

**THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

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## THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

### I. Introduction: An Inevitable Reaction

Throughout the course of history, the function of authority has generally been entrusted to man. However some celebrated exceptions are well-known: Hatshepsut, Jezebel, Cleopatra . . . Aristotle gave a learned philosophical expression to his misogyny [hatred of women], considering woman as a defective man.<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas was to take up the same idea: "Woman is something deficient and of occasional profit. Man alone complies with the definition of human nature whose specific difference is that he is endowed with intelligence and reason, for he is destined for a more noble life which is to understand, whereas woman is appointed to beget children."<sup>2</sup> The Jews yielded to the same tendency:

**A Jewish Prayer:** "Blessed art Thou, Lord, for Thou hast made me neither heathen, nor slave, nor woman."<sup>3</sup>

**Ecclesiasticus 42:14:** "The sin of man is of more value than the goodness of woman."

Later the Vaudois of Piedmont went to the greatest extremes, soon to be followed by Luther.

**The Vaudois of Piedmont:** "Woman is the confusion of man; she is an insatiable animal, a continual worry, an unceasing struggle, a misery, a demand each new day, a stormy house, a hindrance to useful work, the incontinence and excesses of man; she is a vessel of adultery, a dangerous fight, the worst of animals, the poison of asps."<sup>4</sup>

**Luther:** For the reformer, if a woman denied herself to her husband, the latter was at liberty to take a concubine. In this case, said Luther, the husband should say: "If you yourself are unwilling, another will consent; if the mistress refuses, let the maidservant take her place."<sup>5</sup>

Procreation as a second function of woman was stated by Luther with a certain cruelty: "The fact that their pregnancies weary them and end by dragging them to the grave, he said, is not serious; let pregnancies kill them, they are there for that."<sup>6</sup>

These few examples illustrate the extremes that produced a reaction. We remain perplexed, almost incredulous before so many follies and monstrosities. The reaction came. We can well ask if there is not danger of going from one extreme to the other like the swing of the pendulum. The demands no longer have any limit. It is in this climate of opinion today that we examine the propriety of ordaining women to the different offices of deaconess, elder, and pastor.

**No conformity.** In our considerations here we function from no sex bias; there are no preconceived ideas, either emotional or sociological. We incline even to the firm opinion that God confides an important ministry to women in the church. It is a question of determining which, and above all, knowing what God has revealed to us on this subject. Our task is not to follow fashion, to adapt ourselves to the world, whatever may be its pressures (Rom 12:1-2). The Adventist Church has a fundamental mission, essential, vital and sacred—to remain calm and faithful to the Word of God just as the Bible reveals it to us. In this age where under diverse so-called scientific pretexts, the Scriptures are adapted to the taste of the day, God expects that we shall stand firm with humility and love, but also with courage and tenacity.

**No expediency.** The fact that there are more women than men, and that the former often are more available than men, is often called upon to support the propriety of ordaining women to the positions of elder and pastor. The argument is not valid. Convenience is not a reason. Between the choice of the Sabbath or of Sunday as the day of rest, the question is not which is easier. Expediency leads to unfaithfulness.

**No misogyny.** We can be happy and grateful that there is a new appreciation for women in contemporary society. The efficient cooperation that I have experienced several times with women pastoral helpers has left an excellent impression on me. But it is advisable to leave to women what belongs to women, and to leave to men what belongs to them.

Our task is to understand the significance and purpose of the biblical texts dealing with the subject. In the difficult verses of the apostle Paul in particular, the great question is to discover if they have been influenced by a situational ethic, as some have suggested. This is not



our approach with any of the references to be considered. We are more inclined to believe that Paul employs essentially theological arguments. This is what we intend to show in the following pages, without prejudice to the important conclusions which we derive from them.

**Let us remain humble.** We must not allow ourselves to become involved in controversy due to the extreme difficulty of the subject. We must keep a cool head. Without objectivity we have no hope of being guided by the Spirit of God.

## II. A Red Warning Light

Among the French-speaking theologians who have studied the subject, the majority who have taken a position in favor of the ordination of women base their research on a critical exegesis. From this point of view they do not hesitate to make a choice between the inspired texts, easily rejecting those which do not support their ideas. We will cite two examples to illustrate this point.

First, we have Franz J. Leenhardt, famous for the work he has devoted to the New Testament.<sup>7</sup> He attributes closure of the door of the ministry to women to its supposed threat to masculine vanity. No doubt aware that his position would take issue with the apostle Paul, he does not hesitate to write: "I fully acknowledge that Paul was subject to the ideas of his time and that he was able to share the prejudices surrounding him. I am of the firm opinion likewise that there is no reason why we should still share them. We are free to judge him. On all points where the findings of physical or moral science enlighten us better than he does, we are convinced that he was in error."<sup>8</sup> This is how scholarly science judges the Scriptures.

But this is not all. After dealing with the statements of 1 Corinthians and of Ephesians, our author writes: "The outlook changes when we enter upon the first epistle to Timothy. There we find a positive injunction of silence on women. . . . We can leave aside the question of knowing whether this verse is truly Pauline, which moreover we question categorically. . . . It is still true that the reasoning of 1 Timothy 2:13 is inspired by a completely different spirit than that which dictated 1 Corinthians 11. The author wanted to show by this argument that the

metaphysical inferiority of the woman was written in nature by creation. . . . Our author treads in new and unfortunate ways. . . . The tone of these few verses in the epistle to Timothy has therefore something which surprises us. It appears to us to be fruitless to seek for harmony with the epistle to the Corinthians. Another spirit actuates these pages. Whence does it come? It matters little whether it be Judaic or clerical or dualist. It appears to us neither biblical nor gospel."<sup>9</sup>

Here we are told that the epistle to Timothy is not by Paul and its contents are incompatible with the spirit of the gospel. To defend the pastoral ministry of women, we must exclude the epistle to Timothy from the New Testament. The flashing light is red. . .

Our second example of critical exegesis is taken from Ennio Floris, professor of theology at Paris.<sup>10</sup> His approach is very different from the preceding, which makes it worthwhile to be quoted here as a complementary point of view. It consists in exploring the relationship between the Pauline texts and the first two chapters of Genesis. First Corinthians 11 is akin to Genesis 1:27, Ephesians 5 to Genesis 2:24, and 1 Timothy 2 is inspired by Genesis 2 and 3.

Floris says "the first chapter of Genesis is a priestly text, the next two being peculiar to the Yahvistic tradition. . . . Now this priestly text knows nothing of a hierarchy between man and woman, nor therefore a submission of woman to man, but it considers the man, Adam, as made up precisely by the relationship man-woman; and it is this relationship, the couple, which is considered as the image of God; it is also the man and the woman, in the potential of their intercourse as a couple, that God commanded to multiply and to replenish the earth and to subdue it (Gen 1:28).

