and not exegesis. (10)

A summative statement may now be made. Neither in Genesis 1 nor in Genesis 2 can any conclusive case be made for or against a greater role for women in the ministry of the church. A case can be made, however, for equal partnership and standing in the relationships of the sexes. Further, in Genesis 3 there is no conclusive evidence in the text for either side of the question. It is true, however, that if one stays within the Genesis 3 account, one can only legitimately say that any male "rule" (a word which itself needs study) over the female should be limited to the marriage relationship alone. Other conclusions that might be drawn from the Genesis narrative tend to be inferential and thus speculative.

The point of difference as I see it lies primarily in Paul's use of the Genesis 2 and 3 account. Disagreements also arise as has been said, when some see the issue as settled by reference to certain specific passages or precedents in Scripture. Others agree that due

weight should be given to these, however, they also opt for a more holistic overview of Scripture and its setting, allowing the collected evidence to decide the question of whether or not the doors of formal Adventist ministry should be open to Adventist women.

For these reasons we turn now to the New Testament and to Paul's use of the Genesis account as he deals with the question of women having leadership in the church. Further, for the reasons given above it is important also to deal briefly with the essential principles of Paul's overall theology and how these might influence our view of women in ministry. Before this is done, however, a glance at the attitudes of Jesus is in order.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE STANDING OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

Six connecting areas of interest make up the body of this chapter. To begin with, we will take a brief, introductory look at Jesus and His attitude toward women in the light of His times. The other five areas will then develop the general thrust of the argument. We will look first at the implications of the Christian gospel--God's redemptive act in Christ--upon the status of women. We will then look at the specific implications of Gal. 3:28 to our topic. We will move from there to examine some of the relevant Pauline statements that concern the question of women's role in the church. As we do this, we will attempt to relate them to Paul's overall view of God's redeeming work in Christ. Further, we will comment briefly on the progress of the Christian Church in applying the social or ethical implications of the gospel to its life and practice. Finally, we will consider the social and cultural setting of the churches to which Paul wrote. The implications of the New Testament data to the question of women in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will become apparent as this chapter progresses.

A. The Impact of Jesus on the Standing of Women

One of the most significant summative statements made in Scripture about the actual effect of Jesus' person and work is made in Ephesians 2. Here the proclamation is primarily to Gentile believers. Paul

tells them that whereas once they were uncircumcised Gentiles and thus "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," now through "the exceeding riches" of God's grace and kindness "in Christ Jesus" (verse 7), "ye who were sometimes far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (verse 13). Paul goes on with the accomplishments of Christ: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us (verse 14).

Paul is speaking here of Christ breaking down a "wall" that stood particularly between Jew and Gentile. This great accomplishment of Jesus is unquestionably one of Paul's themes. He states it passionately in Gal. 3:28 where he sees Christ as having decimated not only the wall between "Jew and Greek" but also the walls between "bond and free" and--surprisingly--between "male and female." "For ye are all one in Christ Jesus," Paul asserts.

Jesus is viewed by Paul as the great demolisher of barriers--barriers between God and humankind, between peoples, and between male and female. It is not by accident that Paul comes to these views of Jesus. One cannot but get the same view of Christ as one looks at the record of His life. In Jesus' encounters with women there is no exception. Even here Jesus wrecks the dividing barriers (11).

One outstanding example of Jesus' view of women is seen in His encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4. In Jesus' meeting with this woman there are a number of barriers which threaten the free flow of the gospel. It should be noted that the barriers present in this meeting are reflective of two of the three categories Paul speaks of in Gal. 3:28: those of Jew and Gentile and, particularly, male and female.

In John 4:9 the well-known animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans is dramatized by the woman's question, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samarita?" (emphasis supplied). This national or racial barrier is present, but Jesus purposely overrides it.

In verse 27, the disciples return to the scene to find Jesus and the woman in conversation. At this sight, John says the disciples "marveled" (KJV) or, as it is more accurately translated, they "were astonished to find him talking with a woman" (NEB) (12). The fact that Jesus was talking to a Samaritan was no doubt surprising enough, but clearly John is pointing out here that it was Jesus' conversation with "a woman" that was most astounding to the disciples.

It should be noted also that the wording of the woman's question in verse 9 is even more pertinent in another way: "How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samarita?" (emphasis supplied). Apparently the woman herself was surprised that Jesus would speak to a Samaritan, but she stood in wonder at the fact that He would speak to a Samaritan woman.

All of this may seem rather irrelevant to our discussion until one reads descriptions of the kinds of attitudes toward women that were dominant in Jesus' day. Then one realizes the amazing openness of Jesus to the situation of women. One also perceives the risks He took in instigating a new respect for women and moving progressively into areas of reform that were involved in citizenship in His kingdom.

There were at least two basic reasons for the disciples' and the

woman's amazement at Jesus' behavior. Both are relevant to our discussion.

1) The strict rabbi was forbidden to talk to a woman in public. A rabbi was not to speak to his wife, daughter, or sister in public. It is said that a rabbi's reputation could have been damaged if he had been seen talking to any woman in public (13). So, as a person who was regarded as a rabbi, Jesus shocked even His own disciples in cutting across the artificial barriers of religious custom.

2) Aside from the Rabbi's prescribed behavior when it came to women, there were the attitudes of Jewish men toward women. Among other practices (which we will cite later) some Pharisees would close their eyes when they saw a woman approaching (14). In Jesus' day these behaviors and their accompanying attitudes were translated into a customary way of life which was positively advocated.