Because this idea of the man-couple is specially placed in a theological tradition whose text deals with the origin of the world and its people, we are bound to consider it as the text which speaks to us of man and woman as they were at the beginning, that is to say, in the particular view of the final act of the creation.



"Chapters 2 and 3, on the contrary, which belong to the Yahvistic school, speak to us of the man and the woman more in connection with their historical situation and with the moral order of the law. In this text, the word Adam, man, denotes the male, and not the couple. The facts that man was created before woman, that she was taken from man for the sake of man, and that finally sin came to man by means of the woman, are to be considered as myths which give the profound psychological and religious reasons for the state of the man-woman relationships pre-supposed by the laws of all the codes of the Old Testament. For the laws concerning these relationships are rightly derived from the principle of the lordship of man upon the earth" (emphasis supplied).<sup>11</sup>

Having stated this tension between Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, Ennio Floris affirms that Genesis 1 is a prophecy of the gospel couple, whereas Genesis 2 is a history of the couple under the Old Covenant. In Matthew 19:1-9, Jesus, according to him, refers to Genesis 1, "abolishing" (sic) thus the Yahvistic text. In order to "liberate" the woman, the Scripture must be read in the light of the tension between the two sources.

But the question arises of knowing why Paul, while recognizing the deliverance of woman, still desires that she be subject to man in the meetings of the church as well as in married life. Ennio Floris does not evade the question: "Why then has not Paul not followed logic, or rather the prophetic announcement contained in the epistle to the Galatians? What are the reasons, not historical or psychological, but theological, for this apparent return to the law? How did Paul, who opened the church to the heathen world and who recognized the abolition of the law, keep women in subjection?"<sup>12</sup>

For this French theologian there is a conflict between Galatians 3 and the other statements of Paul, but instead of suppressing it according to Leonhardt's example, or minimizing it, as do all those who use the argument of situation ethics, he retains it honestly. According to him Galatians 3 represents the ideal prophecy (Gen 1) toward which we must aim, knowing that the complete abolition of the difference will be achieved only in the kingdom: it is eschatological.

Between the liberty obtained by right in Christ and the liberty achieved at the moment of the Second Coming, there is a liberty of progression. In Christ we must consider ourselves as being all dead in respect to sin as well as to the law. "For in dying for us Christ has robbed the law of its power and has taken away its subjects. The law has remained as a collection of standards which have no longer any force, for those for whom it was given no longer exist for it. By demanding the penalty of death for all who transgress it, the law has destroyed itself by itself."

Hence men and women who are truly converted, in whom the old man is destroyed, are no longer subservient to the law. They no longer have to live according to the model of Genesis 2, echoed by Paul in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and 1 Timothy. The way is open to those as foreseen in Genesis 1 and clearly revealed in Galatians 3.

Certainly such an explanation does not lack grandeur; however, can we not discern the dangers it holds? It is based on a hermeneutic which we cannot accept and leads to an objectionable view of the Christian life greatly different from our own. The flashing light is still red.

### **III. Women in the Old Testament**

#### **A. Before Sin**

In Genesis 1:27 we find the first mention of the feminine: "He created him male and female," in His image, according to the essence of God. Note that God speaks in the masculine. In the same manner we say "our Father." Be that as it may, when God created the first being, He made him at the same time masculine and feminine. In verse 26, "the word man (Adam) is used in its collective sense, without a definite article, and the verbs which accompany it are in the plural."<sup>13</sup> It does not remain that way in verse 27. "Three times in succession the verb (bara) is repeated. Man is taken in a more particular sense with the definite article. Then he is specified by the two words: male and female. It was therefore the human couple that was foreseen in God's creative plan, not as two separate beings, but as two aspects of the human being in its totality."<sup>14</sup>



When Adam named the animals he did not find any creature similar to himself. He was alone. But the solitude of man was not in God's plan. He was to receive a "help as against him, that is to say, as his opposite, or again, as one corresponding to him. . . . There exists in this expression an idea of correspondence, or even of response against the man, which does not contain the idea of similarity or of equality. The help of whom man had need was a being with whom he would enter into personal relationship and from whom he would receive a response."<sup>15</sup>

Ezer (a helper, Gen 2:18), that is aid, support, vital essential help, someone who would share man's responsibilities. In Genesis 1:28 God said, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth," a command given to the two, in the plural.

Kenegdo (fit for him, Gen 2:18), "against him" or "in his presence" or "opposite him," but also "contrary, opposed to him." Rashi, a celebrated Jewish commentator who lived at Troyes in the eleventh century, said that it all depends: if man is deserving, the woman becomes a help at his side; otherwise, she will be a help against him.

So in the divine plan woman appears as a condition of existence for man. Man cannot live alone. He has need of a partner. There is no question of superiority, inferiority, or of equivalence; there will be two beings who will not live each one for himself.

It must be added that the root n g d is found in the verb lehagid, to speak, to be acquainted, to explain, to publish. So it is certainly a matter of one who communes, an aid for dialogue. This first picture is not that of a mother or a sexual partner, it is a relative, one in communion, a suitable helper.

In addition, the woman was to be taken from the man as a part of himself. This explains both the profound unity and the difference which exist between man and the one whom God gave him as a wife. The Eternal One constructed the rib—or the side—which He took from the man to form the woman (Gen 2:22). "The woman is not a creature distinct from man;

she did not give rise to a new creation: she was already created with man. Her existence is only a new arrangement of the human being, but the identity of nature is complete. This common nature of man and woman which corresponds in this respect to the statement of the first chapter (vs. 27) could not be better shown: God created man, He created him male and female. . . . If she had been separated from man, it was only to be given back to him, but transformed. . . . In spite of this identity, a difference remains. Man was created first, the woman was taken from him. It was he who gave her her name and who by reason of this kept a certain pre-eminence over her, even if this name is derived closely from his. The text does not speak then of an equality between man and woman, an equality which appears nowhere in the Bible, in the sense of our modern ideas on equality of the sexes.)<sup>16</sup>

#### **B. After Sin**

Unfortunately the divine plan was suddenly endangered by disobedience. A breaking of the balance appeared immediately between man and God, as also between man and woman. However the peace of the couple is a condition for the peace of peoples. In order to achieve this, man and woman must remain close while admitting their differences. This difference, evident at the biological level, is a sign of a more profound difference, that perhaps Adam had not understood very well. He had recognized in Eve what was "flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone," but had not realized at what point his personality was distinct from her's and different.

Two consequences followed Eve's mistake. She wanted to enjoy, she would suffer: she wanted to dominate her husband, she would be subject unto him. The first relates to the burden of domestic life which falls to a large extent on the woman. The second stresses her submission to man. By the channel of creation already she had assumed the lesser role. Now it changed itself to submission: "thy desire shall be to thine husband, and he shall reign over thee" (Gen 3:16). Even today in numerous tribes the woman is considered almost as a slave. Such was not the case among the Jews although they had assigned a



subordinate role to woman.

### C. Function of Women

The main function was to take care of the home. Therefore they were, above all, to remain at home. The psalmist speaks by the circumlocution "she that tarried at home" (Ps 68:12). They were to grind the grain, bake the bread, prepare the meal, go to draw water from the spring, spin, weave, sew, make their own clothes and those of the men. The most skillful made tunics and belts to sell.<sup>17</sup>

From the Mosaic period pious women took care of the holy places, keeping them in a clean condition, making, washing, and ironing the sacred vestments.<sup>18</sup> In the wilderness of Sinai, the most adept wove precious material for the tabernacle and carried out work of embroidery.<sup>19</sup> In the patriarchal epoch girls watched flocks and the mistresses of the house supervised their servants.<sup>20</sup>

Some women had tasks of greater importance. Under the kings, the queens often exercised great influence as wives, and above all as mothers. Jezebel and Athaliah exercised genuine power.<sup>21</sup> It is true that in their cases this was not a blessed experience. The example of Deborah, a judge in Israel, is more convincing. But the qualifications of the prophetesses are specially remembered: Miriam, Huldah, Anna.

### D. The Priesthood

We know that in the beginning the father of the family carried out the priestly functions. In the name of all those who depended on him, he offered their worship and sacrifices. During their sojourn in Egypt, the Hebrews were familiar only with the patriarchal priesthood. It was during the Mosaic epoch that the Levitical priesthood was organized, reserved exclusively for men. To appreciate this fact for its proper worth one needs to recall that the heathen religions often had recourse to priestesses. Local practices did not therefore play a decisive role in the choice of men rather than of women.



#### IV. Argument Taken From the Universal Priesthood

The study instituted at the present time by the Adventist Church concerning the ordination of women has also been made by the Reform Church in France. Professors Casalis and Dumas have considered Galatians 3 a fundamental text. For them, pastoral ministry is not specific but is part of the ministry common to the church; all baptized persons, whether men or women, have access by baptism itself to the ministry common to the church, and as a result, any baptized person, whether man or woman, may also have access to the pastoral ministry.

Faced with this important stand, we cannot avoid considering the question. What is the scope of the universal priesthood proclaimed by the New Testament? Does it carry a decisive argument which will resolve the problem that concerns us? It is important to address ourselves to this subject, for the idea of the universal priesthood often is raised.

##### A. Five References

The New Testament clearly affirms the universal priesthood of all Christians: 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6; 5:9, 10; 20:6. All these verses refer more or less directly to Exodus 19:6 where the priesthood is promised to Israel in an imposing context. The whole people are involved. However only the tribe of Levi was put forward for the specialized priesthood. One would then expect that the promise was fulfilled only under the New Covenant. A comparison of the New Testament texts with the reference in the Old Testament will convince us of this.

##### B. 1 Peter 2:9

The author quoted Exodus 19:6 from the Septuagint, which replaces the plural priests by the singular hierateuma. All Greek words ending in euma designate a group of persons exercising a function.

Difference between the two verses:

Exodus 19:6

1. God speaks
2. Verb in the future: you shall be
3. Kingdom of priests

1 Peter 2:9

Peter speaks  
verb to be implied in the present. Outlook changed: passing from a promise to the proclamation of a fact.  
A royal priesthood: in the sense of functional, corporate.

In order to emphasize the functional aspect, Peter amplifies the quotation with elements borrowed from Isaiah 43:21—"This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Peter writes: "... that ye should shew forth the praises (margin = virtues) of him who hath called you. . . ." The priesthood therefore is associated with the function of witnessing. This is new, and here Peter separates himself from the Old Testament view.

**C. 1 Peter 2:4-5, The Building of the Spiritual House**

The doctrine of the priesthood appears here in all its force. Christians are invited to draw near to Christ. If they approach they are integrated into the spiritual house. Note that the building is done by Christ, contrary to what some translations suggest, by translating oikodomeisthe by build yourself. The indicative should be preferred to the imperative:

1. A verb in the passive introduced by a relative pronoun: very rarely in the imperative mood.
2. Jesus said: "I will build my church" (Matt 16:18). Literally Peter wrote: "You coming (participle) . . . you are built (indicative). . . ."
  - a. The verb proserchomai, draw near, is applied to a joining of faith.
  - b. It shows the absolute necessity of the mediation of Christ and of continual union with Him. If the priestly title of Christ is not mentioned, His mission is suggested clearly.
  - c. By drawing near to the corner stone, although rejected, believers become living stones. Jesus is the only mediator, the unique archiereus. He became a living



stone by His suffering and His resurrection. He has established the capacity of uniting together other stones, which, on contact with Him, are transformed and receive new life.

- d. Being built, believers then form a spiritual house with a view to (eis) becoming a holy priesthood (hierateuma), offering spiritual sacrifices. The word house, which is static, is then completed by the functional word, hierateuma, introduced by the preposition eis which rightly indicates purpose.<sup>22</sup>

#### **D. Can we conclude from these verses that there is a generalized individual priesthood?**

1. From a semantic point of view, it is difficult to diminish the words kingdom and priesthood to an individualized classification. Peter speaks of a new society, holy and elect of God. Its qualifications are collective and corporate, applicable to a people, not to isolated individuals. The context underlines this aspect with the words race, nation, people, house. Believers are not simply individuals placed side by side, but persons placed in relation one to another in such a way as to form a priestly organism, a house. Paul expresses the same idea by the illustration of a body.
2. Does this universal priesthood imply the disappearance of all distinctiveness? No. Equality is not identity. By the illustrations which he uses, Peter suggests different levels of participation. All the stones are part of the house but they do not all have the same function. Paul is even more explicit on this point (1 Cor 12:12-30).

#### **E. Universal Priesthood and Organization of the Church**

1. **Elders.** First Peter is the only New Testament book that speaks of both the universal priesthood and of elders (1 Pet 5:1-4). One does not exclude the other. The universal priesthood offers no reason to prevent the church from organizing itself after the pattern of the primitive church.
2. **Ministries.** One reaches important conclusions in comparing 1 Peter 2:3-5 and Ephesians 2:21-22. The same ideas, and to a certain extent, the words, are parallel in these



two passages. However Peter proceeds to discuss elders, whereas Paul continues his development by describing the ministries of the church (Eph 4:11-16).