These conventions, and particularly the attitudes behind them, Jesus ignored, or respectfully defied, in His conversation with the woman at the well, thus shocking His disciples and the woman.

Two further examples of Jesus' progressive attitude toward women can be mentioned here. 1) There is the instance of Jesus' treatment of Mary of Bethany at the feast at Simon's house (Luke 7:36-50). Here, according to the prevailing convention, Mary should have been preparing the food or serving at the feast. When she forgot her assigned place in relation to the men and came in among them and performed her act of worship and was judged by the men for doing so, Jesus moved swiftly to her defense. Jesus used this woman as the example of what true religious devotion is all about (verses 44-47).

This was a difficult thing for the men to accept, especially for Simon, the Pharisee. It was shocking to those present, and it seems to have contributed to the influences which led Judas to betray Jesus (Mark 14:3-10; note verse 10 and its setting), and Jesus to be crucified.

2) It cannot be merely coincidental that at His resurrection Jesus revealed Himself first to a woman who was first to proclaim the foundational news of the Christian religion, "He is risen."

Thus in His life and death, Jesus intentionally opened the door to the more complete participation of women in His church. Although for cultural and social reasons (to be referred to later), Jesus did not press this issue to its logical end, He definitely saw its necessary genesis. Through His gospel with its inevitable ethical implications, Christ expected His church to progress in this area, even though that progress would be slow.

B. The Implications of the Christian Gospel for the Role and Standing of Women in the Church

In discussing the implications of the gospel to the question of the role and standing of women in the church, we will begin with a brief overview of Gal. 3:10-29. This will enable us to get a more accurate and detailed view of Gal. 3:28 and Paul's pivotal statement in it, that in Christ there is "neither...male nor female."

This particular passage begins (verses 10 & 11) with a double appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures. By this appeal Paul is pursuing the theme of his main argument in the letter. He declares that there is a curse upon anyone whose religious confidence depends

upon his or her success in doing what the law says should be done (Deut. 27:26); for it is not by the law, but by faith that the righteous will live (Hab. 2:4). Paul asserts further that no one has always continued in everything that the law said should be done (see verses 21 & 22) and that, therefore, everyone is under a curse. But when Christ came, He "redeemed us from the curse of the law" by Himself becoming a curse for us (verse 13). In doing this Christ opened for all people the free flow of God's promises, specifically the promise of the Spirit which comes by faith (verse 14).

Paul next shows that God's promise to bring redemption was not interrupted by the law, which was formally given long after the promise, for "God in His grace gave it [redemption] to Abraham through a promise" (verses 15-18, NIV). The law's role was not to sabotage the promise, but instead it was added because of sin to lead us to the fulfillment of the promise, that is to the coming of the Redeemer, the "Seed," Jesus Christ (verses 19-21). Here Paul again appeals to "the Scripture which declares that the whole world is a prisoner to sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe" (verse 22, NIV), that is, in distinction to those who try to gain redemption by doing all that the law demands.

Paul goes further. He asserts that not only was the world held prisoner by "sin" (verse 22) but that "we were held prisoners by the law" (verse 23, NIV). But this was only to be until "faith came" (verse 23). Paul again affirms what he has so far been saying, "The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ" so that justification

could be by faith; and so now that Christ (or faith) has come the law no longer supervises us in the way it did before faith came (verse 24).

The implications of this are clear to Paul. All who have this faith in Christ are baptized into Him and have "put Him on" (verse 27). Thus they have become God's children (verses 26 & 27). For this reason--a great, grand, pivotal and redemptive reason--Paul declares in verse 28 that in Christ, that is, in the community of the new creation, there is among other things "neither...male nor female." Whereas once we defined ourselves primarily as "Jew" or "Gentile," as saying, "I am a slave and you are my master," or "I am a man and you are a woman," now since faith (Christ) has arrived and the promise of redemption is fulfilled, there is a new basis of interpersonal definition. It is that in Christ we are all "children of God" (verse 26). This definition transcends the old distinctions, that is, the old ways of defining ourselves and others. God's re-creative work in Christ redefines His fallen creation. There is in fact a new creation (II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, RSV). From now on this is to be the basis on which Christians define their relationships. This is to be the foundation upon which Christians build their social, cultural and sexual structures.

Before returning to a more detailed view of Gal. 3:28, we must look again at verses 10-13. Here the question of a "curse" is raised. This word inevitably directs our thinking back to Genesis 3 and the curses spoken to the serpent, Eve and Adam. We are especially interested in the second part of Eve's curse, "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you" (NIV).

Two questions arise: 1) Can we legitimately connect the "curse of the law" in Gal. 3:13 (from which Christ has redeemed us) to the curse spoken against Eve in Gen. 3:16? 2) If so, then to what extent or in what way was Christ's coming meant to affect the standing of women in marriage, in society at large, or in the church?

There is a very close connection between the curse of Eve (Gen. 3:16) and the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13). This is true first because Eve's curse came on the heels of her fall into sin in Eden, sin being a breach of God's direct command. This curse was essentially a divine sketch of what the results of Eve's sin would be. God had already declared that death would ensue (Gen. 2:17), here He spells out what would curse Eve's life before she died. The woman's curse describes the inauguration of a different relationship between the woman and her husband as a result of sin. It was, however, against the results of sin and its curse that Christ came as the "second Adam" to reverse the effects of the fall. Upon Eve in Eden fell the curse of the broken covenant (Gen. 3:16). Upon Christ in Gethsemane, as the Representative of all humankind, fell the curse of the broken law (covenant) so that the curse might be removed from humanity (Gal. 3:13).