Furthermore Paul builds a comparison between the priestly service of the temple and the ministry of the gospel (1 Cor 9:13-14). He also establishes a close connection between apostolic ministry and sacrificial worship. He is leitourgos ... hierourgounta," a ministry fulfilling a sacred work (Rom 13:16). Paul does not appear as a simple devotee but as a servant offering the oblation of the heathen.

That does not mean he identifies himself with the ancient priests. It is no longer a question of sacrificing an animal but of sanctifying living people by imparting to them the fire of the Spirit. And the first sacrifice to offer is oneself (Rom 12:1). Paul never assumed the title of hiereus, but he mentioned some precise ministries in the heart of the church at the interior of the universal priesthood.

### 3. Conclusion.

- a. The promise made to Israel was fulfilled in the church of Christ.
- b. Christ is the cornerstone of the building which he constructs. All Christians, by uniting themselves to Him by faith, become living stones and so participate in the mission which devolves upon the church.
- c. But this does not imply a uniformity. The writings of Peter and of Paul dwell upon the existence of particular ministries. Nowhere are women spoken of as involved in the functions of elder and pastor. To prove the ordination of women based on the universal priesthood can come only by an extrapolation.

### F. Revelation 1:4-8

In his three references John quotes Exodus 19:6 from the Hebrew text. His first mention appears in a doxology. Once more, the promise becomes reality and is applied to each Christian. There is not only a collective priesthood of a functional type, but a plurality of those who offer sacrifices. It is advisable to avoid the use of the word priest, which comes

from the Greek word presbuteros, which designates elders. All take part in a kind of priesthood which implies essentially the mission of witness. All are not elders, only those whom the church sets apart under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Thanks to His death and resurrection, Christ obtained for mankind a profound transformation, one which introduces them into a direct relationship with God without barriers. As Paul stated (Rom 8:37-39), there is no more separation, we have free access into the sanctuary (Heb 10:19): such is the marvellous privilege of the Christian.

#### **G. Revelation 5:10**

The setting is that of a hymn sung in the context of a great heavenly vision. It brings enlightenment to the word basileia—"kingdom." Is the meaning passive or active? In stating that Christians make up a kingdom, can we say that they are governed by God (passive sense), or they are actively associated in His reign? John is quite explicit: "they shall reign on the earth."

#### **H. Revelation 20:6**

Neither doxology nor hymn but a beautitude. It has the virtue of showing that the privilege gained now is confirmed in the hereafter after the return of Christ. As in his vision of chapter 7, John looks at the multitude who stand before the throne and who hail God and the Lamb. Therefore they occupy an eminently priestly position, for not only are they allowed to enter the naos ("temple")—a prerogative of priests—but they reach even the throne of God and remain there day and night to serve Him (Rev 7:15).

#### **I. Conclusion**

The priestly monarchy parallels the redemptive work of Christ. The full realization of this double dignity is presented as the supreme experience of joy and of Christian holiness. Nothing greater can be imagined. It is the freedom above all freedoms. In presenting it John says nothing either for or against the ordination of women. Biblical discussions of the priesthood of even believers, while important, simply do not deal with the issue we are



discussing.

## V. Galatians 3:28—The Main Argument

Most proponents of women's ordination cite this passage as the principal Bible text relevant to the question of ordaining women. The main argument rests on the expression, "there is neither male nor female."

### A. Parallel Texts.

We should observe that Galatians 3:28, this verse, has three parallels in Paul's writings:

**Romans 10:12:** "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all. . . ." They all call on the Lord, confess Him with their mouth and believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead. From then on, there is no longer any difference.

**1 Corinthians 12:13:** "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free. . . ."

**Colossians 3:11,** where Paul describes the way those should behave who, having been baptized, are risen with Christ; since they have put off the old man and have put on the new man: ". . . there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all."

It is important that when we compare the four passages only Galatians 3:28 combines in its enumeration arsen kai thelu, male and female. And this certainly is not the thrust of the verse. It does not express the main burden of the author.

### B. Soteriological Meaning

We saw that two declarations of Peter concerning the universal priesthood appear in a baptismal catechism. And here Paul refers to baptism (3:27). He stresses that baptism is sufficient for salvation, unsupplemented by circumcision. In baptism women are not there-



fore disregarded. They have the benefit of access to the same grace as men. Having said this, all should agree that it would be absurd to credit the apostle with a doctrine that dismisses all differences between man and woman. Taken to its limit, this would justify homosexuality, a practice severely condemned in Romans 1:26-27.

### C. No Commonplace Attitude to the Sexes

In short, in these four passages, the apostle Paul derives from his gospel a general principle of prime importance: regarding salvation, God is no respecter of persons. And in Galatians 3:28 he contends that a woman partakes of metanoia ("inward change") in the same way as a man. No attitude to the sexes is to be held in absolute contradiction to Ephesians 5. We believe it is improper to base the ordination of women on this statement.

## VI. 1 Corinthians 11: The Theological Argument

- A. This text in this chapter already is difficult to translate,<sup>23</sup> even more to understand. But the general idea at least is clear, however remarkable it may appear. Paul does not exclude women from worship, in fact he places them there. A woman may pray, she may prophesy. She does not come to a worship which is conducted solely by men.
- B. But he insists on the reciprocity of man-woman (vs. 11). Each one should be in his or her place. "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God: but woman is the glory of the man" (vs. 7, RSV). This translation is surprising because it contradicts a very old custom requiring Jewish men to have the head covered during worship. We may prefer the translation of professor Maurice Carrez: "The man, himself, should not veil his head. . . ." a translation which he justifies by comparing the veil to the one Moses wore (cf. 2 Cor 3). Man does not take it off in order to speak to God." The use of the word "glory" (doxa) is then understood. It would carry its strong sense of the glory of God, with all His characteristics: glory guides, frees, protects.

Jewish tradition attributes glory only to Adam. It never speaks of Eve. Here Paul elevates

woman in a considerable way. She is not a reflection, but the glory of man.<sup>24</sup> What does this mean? Man shows and experiences the active presence of God: he is the glory of God. Woman shows and experiences the active presence of man: she is the glory of man."<sup>25</sup> Glory is the communication of oneself to others, associating them as it were with the most intimate experience. According to Paul's teaching man is associated with God and woman with man.

- C. The pro-feminist attitude which we purposely presented in relief at the beginning of this paper prevents us from thinking that the whole of this chapter might be tainted with hatred of women. Paul was not a woman-hater. Nevertheless he has some things to say and he says it solemnly: "thelo de humas eidenai," "I wish you to know." Surely he expected some dispute. He also specifies: "If anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (vs. 16). The passage is controversial, as we recognize immediately, beginning with verse 7.