Secondly, Eve's curse in Gen. 3:16 comes in the immediate context of the "promise" of the "seed" in verse 15 which Paul mentions in connection with Abraham in Gal. 3:15 & 16. In Gen. 3:15 Jesus is the promised "seed" who would come to deal successfully with the serpent, and in Gal. 3:16-22 He is the "promised seed" who came to redeem us from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), the results of the serpent's delusion.

These two passages refer to the same event and the same Person. Thus the coming of Christ must affect the curse of Eve as Paul in Galatians 3 proclaims it to have affected the whole of human existence. The coming of the "Seed" must end the reign of the curse in the life of all believers, including women, as Paul affirms in Gal. 3:28.

No doubt some will object to this, saying that women still have pain in childbirth (the first part of Eve's curse). The coming of Christ did not remove that. This might seem to prove the above Scriptural reasoning fallacious. Here it must also be said that men still sweat over less than ideal soil (Adam's curse); and Satan (the serpent), still prowls despite the coming of the Messiah. Further, death is still a human condition despite Jesus' words in John 6:47-49.

The good news of the gospel is that the "Seed" has come, He has broken the reign of sin and its curse. He has inaugurated a new reign and will soon return to consummate that reign. In the meantime, the citizens of His kingdom are to live by faith in the reality of His victory over the serpent and the curse. The Christian faith declares that believers must live in careful consistency with the great work Christ has accomplished. In terms of our discussion it becomes imperative that we, by acting in tune with Christ's conquering act, do all that is possible for us to do as a believing community to remove the effects of the curse of Eve in our marriages, in our communities and particularly in our church.

C. The Implications of Galatians 3:28 to the Standing of
Women in the Church

As we turn now to a more direct view of Gal. 3:28, we see that Paul states a universal principle. This principle springs directly from the bedrock of the Christian gospel and the arrival of Christ. Resident in it are social, cultural and sexual implications. The principle is stated in the King James Version in seven words, "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

The position of Galatians 3 is this: Those who believe the gospel and who are the new creation in Christ, view cultural-national (Jew versus Gentile), social (slave versus free) and sexual (male versus female) issues in a different light from those who do not believe the gospel and are not one in Christ.

This principle must not be seen in a merely "spiritual" light; for as in all true religion, that which is spiritual has direct and profound significance in the actual life of the individual and the community. To deny this is to undermine the Scriptural call for sanctification. That which is truly spiritual is always to be translated into that which is thoroughly practical. In the Jew-Gentile reform which Paul called for, the effects were plainly seen and felt in the church. Just as the reform of slavery that came between Philemon and Onesimus and in the 18th and 19th centuries had profound, down-to-earth implications for the way of life in the Christian community, so must the male-female relationship have noticeable, tangible effects growing out of the spiritual principle.

Some, in arguing against ordaining women for pastoral ministry, attempt to neutralize the profound practical effects of the mandate of

Gal. 3:28 by saying that the context of this verse speaks only about Christian baptism. Certainly the immediate context of Paul's statement speaks very fittingly of baptism. But to ignore the broader context denies the practical implications of the outcome of Christ's work in the Christian community. Thus, this curtailed view of Gal. 3:28 ironically encourages a limited view of the consequences of baptism itself (Rom. 6:1-14), and it detracts from the heart and soul of the Christian faith. This approach also seems to ignore the general content of Galatians 3 and the essential message of the book.

Further, it is sometimes asserted that using Gal. 3:28 to destroy the distinctions between male and female might encourage homosexuality. This is a serious distortion. First, neither Paul nor any other responsible Christian, uses this Scripture in such a way. The distinction between male and female for the Christian is obviously God-ordained, even if one looks only from a physical point of view. Gal. 3:28 does not speak of the absence of sexual distinctions, but of the equality of the sexes in Christ. Besides this, such interpretations fall disappointingly short of actually dealing with the issues in passages like Galatians 3.

We have said that in the heart of the book of Galatians, Paul points to a radically new principle, a new world-view which has been introduced with Christ's arrival, or the arrival of "faith." In Gal. 3:28, Paul calls for the light of this new world-view to penetrate all the dark corners of the human condition. He beams this light into three specific areas: the relationships between Jew and Gentile, between slave and free, and between male and female. We will now look more directly at all three of these.

The question of the relationship between the Jew and the Gentile is a prominent Pauline theme. This issue was in fact an extremely controversial one in the early church as a whole (see Acts 15). Peter had difficulty with its implications (Acts 10) and Paul openly opposed him on the stand he took at one point (Gal. 2:11). It must be noted that Paul opposed Peter because he said the position taken by Peter was not "in line with the truth of the gospel" (verse 14). It is significant that Peter took this stand under the influence of certain men "from James" (Gal. 2:12, NIV). Not only with Peter, but at every turn Paul was uncompromising in his attempt to destroy the barriers between Jews and Gentiles. This controversy threatened to divide the leaders of the early church.

At the heart of the Jew-Gentile question was an underlying concern, one which is quite relevant to the basic issues of our discussion. This was the matter of circumcision. Many Jewish Christians felt that the rite of circumcision should be continued in the Christian era and that Gentile Christians should practice it along with Jewish Christians (Acts 15:1 & 5; Gal. 6:12-14, etc.). Paul was totally opposed to this on the ground of the gospel (Gal. 2:14, 16-20), as was Peter at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:5-11).

If the essential sign of religious identity for the Jew was the rite of circumcision and if, as was the case, this rite was one that was exclusively for the male, it is entirely understandable that in such a setting the male would be seen to be dominant. After all, if this sign was instituted by God and was obviously only for the male, did that not prove God's endorsement of male supremacy, especially in the religious arena?

No doubt much of the sense of male superiority in the first century religious setting was somewhat unconscious when it came to the matter of circumcision, but it can readily be seen how such a rite would affect the thinking of men toward women (and vice versa) in the religious life of the community. More significantly, it can also be readily seen how the removal of such a practice from the ritual of the community would inevitably come to affect the way each sex viewed the other in the church, and the role either sex might play in the life of the church. The male would no longer be seen to possess quite the same exclusive standing with God as had formerly been a fully accepted axiom. This would especially be so if the new signs of the new covenant were universal and sexually indifferent by nature, such as receiving of the Holy Spirit and Christian baptism obviously were. Much was at stake when Paul said in the light of the controversial Jew-Gentile question, "Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing; the only thing that counts is new creation." (Gal. 6:15, NEB).

There is no doubt that through Christ, God wished to change many things among His people. It is reasonable to say that in reforming the sign of the covenant, God wished to accomplish more than just an alteration in outward form. He must have known, and even intended, that the male-female relationship would alter in the church as well. Thus when Paul says in Gal. 3:28 that in Christ there is "neither male nor female," his proclamation is completely consistent with the whole order of what came into being with the advent of Christ.

D. The Progress of the Christian Church In Applying the
Principles of God's New Creation

We have already referred to the well-known "wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile. Much of the reason for the existence of this wall was that Gentiles (and women) did not possess the sign of the covenant, circumcision. We have also stated that of the three major ethical relationships mentioned in Gal. 3:28, Paul dealt primarily with the Jew-Gentile Issue. His next most urgent sense of mission was in the area of slave versus free. The question of male versus female as such occupied some of Paul's attention, but not as much as the other two relationships.

It is therefore not at all strange, and is entirely consistent with the guidance of God, that to a miraculous extent the early Christian community was able to avoid schism over the Jew-Gentile question. By the time of the death of Paul the church had become relatively clear in its collective mind about the proper relationship between Jew and Gentile. Had this not happened, it is not difficult to project what the destiny of Christianity would have been. It is to the glory of God that the gospel was able to penetrate and alter the pride and the prejudice, along with the embedded traditions, practices and attitudes behind the Jew-Gentile struggle. By the time of the death of Paul, however, much yet remained to be done in the Christian community when it came to the slave-free and male-female issues.

When one looks at the progress of early Christianity on the slave-free question, the record shows much slower growth. Though Paul felt very deeply about this question, he did not express himself on it as

frequently or as vehemently as he did on the Jew-Gentile Issue. With the exception of his letter to Philemon, the relationship of slave to free is not prominent in his epistles. It is true that in this area some significant progress was made, but it was well into the nineteenth century before this question was resolved with any finality in Christian communities and nations.

The fact is that Paul did not call for the abolition of slavery. He did appeal to masters to be humane to their slaves and for slaves to serve their masters well (Col. 3:22-4:1; Eph. 6:5-9). But if we are to judge the early and later Christian communities and even Paul by the universally accepted standards of freedom prevalent in the world today, we would have to say that it took much longer for Christians to resolve the slavery issue than it took them to resolve the Jew-Gentile Issue. Further, some would say that Paul himself was not quite as forward looking as we might wish. Yet it was Paul who said, on the basis of the gospel in his day, "There is neither.... slave nor free."

Paul and the early church were able to clearly see, and largely practice, both the spiritual and the social equality of Jews and Gentiles. The social equality of slave and free, however, was not achieved in Paul's day even though he felt slave and free to be equal in Christ. Paul appealed to the Christian community to remove only the worst of the conditions prevalent in the master-slave relationship.

The same kind of situation existed in Paul's day when it came to the male-female question, and therefore Paul, for his own reasons and for reasons within the community (which will be discussed in the next

section), was not able to insist on the sort of changes he did in the case of the Jew-Gentile Issue. In fact, for these reasons Paul employed arguments from Genesis 1, 2 and 3 against women teaching or even speaking in the churches. We will now turn to a brief discussion of this.

E. Paul's Specific Position on Women in the First Century Churches

It is as we consider passages of Scripture such as 1 Tim. 2:11-15, 1 Cor. 11:3-16 and 14:34 & 35 that the strongest divergence of opinion arises. We will now look at these Scriptures as such and consider them, as our hermeneutic demands (15), in relation to other Scriptural and historical dynamics.

1 Tim. 2:11-14 contains part of the instruction given by Paul to Timothy as to the behavior of believers in worship (16). 1 Tim. 2:9-12 gives concise instruction for women's decorum in the church. Then verses 13 and 14 give a Biblical rationale for the instruction. We will concentrate on verses 11-14, including also the data from 1 Corinthians 11 and 14.

In verse 11, Paul calls for women to "learn in quietness and submission." This injunction is consistent with 1 Cor. 14:34, where Paul says women should remain silent in the churches. In 1 Cor. 14:33 Paul says that this is done "in all the congregations" (see also 1 Cor. 11:16); in fact, women "are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission" (verse 34). In verse 35 Paul uses a strong word, saying, "It is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church." There is no question left as to what the apostle is saying about how women ought

to behave and what their role, if any, is to be in the meetings of the churches.

On the question of the silence of women in church, Paul has nothing to say in 1 Cor. 11; he will cover that in chapter 14, as we have just seen. In 1 Cor. 11:3, 7-10, however, Paul does place the woman in a subordinate position to the man. Thus again the "submission" of the woman is called for. This concept is unequivocal and consistent in all three of these passages and others (such as Eph. 5:22, where marriage is explicitly discussed). It is clear therefore, that in Paul's mind there is a direct connection between the male-female role definition in marriage and in the rest of society, particularly in the church.