Paul writes, "What should we know? . . . that the head of every man is Christ; and that the head of the woman is the man; and that the head of Christ is God" (vs. 3, translation L. Segond). Kephale has several meanings: head, chief, beginning, origin. The application of the Word of God in relation to Christ compels us to retain the idea of chief. The Father and the Son are equal, but in the heavenly hierarchy the Father is first and the Son second. So it is with man and woman. That can either please or displease us. Radical feminists will gnash their teeth. But that is not the question. Paul refers to a hierarchy of function God, Christ, Man, Woman. We must look forward to what this means with a wisdom that cannot be despised with impunity.

- D. Here we find the inspired universal principle that dominates all the section from which Paul derives his practical consequences. These latter may be adapted to the times and the circumstances, but the principle remains. In practical application the man who officiated in a meeting should have his head uncovered. On the contrary the woman should have hers



covered.

We know that in Greece men wore a head-covering only as a sign of grief. "Certain texts of the Mishnah or the Talmud considered that for a woman to go out with her head bare was a ground for divorce. For at this time dishevelled or visible hair was tantamount to adultery. Paul does not link his statements to original sin or to Eve's sin. He attacks this act only as an indecency at that particular period."<sup>26</sup>

- E. The veil of verse 15 can be thought of as a headdress or as a garment. Jean Hering sees it as a headdress: "The woman who has her head uncovered dishonours her husband, by wanting to be his equal. She disputes, as it were, his superiority by wanting to seize a privilege which is reserved for him alone."<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, Maurice Carrez thinks that it has to do with a garment. "In the 'aphrodisia', while in a trance, the priestesses begin to utter inarticulate sounds which are close to speaking in tongues. In this ecstatic mental state they finish by being in a state of ritual nudity preparatory to a priestly wedding. Above all the apostle did not want the participation of women as officiants at worship (that is to say in a way which would recall the priestess) to open the possibility of any outbreak of pagan phenomena."<sup>28</sup>

The recommendation of Paul concerning the veil surprises us. But we must remember that he was forced, as is everybody, to express his ideas in the vocabulary of his time and to translate them into action and deeds, other times, other customs. It would be unwise to forget this. However it would be less wise still to sweep away the universal principle on which the choice of action and deeds depends. By yielding herself to the regulation regarding the veil, the woman would show everyone that she meant to remain faithful to the proper vocation God had assigned her.

- F. So woman has a position which is ideal for her. It is important, says the apostle, that she know of it and even that she adopt an external sign which bears witness of it. But let not this make us forget that she can prophesy !



Elsewhere Paul insists on the fact that this gift confers a language which is clear and intelligible to everybody. The one who prophesies even speaks in such a way that the unbeliever, there by chance, is gripped to the heart by her word, smitten in his conscience, convinced of sin; he humbles himself at last and is converted to God. Such is the picture of the gift of prophecy—not to be confused by any means with the ministries which are given to us (1 Cor 14:24-25). The woman who prophesies achieves, to some extent at least, that which should be the aim of preaching.

- G. Conclusion.** "Not to shut oneself up within the limits of his nature and within the laws which God has given to us, to transgress both, is not to rise, but to fall"—commented John Chrysostom.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, it is not sufficient alone to obey nature. But it is impossible to obey God without obeying also the laws of nature.

## **VII. 1 Corinthians 14:34-38—Let Your Women Be Silent !**

- A.** These famous words were written by Paul in the same epistle a little further on. How shall we understand them? The seeming contradiction with chapter 11 seems flagrant and inexplicable. There is a temptation to minimize it.

1. Some think that the author had not given his last word in chapter 11, holding back in order to give it a little later and in a negative manner.<sup>30</sup> This is to attribute to Paul a timidity or hesitation leading him to a contradiction. Such corresponds neither to his character nor to his normal style.
2. It has been alleged that chapter 11 deals with intimate meetings, while chapter 14 speaks of public meetings.<sup>31</sup> But there is nothing in the text to support such an affirmation.
3. Others have resorted to "the surgery of criticism," considering verses 33 and 34 to be an interpolation due to a copyist who was more rigorous than Paul.<sup>32</sup> This hypothesis is without foundation.

B. It is proper to recall in what context this strong language appears. The chapter is devoted to the discipline of meetings. Some particulars are furnished regarding the practice of the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues. The one who prophesies should know when to be silent, for the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. God is not a God of confusion but of peace (vss. 29-33). Having presented this statement, Paul utters his famous sentence. It cannot reasonably contradict chapter 11 which authorizes women to prophesy. It is impossible therefore to see it in an absolute sense. Hence two interpretations are possible:

1. Either the apostle orders silence or chatterboxes.
2. Or he requires women not to practice speaking in tongues.

Let us look at them in turn.

1. Silence for Chatterboxes. Paul does not say that women should not prophesy but that they should not speak. There was therefore for women a manner of speaking which upset the harmony of worship: untimely chatter, which showed on their part a misunderstanding of their position and their function. The verb hupotassein (submit) describes the position of the women with respect to her husband. We will return to that further on. Paul was afraid of chattering, which not only created disorder, but showed up a bad understanding of marital relationships. Let women adopt with respect to their husbands the place allotted to them in the Lord, and order will be restored in everything.

To what exactly is Paul referring? Verse 35 suggests that it has to do with women who asked questions, demanded explanations, or even presented objections. That would cause interruptions, disorganizing the meeting. If already the prophet should keep quiet when another intervenes, how much more should those who do not have valid reason for speaking.

2. No feminine speaking in tongues? Let us look at the second possible explanation. The



verb lalein, "to speak," occurs 23 times in chapter 14. It signifies to speak in tongues, except in verses 3, 19, and 29. In verses 3 and 29 the context shows that it has to do with the one who prophesies; and in verse 19 it is a questions of speaking with intelligence in order to teach others. Apart from that in 19 cases, the verb clearly means to speak in tongues. Therefore it could be asked whether in the last instance, relative to women, it does not have the same meaning.

Another argument can be advanced in favor of this interpretation. Sigato, "let him keep silence," in verse 28, applies to speakers in tongues. It could be expected in verse 34 that sigatosan, "let them keep silence," might have the same connotation. This is the choice of Maurice Carrez, who writes: "To keep silent means then not to speak in tongues, since they may pray and prophesy. To keep silent means not to go into a trance. The apostle had to take care that the good and happy participation of women in Christian worship, so recently begun, should not become the occasion for a return to the heathen excesses which were quite near in time and space. The principle of 1 Corinthians 10:31, "do all to the glory of God," here finds an excellent application."<sup>33</sup> From this point of view Paul requested women to abstain from speaking in tongues in public, no doubt because of their greater emotional vulnerability.