In 1 Tim. 2:12 Paul says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man." This same idea, though not stated as overtly, is implicit in the 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 passages. Two things are spelled out in this statement: No woman is to teach and no woman is to have authority over any man.

Paul gives a threefold rationale for the position he takes on women in the church. 1) In 1 Tim. 2:13-14 he grounds his view in the pivotal creation-fall event. He says that women should not teach or have authority over men in the church because "Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived; it was the woman..." 2) In 1 Cor. 11:3 Paul indicates an unequivocal hierarchical scheme in the church based on a New Testament way of thinking. He says, "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." 3) In 1 Cor. 14:34

Paul says women should keep silent and in submission "as the law says." As discussed in chapter 2 of this paper, this almost certainly refers to the curse of Eve in Gen. 3:16 (17).

Thus, reasons 1 and 3 have a creation-fall or legal base, while reason 2 has what could be described as a Christological rationale.

The question must now be faced squarely; if Paul's position on the standing of women in the church is that they be subservient to men and if his reasons for taking this position are as fundamental as they seem to be, how can any Christian person adopt a view which allows women to stand equally with men in the formal ministry of the church? We will now attempt to answer this question directly.

We will look first at some perhaps unnoticed but important elements within the 1 Tim. 2:11-14 passage. We will then turn to other more inclusive elements that become evident as we view Paul's stand as a whole. Finally, we will look at some of the social, cultural and ecclesiastical backgrounds that are essential to a proper, holistic understanding of the Biblical view of the role of women in the church. We must also keep in mind what has already been said about the underlying influence of the gospel when it comes to both Paul's thinking and ours.

As we take another look at 1 Tim. 2:11-14, we should notice two things:

- 1) The KJV rendition of verse 12 reads "But I suffer not a woman to usurp authority over the man" (emphasis supplied). The accuracy of this translation is borne out by the primary meaning of the Greek word, authentein, or authenteo which is, "one who acts in his own

authority, an autocrat" (18). Moffat translates this, "I allow no woman to...dictate to men." Apparently there were women in some of the churches, such as in Corinth, who in their new-found Christian freedom tended to grasp aggressively at the prestige of teaching and leading in the congregations. This, understandably, could not be allowed, especially given the prevalent attitudes toward women in the church and the surrounding culture. Further Scriptural evidence of this aggressive attitude may be seen in 1 Cor. 11:16: "If anyone wants to be contentious about this [the man-woman relationship Paul is prescribing] we have no other practice" (emphasis added).

2) Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:12, "I do not permit a woman to teach..." This suggests the possibility that Paul is sharing with Timothy his practice as a leader in the congregations, leaving a certain latitude for others. There is no question about Paul's strong feelings on this issue; nevertheless Paul's wording suggests that he might have allowed some to do it differently, although his own preference and philosophy of leadership did not permit women to teach or have authority.

Apparently the question of women's role in the church was especially pronounced in the Corinthian congregation where it seems some women exaggerated the legitimate implications of their new freedom. Although Timothy was probably pastor of the Ephesian church at the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy (19), Timothy also worked in Corinth for some time (as 1 Cor. 4:17 shows), Paul having sent him there to settle the numerous problems in that church, not the least of which was the question of women's standing in the congregation. 1 Cor.

11:3-6 (see verse 16 especially) and 14:34-35, give evidence of a special problem in Corinth. It is also interesting to note that when Paul wrote to the Galatian churches, he said that in Christ there was neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female (Gal. 3:28), but when he wrote to the Corinthian Christians, his parallel statement spoke only of "Jews or Greeks" and "slave or free" (1 Cor. 12:13). The absence of any mention of male or female stands out. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul left the male-female relationship out of his statement in 1 Cor. 12:13 because he knew of the particular problems in Corinth where some women were extremely assertive.

All of this points to the conclusion that it was the abuse of new privileges among women in the Christian church that particularly concerned Paul. He was more concerned about the "contentiousness" (1 Cor. 11:16) of some women and their "usurping" of "authority" (1 Tim. 2:12, KJV) over men than he was that women take a definitely subservient role in the life of the church. This was especially so because of certain cultural, social and religious dynamics. We will now look at these.

F. The Cultural, Social and Religious Factors Behind

Paul's Position and Ours

We have already pointed to the fact that in Jewish religious culture the strict rabbi was not to talk to a woman in public, not even his wife, daughter, or sister, and that some Pharisees closed their eyes if they saw a woman approaching. A deep-seated attitude toward women is dramatized in these prohibitions and practices.

Aside from these there were other practices in both the Jewish and

Gentile cultures that throw light on our discussion and specifically upon the three passages we have looked at (1 Tim. 2:11-14, 1 Cor. 11:3-16 and 14:34 and 35). It is essential that we take into full account the fact that when Paul wrote on the issue of women in the church, he wrote against the backdrop of strong Jewish and Greek cultures.

A description by William Barclay (20) is very helpful, especially if we take the description step by step and note its remarkable correlation to the New Testament passages we have been discussing. We will also note instances in which the early Christian church progressed in its day beyond the conventions of Jewish and Greek culture.

Barclay says: "Women had no part in the synagogue service; they were shut apart in a section of the synagogue....where they could not be seen, and were allowed no share in the service." If Paul's instruction to Timothy was followed in all the New Testament churches, then women would have had very little to do in the public aspects of worship. Paul's injunctions, "A woman should learn in quietness," and "They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission" (1 Tim. 2:12, 1 Cor. 14:34) are unequivocal on this point. Although women were apparently not separated from men in the Christian meetings, they were definitely expected to behave in a fashion reminiscent of these Jewish synagogue practices. They did apparently take part in the service, but on a very modest level.