Conclusion. Let us admit that both explanations are attractive. Could they perhaps be complementary? If we must choose, verse 35 seems to me to favor the first. In any case it is not vital for our subject. It is sufficient to have shown that women can receive from God a ministry of the word—to pray, to prophesy—while respecting the order established by God as to the relationships of man-woman. It is functional hierarchy, not an ontological one.

#### **VIII. Ephesians 5:22-33—The Christian Couple and the Church**

It is not the purpose here to present a complete exegesis of this very rich passage, any more than we have been able to do for the others. It is sufficient to explore the ideas which concern

our subject.

**A. Submit Yourselves (vs. 22).** The whole passage is dominated by the invitation of 5:1, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." In this aspect, Paul enumerates the different forms of obedience, creating a veritable summary of the Christian ethic. It is important to understand what the will of the Lord is (vs. 17). From this point of view, the members of the church should submit themselves "one to the other in the fear of God" (vs. 21).

The verb hupotassein means to submit, be subject to, to stand behind, to shelter behind. In the context of the church it is unlikely and not in harmony with the spirit of the gospel to take a meaning which implies the abdication of one's own will to that of a superior. Jesus who is the Head, did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. The use of the same verb in Romans 13:1, dealing with civil authorities, nevertheless suggests the idea of a submission that is respectful but crucial, for we must obey God rather than men.

In the short manuscripts the verb is not repeated, but the idea is indisputably present.<sup>34</sup> The whole question is to see the true intent of it.

The combination of this recommendation with the one that applies to brotherly relations in the heart of the church essentially should remove any interpretation which would foster the proud claims of men to play the master in the home. Let it be said clearly: to inflict a servile attitude on the woman in the name of this verse would be to betray it shamefully. "Each one should know that Christ demands him to submit himself to the service of his brethren. He who serves occupies an inferior place, he puts himself under the one he serves; the Christian submits himself by directing his actions toward the welfare of his brother. This is far from the imperialistic, tyrannical shade of meaning in the formula: "Wives, submit yourselves. . . ." which has done so much harm. It is already love that we must read in this expression."<sup>35</sup>

Nothing is more true. Everything lies in the manner. The idea of a functional authority is



present—who could deny its presence?—but it should not be more formidable than the authority of Christ over His church. Actually it is this authority to which Paul refers husbands, and it is the willing, respectful attitude of the church toward its Lord upon which Paul builds his model for wives (vs. 24).

#### **B. Husbands, Love Your Wives (vs. 25)**

Up to this point the tone of this passage still resembles 1 Corinthians 11. But with verse 25 we reach a new level, incomparably higher. Everything happens as if the apostle had been suddenly lifted up by an ascending current, carried up on the wings of agape, this converted love. "Hoi andres, agapate tas gunaikas"; You, husbands, love your wives!

The authority of the man no longer is domination, but a responsibility full of love and capable of sacrifice. Let us note that authority is maintained, but cleansed of bitterness, of conceit, or of paternalism, because the one who loves does not humiliate the other; quite the contrary, he delights to elevate her. Such is already the heavenly atmosphere in which the relationships of men-women should unfold. One of the evils of our epoch is our failure to understand this. Never has conjugal and family life been put so much in danger. Feminist demands do not bear all the responsibility by any means. It would be foolish to think so. But we would be foolish to pretend they have nothing to do with it.

#### **C. Home and Church**

What would the future of the church be if we failed to apply to it the counsel of the inspired apostle on the subject of the home? Is it for nothing that Paul compares the couple—man-woman—to the couple—Christ-church? As Christ is kephale, the man is kephale ("head"). It is on him that the task of making the final decision falls. We say final, for there must be a consultation, a consultation in love. The heart has reasons that reason knows not of. But reason cannot forget it; it must take account of it. If it falls on the head to decide—which constitutes authority—it is because it is made for that. It is conditioned for that in a natural manner, by way of creation. It is necessary to keep a cool



head, a warm heart, and a submissive body, failing which, one encounters catastrophe.

Christ is the Head of the church and the church is His body. In the same way the man is the head of the woman, and Paul invites him to love his wife as his own body (vs. 28). The text recalls Genesis 2:24, making clear that the functional difference between men and women should not lead to their being set in opposition. They are inseparable one from the other. Love unites them.

Paul knew that man is inclined to yield to the temptation to dominate. That is why he placed him under command to love. He knew also that woman can be tempted toward a deceptive equality with man. That is why he recalls her role and her place. Shall we say that one of these roles is preferable to the other? To do so would be to criticize God Himself. Furthermore, is there any more reason to envy the authority of man than to have the privilege of carrying a child in the bosom? Both encompass joys and sorrows.

#### **D. Let the Wife Reverence Her Husband (vs. 33)**

The verb concluding this passage is phobeomai, to fear, often used to express the fear of God. There is a fear that comes from an imperialism which demands surrender. But we have seen this idea as foreign to the text. Under no circumstances would we put it back: to do so would be to make a mockery of the gospel. The author already has spoken of the fear of Christ in verse 21 in order to indicate the inner attitude of the one who can respond to the love with which Christ loved him by giving Himself for us. It is a response of love to love. The church experiencing the loving authority of Christ orders its life like His own. The woman, experiencing the loving authority of her husband, orders her life like his. Such is the atmosphere in which Paul delights to place the relationship of man and woman. Here is what springs from creation itself, or in other words, from the divine laws.

#### **E. The Great Mystery**

Verse 32 merits our attention: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." When a person is climbing along a ridge in the mountains and suddenly



reaches the edge of empty space, one's gaze plunges into the infinite, and an unspeakable emotion grips the heart. This is the feeling that these few words of the apostle inspire. Then one senses that this is holy ground. The difference of the sexes finds its fulness in the fact that it permits men and women to illustrate the "great mystery" of salvation.

As a matter of fact, "the way in which he [Paul] argues in Ephesians 5 is much too much fundamentally theological, much too faithful also to one of the recurring themes of biblical revelation to be thought that this is by chance, unintentional, unwitting, that he explains in regard to the bridal union between Christ and the church, the marriage such as it is renewed in the church. Now Christ and the church cannot be interchanged without upsetting salvation. The difference between Christ and the church is not casual and temporary, it is essential and eternal in spite of their unity or actually because of their unity, and so that it may be possible. If the difference of the sexes did not place men and women in their most intimate existence, and in such a way as to prevent them from becoming interchangeable, the Pauline argument of the "great mystery"—already this term is pregnant with meaning—would be artificial and superficial and that no serious expositor would countenance."<sup>36</sup>

Without doubt, to read Galatians 3:28 and to forget the balance provided by Ephesians 5 can lead only to dangerous conclusions.

## **F. Conclusion**

Ephesians 5 adds an enlightening and marvelous clarification to 1 Corinthians 11 and Galatians 3:28. The place of woman in the couple no longer manifests the picture of the desiring and dominated creature of Genesis 3. In the Christian era man's authority is not domination, but like that of Christ, an authority of love, capable of sacrifice.

The difference of the sexes, fully intended by God from the time of the Creation and preserved within the Christian home, illustrates the great mystery of salvation by calling to mind the unalterable relationship Christ-church. Therefore it is destructive if woman



abandon her womanhood in an effort to act the part of man, for then she becomes neither woman nor man.

#### IX. 1 Timothy 2:9-15

- A. Here Paul speaks of meetings of the church. Woman has a legitimate place there, she is called there, contrary to Jewish tradition. She is to fulfill certain requirements concerning her dress (vss. 9-10) and her role (11-12). "Lacking neither psychology nor experience the apostle knows that women could be tempted to attract attention to themselves by their dress, hair style, or jewels. Will not the religious meeting provide a fine opportunity, if she does not take care, of satisfying her vanity? Then let her wear modest dress, avoiding slovenliness as well as enticement. She should please her husband (1 Cor 7:34) and dress in good taste (kosmein), but should avoid everything which would bring damage to the virtues which are expected to be found in a Christian: reserve and modesty."<sup>37</sup>
- B. Before approaching this passage dealing with the role of women in meetings, this comment must be made. Justification of the Pauline ethic is not psychological or sociological, but theological. The author refers to Genesis 2 and 3. On the one hand man was created first; on the other, woman allowed herself to be seduced. The first argument already presented in 1 Corinthians 11 appears here in reinforced form.
- C. Even the tone has changed: the impersonal, "It is not proper" has become a personal command: "I do not allow." It is not a matter of women not interrupting the worship by ill-timed questions, but of women who would presume to dominate man, forgetting as it were, his birthright—"As the husband is the head of the household, so also is he the natural leader of the group of households in the church congregation."<sup>38</sup>

Why this change of tone? Would Paul be forced to resist certain excesses? We may arrive at this conclusion because we know that the foundation of his epistles always is conditioned by his information. In a society based on trust, any abusive use of liberty compels those



responsible to reinforce the authority entrusted to them.

D. **Verse 12.** Epitrepo signifies in its active meaning to pass on, or to entrust; and in a passive sense to leave it to, or to surrender to. A typical example of its use is found in 1 Corinthians 16:7, "if the Lord permit," in other words, if God makes everything transpire in this way. There is no tyrannical or authoritarian meaning. It is not a will of fact, uncompromising; but a will of ideal.

E. "I suffer not a woman (gunaiki ouk epitrepo) to teach" (didaskein). Is it possible to understand this without making Paul contradict himself? He has already said that she can pray or prophesy; on the other hand, can she not speak? Earlier we thought in terms of either chattering or breaking the harmony of worship, speaking in tongues, or creating disorder. But what does didaskein mean in 1 Timothy 2:12?

Could we understand it as in Ephesians 4:11b where the kai ("and") is "epexegetical," that is, an addition to make the meaning clear? Among the ministries instituted in the church, there are pastors who also are teachers (didaskalous). In such a case, Paul would be requiring that pastoral ministry not be entrusted to women.

By functioning in the church as pastor-teachers, women would have authority over men. Paul does not permit that. Such a suggestion would be perfectly at home in an epistle so rich in directives concerning the organization of the church. What are his reasons?

"In recommending to women submission (hupotage), moderation (sophrosune), quietness (hesuchia), and not allowing women to teach nor to take authority over man, he [Paul] was only applying to her the characteristics of the church itself in its relationship to Jesus Christ. . . . This exclusion . . . was intended to remind the church, in so far as it was constantly threatened in its teaching (cf. I Tim. 1:3; 4:1; 6:3; II Tim. 4:1, etc.), that it could itself only speak if it listened, could teach and instruct in letting itself be taught and instructed, in a word, that it could be a teacher only by being taught herself. So it is in

fully accepting their human condition, by consenting to be in all their conduct, 'even without the word' (I Pet. 3:1), in all things with respect to men as is illustrated by the church itself with respect to Jesus Christ, that women participate in the priestly ministry of the church and receive their true dignity. . . ."39

#### **F. Verse 15—Saved in Childbearing**

We must not make the apostle Paul say that motherhood is a condition of salvation. To do so would counter his counsel that for some at least celibacy is preferable to marriage. The meaning is surely otherwise. Paul wishes to illustrate, by a very concrete example, his fundamental points. He instructs men to live as men and women to live as women. By performing the duties appropriate to their sex they would be saved, one group as much as the other. In the case of women, it is maternity that is given them in the course of creation, "if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (vs. 15). Maternity only illustrates the fact that to be a woman is to live as a woman.

#### **G. Conclusion**

On first reading Paul's verses to Timothy surprise us and divert us from the actual context. Nevertheless upon reading them carefully, we discover there the same teaching already given in other epistles. Since Creation, God foresaw an order which He wrote into nature. Now nature is controlled only by obeying its laws. To fail to take account of this is to run the risk of falling.

#### **X. Elder, Bishop, Pastor—1 Timothy 3:1-7**

The mission of the church is to proclaim the approach of the Lord until He comes. In order to do this it must be organized. The ecclesiastical ministry in all its aspects is one of the major themes of the pastoral epistles. But the other epistles, and especially the Acts of the Apostles, furnish equally valuable particulars. Acts 20:17 and 28 shows that three terms were virtually synonymous: elders (vs. 17), who are also bishops (vs. 28, margin), charged to feed the flock in the capacity of pastors.



In order to discover the aptitudes that are rightly required of the candidates, the pastoral epistles must be examined. The excellence and the importance of the work demand excellence and competence on the part of the worker. We do not need to consider here this question. It is sufficient to verify whether all the required aptitudes are compatible with the plan of God for women.

Paul declares that the elder should be "One that ruleth (proistamai) well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (vss. 4-5).

Proistamai ("to be at the head, to govern, to preside") describes the function of the elder as chief, head (cf. Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17). The deacon also should rule his children and his house well (1 Tim 3:12).