Barclay goes on: "A man came to the synagogue to learn; but, at the most, a woman came to hear. In the synagogue the lesson from Scripture was read by members of the congregation; but not by women."

Although Paul says in 1 Tim. 2:11, "A woman should learn...", (showing progress over the Jewish practice), nevertheless she was to learn in silent "submission" (verse 11 and 1 Cor. 14:34, NIV), for it was "disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14:35, NIV). Here is an unmistakable correlation between Christian and Jewish worship customs involving women.

Barclay further says of the Jewish life-style: "It was absolutely forbidden for a woman to teach in a school; she might not even teach the youngest children." There can be little question but that Paul's statement, "I do not permit a woman to teach..." (1 Tim. 2:12) is a direct carry-over from the Jewish practice.

A further description of the Jewish background behind Paul's position on women in the church is helpful in a more subjective way: "Now in Jewish eyes, women officially had a very low position. It is true that no nation ever gave a bigger place to women in home and in family things than the Jews did [a reflection Paul's statement in 1 Tim. 2:15, "But women will be kept safe through childbirth..."] but officially the position of women was very low." We must affirm what has already been said, that women were given a new standing in the Christian community, apparently above any that generally existed in the first century. However, given the influences of Judaism, it was difficult for Paul as a man and as a leader of people who had grown up in this sort of culture to advocate any greater shift in the standing of women than he advocated. If a shift in the position of Jew-Gentile relations, or in the question of circumcision almost divided the church, it was obvious that agitation in another controversial

direction would almost certainly have split it.

Thus we have Paul advocating a conservative stand on the issue of women's role in the church, indeed a stand which called on the Biblical creation-fall account, as well as the hierarchical order of God to Christ to man to woman, to affirm it. Though Paul's teaching on women in the church did allow for significant progress for women, it did not attain the degree of progress implied in the inspired, redemption-based mandate that in Christ there is "neither...male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). As in the issue of slavery, understandable though significant concessions had to be made due to prevailing prejudices and practices.

When it came to Greek or Gentile influences on the attitudes and practices of early Christians, Barclay says: "The place of women in Greek religion was very low. The Temple of Aphrodite in Corinth had [its] priestesses who were sacred prostitutes and who every evening plied their trade on the city streets." Two points must be made in regard to this statement. 1) As in Judaism so in the Greek culture, the overall place of women in religion was low. 2) If the priestesses of the Temple of Aphrodite in Corinth were prostitutes, Paul's concern for the way women conducted themselves, especially in terms of leadership in the Christian church, would have been understandably conservative. He would not have wanted to have women take a position in the Corinthian Church that would cause them to be seen as being in any sense the Christian counterpart of these heathen priestesses. These conditions were not localized in Corinth. The Temple of Diana in Ephesus also had priestesses called the Melissae, who had the same function as the priestesses in Corinth.

Furthermore:

The respectable Greek woman led a very confined life. She lived in her own quarters into which no one but her husband came. She did not even appear at meals... She never went to any public assembly. The fact is that if in a Greek town Christian women had taken an active and a speaking and a teaching part in the work of the Christian church, the church would inevitably have gained the reputation of being the resort of loose and immoral women.

At this point we must say with emphasis that Paul's position on women in the church is a position that has never as such been advocated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For example, Adventist women, though they have covered their heads by wearing hats to worship, have not generally done so in the United States for years. Even when Ellen White or contemporary women have stood to speak or teach the Word of God, they have done so largely with their heads uncovered. The speaking and the teaching, as well as the uncovered head, is all a departure from Paul's prescription. As Adventists, we have felt understandably free to interpret some of Paul's teaching according to the circumstances of our congregations. Can we then allow ourselves to use the Pauline passages under discussion to bar women from fuller participation in the ministry of the church?

Women have for years been given official, permanent teaching positions in our Seminary, colleges, academies and elementary schools. Women regularly lead out as elders, superintendents and teachers in our churches and Sabbath Schools. These offices, among other things, give women "authority over men." This authority is not unlike that of the ordained minister. We have not required these women to remain "silent" or "submissive" in the way Paul enjoins.

If, on the basis of statements such as Paul's in 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14, we continue to limit the role of women in the church, then we are taking a logically untenable stand. Who is to say what degree of latitude the church should allow itself in adapting Paul's words once we embark on this rather literalistic view of Scripture while we largely neglect some of the central principles of the Bible? This use of Scripture is susceptible to an inconsistency which inevitably leads to the adoption of rather arbitrary conclusions that only appear to be Biblical.

If indeed we are going to bar women from full participation in ministry, largely on the basis of these Pauline statements or on the basis of similar Biblical statements, cases or precedents, then we must in all reasonable consistency also insist that women cover their heads at church gatherings, that they remain silent, that they not speak or teach, that if they want to know anything, they wait until they get home to ask their husbands (if they all have husbands), and that they hold no position that involves any authority over any man in the church. We should also hold that it is a "disgrace" (1 Cor. 14:35, NIV) if this is not done. This would not be unreasonable or extreme, if indeed we were to exclusively adopt the more literalistic view of Scripture with little appeal to the great principles of the Bible or the background dynamics of Paul's day and ours.

A further point should be noted. The traditional, functional criteria employed in the Seventh-day Adventist Church to distinguish the unordained minister from the ordained, have been twofold: The privilege of performing baptisms and the right to solemnize marriages.

Although the church must always be granted reasonable latitude in setting such criteria, two things must be pointed out: 1) Our actual practice of ordination is not Biblical per se. 2) By allowing only ordained ministers to baptize, we imply that performing the rite of baptism is an act that denotes ecclesiastical authority. This use of baptism is not really Scriptural. Jesus baptized no one. His disciples did the baptizing (John 4:1, 2). One might reason that if baptism is indeed what we see it to be, surely Jesus would have performed baptisms. If someone says that it was because of the exceptional role of the Messiah that Jesus refrained from baptizing (which may be true), then we must look at I Cor. 1:14-17, where Paul says he baptized only a few of the Corinthian believers, and where he says, "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (KJV). We are left to wonder who baptized the other Corinthian believers and if preaching the gospel--an activity we finance and train women to do--is perhaps to Paul and to God a more important sign of authority than the act of baptizing is. If we are indeed committed to the more literalistic use of the New Testament material in setting our church policies, we should reconsider the Biblical data and reevaluate our use of the act of baptizing to distinguish the ordained ministry in the church.

We will now turn briefly to one more background factor that affects our understanding of the Pauline position on women in the church. This factor has important implications for our understanding of one of our basic Pauline passages, Gal. 3:28: "Women, slaves and children were classed together. In the Jewish morning prayer a man

thanked God that God had not made him 'a Gentile, a slave or a woman.'" It is impossible not to notice the parallel between the things a Jewish man thanked God he was not--a Gentile, a slave or a woman--and those things Paul in Gal. 3:28 declares since Christ has come are no longer the issues they had once been; the Jew-Gentile, free-slave and male-female relationships. Paul, having been a Pharisee, would almost certainly have daily prayed this prayer of the Jewish man. In becoming Christian, and in realizing the implications of the arrival of Christ, not only does Paul repudiate this prayer, but he authoritatively declares that in the light of Christ and His new creation, all God's children have an equivalent standing (21). He calls for the demolition of the distinctions which are no longer appropriate to the new creation.

Paul's desire is that the church move on to show the reality of this great principle in the way it treats all people. Clearly, Paul himself would have gone further had it not been for the cultural and social constraints that existed in his background and environment. These constraints no longer exist in our day. If anything, in many parts of the world, and especially in much of the United States, the constraints are now reversed; a circumstance which finally allows us to obey the gospel mandate by fully opening the doors of formal ministry to women.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There are a number of rather critical issues that could yet be discussed. The whole question of "the royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9) and its universal nature has a most suggestive impact on the standing of women in the church, as does the New Testament teaching on "spiritual gifts" (1 Cor. 12:1). The actual role of women in the early church, such as Philip's daughters and Dorcas, would be interesting to study, especially in the light of the Pauline statements we have considered. The question of the particular roles of women in the Old Testament is also important, as is the crucial question of women's "call" to ministry. We must, however, summarize and make an important concluding statement.

A. Summary:

We began by laying a hermeneutical base. The more literalistic way of viewing particular Scriptural texts was not seen to be adequate by itself. Studying the whole testimony of Scripture and the Bible's foundational principles along with its historical backgrounds was seen to be of value, while we also insisted on allowing the single texts of the Bible to have their full literal weight. The attempt was made to combine these two ways of looking at Scripture into a single hermeneutic, allowing both to contribute to a proper interpretation.

In Genesis 1, we asserted the fact that male and female together make up the "Image of God" in humanity. We saw that Adam was made

before Eve, but that Eve was taken from the side of Adam to be his equal. While we recognized the significance to Paul of Adam being created before Eve, we cautioned against assigning significance to such facts when an inspired writer had not noted them. We also noted that Adam's exclamation of delight with Eve (Gen. 2:23) gave no hint of anything but a recognition of Eve as his equal partner.

In the Genesis account of the fall we affirmed not only the different roles that Adam and Eve played in the fall, but the areas in which they were mutually involved, and the way God held both culpable. In the curse of Eve, we emphasized that the wording speaks of man and woman as husband and wife and does not imply a generalized relationship between all men and all women in every social, cultural or ecclesiastical situation.

In the New Testament, we showed that the attitude and practice of Jesus regarding women was distinctly progressive. Using the account of the woman at Jacob's well we showed the astonishment of the disciples and of the woman herself that Jesus would speak to a woman, a thing that simply was not done by rabbis or respectable Jewish men of Jesus' day. When observing the open stance that Jesus took toward women we suggested that He intentionally set the pace for the Christian church.

As we took up the question of the influence of the gospel on women's standing in the church, we observed that according to the summary of the gospel in Galatians 3 the pivotal statement of verse 28 was indeed founded on the bedrock of the good news itself. We noted that being "in Christ" as "children of God" through the gospel implied

a new and profoundly practical way of defining ourselves and others. We saw that the old way of emphasizing distinctions between Jew and Gentile, slave and free and especially male and female gave way to a new view of a humanity united in Christ and equal as sons and daughters of God. We further showed that the curse of Eve (and Adam) was embodied in the "curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13) and that Christ removed the sting of this curse. We asserted that the Christian community must in every way live in consistency with this fact and that this would logically include giving full standing to women in the church.

Further, we pointed to a connection between the Jew-Gentile Issue and the male-female Issue, this connection being the matter of circumcision. We saw circumcision as the Jewish sign of the covenant. We showed how this sort of sign by its nature excluded women from full standing in the religious community. We then discussed how the removal of circumcision from the Christian community and the adopting of a universal covenantal symbol (such as baptism) helped to raise the standing of women in the church and the community.

We moved on to note how the Christian church was able to make remarkable progress in applying the implications of the gospel to the relationship between Jew and Gentile, while because of social and cultural constraints, concessions had to be made in the case of the slavery issue. We showed how similar, though perhaps even more potent kinds of factors definitely impeded the progress of the standing of women in the early church. We pointed out how Paul, to support his position on the role of women in worship used arguments from the

creation-fall event, and chose to make concessions, even using these arguments, because of the potential divisiveness of taking a course that would have pressed the Gal. 3:28 mandate any further than it had already been pressed in the case of the Jew-Gentile question.

In closing, we showed that though some would exclude women from full participation in formal ministry on the basis of the statements of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, and 1 Timothy 2, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has never applied these statements just as they stand. A nonliteralistic application of these Pauline statements was affirmed proper because these statements were unmistakably responsive to the existing Jewish and Greek cultures in the midst of which they were written. We observed that the cultural constraints in the United States today press in an opposite direction from the Jewish and Greek cultures, thus finally allowing us to fulfill the mandate of the gospel as we open the doors of the ministry of the church completely to women.

B. Conclusion

As we view the Biblical account as a whole, along with the first chapters of Genesis and the Pauline material, we are led to the conviction that the position of women in the church must be raised to a level fully corresponding with that of men.

We can see that definite social, cultural, and thus religious constraints rested on the early Christian community. These constraints prevented earlier Christian people from fulfilling the mandate of the gospel which proclaimed an equivalent standing for all God's children in Christ, women included. We can also see, however,

that just as in the case of the slave-free issue, a time came to drop the concessions and to respond fully to this mandate, so now on the issue of women in the Christian community and in the church, this time has come. If anything, in widespread areas of the world, conditions are such that if we withhold from women the standing that the Bible calls for, we will be in the wrong--not only in the eyes of our society, but especially in the light of the mandate of the gospel.

It is disconcerting for us to look into history and to see how the Bible has been used persuasively by Christians to try to justify the slave trade. It is alarming to look at much more recent history and to see how "the curse of Ham" (Genesis 9:25) was used by Christians to try to justify a wholly unjust stand against the idea of full equality for Black people. The use today of the Biblical account of the curse against Eve to exclude women from full standing in the ministry is strikingly similar to this kind of reasoning. The Seventh-day Adventist Church must not be a party to it.

We believe, on the basis of the Biblical evidence as a whole, that to understand Paul properly we must always proceed from the point he ultimately does: the arrival of Christ and its impact upon the lives of human beings. We believe that Paul based all of his thinking and action primarily upon his understanding of the work of Jesus Christ. If apparent restrictions to this redemptive principle are found elsewhere, even in Paul, then as soon as possible they are to be subjected to the redemption-based mandate of principle statements expressed in Biblical passages such as Galatians 3, and not vice versa. We believe that God's redeeming act in Christ, and its

Implications, must be the ultimate touchstone in defining the activity of the church.

We realize that there are many, even in much of the United States of America, who are not yet ready to affirm the full standing of women in the ministry of the church. For this reason, it is important that the Adventist Church proceed carefully as it moves women into complete formal ministry. It would not be wise nor would it be just to press women ministers onto congregations who cannot accept such action. It would also be highly unwise to encourage young women to go into ministry without a full understanding of the frustrations they will encounter because of the unreadiness of many to receive them.

All of this is true, but it must not in any sense be allowed to obscure the fact that on the basis of Scripture, the time has now come to officially affirm the full standing of women in the Adventist-Christian community and to open the doors of ministry completely to those women whom God has called to such service.

FOOTNOTE REFERENCES/COMMENTS

1. A purposeful oversimplification is obvious here. There are undoubtedly more than two approaches and a variety of ramifications. But dealing with only two suits our purposes adequately.
2. Richard N. Longenecker, New Testament Social Ethics for Today (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), p. 92.
3. Arnold V. Wallenkampf, "On Women Ordination to the Gospel Ministry" (Washington, DC: E.G. White Research Center, 1978), p. 1.
4. For a brief discussion of the Hebrew wording ('ezer kenegdo) see F.B. Holbrook, "A Brief Analysis and Interpretation of the Biblical Data Regarding the Role of Women" (a paper written in 1972), pp. 1, 2.
5. See Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1953), pp. 225, 226.
6. Ellen G. White, The Adventist Home (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1952), p. 71.
7. A fuller discussion of Paul's use of this passage will be provided in the next chapter.
8. This is not to deny Paul's view of the fall, nor his view of the implications of Eve's part in it. Again, this will be taken up more fully in the next chapter.
9. Holbrook, p. 7.
10. Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Relationship of Man and Woman in the Beginning and at the End" (a position paper written in 1972), p. 17.
11. It is true that in Ephesians 2, Paul sees the cross as the active instrument in razing sin-caused barriers. But the way Jesus lived and what He acted out in His day-to-day existence, mirrored that which was accomplished by His death.
12. The Greek literally reads, "...and marveled that with a woman he was speaking."
13. William Barclay, The Gospel of John, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), p. 162.

14. For data relating to Jewish attitudes toward women, see pp. 34-36, and 40.
15. See pp. 6 and 7.
16. All Biblical quotations in this section are from the New International Version.
17. See p. 12.
18. G. Abbot-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), p. 68.
19. See Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1960), p. 1099.
20. All quotations in this part of the discussion, unless otherwise indicated, are from William Barclay, The Letters to Timothy, Titus and Philemon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 66, 67.
21. See Wallenkampf, pp. 4 and 5.