"The reasoning is interesting for it compares the church of God to a house in the double sense of family and building. The church-house of God is a picture known to Paul. . . . The church is also the family of God; the Heavenly Father has given us the Spirit which makes us cry 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8:15). . . . of this family the bishop is the manager (Tit. 1:7). Also the candidate for the "episkope" should show proof in his home of the qualities that make him a good father of the family: love and authority."<sup>40</sup>

We must enquire then whether it is normal that the mother be head of the house. Paul replied clearly in the negative in 1 Corinthians 11 and in Ephesians 5. If this is the case, it can be asked how he would regard entrusting to her the direction of the church. Would she do to the church, composed of the unity of the families, what she is asked not to do at home? Those who see no Biblical obstacle to the ordination of women as elders must answer this question. And it becomes even more crucial in the presence of the question of ordination to the pastoral ministry.

## XI. The Pastoral Ministry

Is it legitimate to ordain women to the pastoral ministry? Let us say again that what is at stake is fidelity of the Word of God in general, and to be more specific, fidelity of the church to its nature and its mission. It is not the most skillful human counsel, nor the strongest, nor the most stubborn which must prevail.

Professor von Allmen offers three reasons against the legitimacy of a female ministry: ecclesiological, anthropological, and ecumenical.<sup>41</sup>

### A. The Ecclesiological Reason

1. Is the pastoral ministry an institution of the Lord or an internal measure for ecclesiastical efficiency? Is it essential to the church? Is it part of the well-being or of the being? In fact, if not by principle, we act more and more as if it were only a full-time occupation for specialized lay members. If this were the case, ordination would no longer have any reason for existence; baptism would suffice. But can it not be seen that such an ecclesiology belittles the church by reducing it to being nothing more than a business?

Besides this, there is the very real danger included in a certain conception of the growth of the church. The difference between the sacred and the profane disappears. Now the church is the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, which consists of a mystery (Eph 5:32). He builds it Himself from the height of the heavens (Matt 16:18). While it is still on earth, it is already seated, in Christ, in the heavenly places (Eph 2:4-7). The task of pastors is to maintain in it unity, life, holiness, and light bearing. It is by grace and not a right. By ceasing to consider it as a grace, by reducing it to a function of internal organization, the pastoral ministry is desecrated and profaned.

2. Luther reacted against the idea of a feminine priesthood in the name of a universal priesthood. As a result of such an approach every particular ministry in the church was thought of as a simple outcome of the universal priesthood, without ecclesiologi-



cal precision. As a consequence, established ministries are challenged today. They are contrasted with the spiritual authority of the charisma. The laying on of hands, formerly reserved for very well-defined acts, is now practiced on all occasions.

It is claimed also that the apostolate constitutes a unique ministry. Since it was fulfilled once for all in the twelve, no longer are there any apostles and no ministries. And yet as the Helvetic Confession says: "these are things that are greatly different and diverse from the priesthood and the ministry."

3. It would require a long study to clarify this point as it deserves. It would show that the gifts (charismata) should not be identified or confused with the ministries or functions. The ministry is an institution absolutely attested, for example, in 1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6, where we find the idea of charisma and of institution.

Must we contrast institution and the grace of God? action of man and action of God? Decidedly not. These declarations build harmony between the divine action and the human. Wherever the ministries are referred to in the New Testament, an extraordinary harmony is shown between the action of God, the action of the ministries, and the action of the community.<sup>42</sup> It is a harmony which is, as it were, hallowed in the rite of laying on of hands, which shows clearly the indissoluble connection between the sovereign action of God and its acknowledgement by the community. It is like communion between heaven and earth. God gives, calls, and sends; the community acknowledges and ordains.

## **B. The Anthropological Reason**

1. Once the existence of the pastoral ministry is recognized in the church, the question arises of knowing whether women are included in it! We already have seen by studying the main texts, that this is not the case. The apostle Paul seems even to exclude it by using an argument drawn, not from the Fall, but from Creation itself. Now, the gospel does not save from Creation, it saves Creation, which means preserving sexual

differentiation.

2. The passages dealing with marriage are very explicit on this subject. To prohibit people from getting married is a doctrine of devils (1 Tim 4:1-3).

"This is what arises from the seventh chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians: to women who, by anticipation, follow the teachings of Marcion and disturb the church by their refusal to accept their feminity as a grace, the apostle retorts that they are deceiving themselves. The gospel saves them in the same way that it saves men, but it saves the former and the latter not because of their masculinity or femininity. Their salvation gives back to them, both former and latter, their true place; and if they do not wish to take this place, it is salvation that they do not wish.

"Because the modern world has lost the meaning and dimensions of biblical anthropology by losing faith in God the Creator, it is not necessary to allow oneself to be a party to this moral decline. . . . It is necessary to recall that polarization of human beings, whether masculine or feminine, is not an accident, but arrived at by their identity, by this most profound mystery."<sup>43</sup>

3. Is it necessary to proceed to consider man as the mediator of grace? Some think so. That is essentially the Catholic attitude. There is no decisive strength in this argument. On the other hand, we have seen how the differentiation man-woman illustrates the great mystery Christ-church.

Taking everything into consideration we would support the following definition of pastoral ministry: "The pastoral ministry is the grace that the Lord wished for the church and instituted in the church, by which a male believer, after the pattern of the apostles, is called to act in the name of Christ the prophet, of Christ the priest, and of Christ the king. For that reason, following the apostles and therefore in the name of Christ, the pastor is the minister of the word, of the sacraments, and of discipline. It



is by the power of the Holy Spirit, invoked upon him at the time of his ordination, that he is authorized to exercise this ministry in the church, and that he dares exercise it with confidence."<sup>44</sup>

### **C. The Ecumenical Reason**

1. Here is the question that von Allmen asks: "Is it wise at this time when all ecclesiastical problems are fluid, to take a decision of faith and order which we know will be disputed both by churches of the same confession and by churches of other confessions . . . and that it will inflame the wound from which western Christianity suffers so much?"<sup>45</sup>
2. As Adventists, such preoccupations should not influence us very much, given our position with regard to the ecumenical movement. Moreover, such questions express a feeling more than they advance an argument.
3. Nevertheless they merit our attention under the following form. Considering the impossibility of obtaining a consensus in the Adventist church, and knowing, on the contrary, that there does exist a profound diversity of opinion, more often emotional and passionate than rational, are there any biblical arguments sufficiently convincing which would change an existing situation supported by all the weight of history in its favor? Honestly we doubt anyone could answer affirmatively. We have a mission which singles us out by reason of our affection for the Holy Scriptures. In that light a decision taken by the General Conference in favor of the ordination of women would appear to be a revolutionary departure.

## **XII. The Bible, Situation Ethics, and the Ministry**

- A. Did the apostle Paul succumb to his situation? Would he speak otherwise today? To answer this question with certainty in both cases requires a certain boldness. Unquestionably, he did refer to arguments based on right, and transcendental, not simply circumstan-

tial. It is at another level, the level of the consequences, that the social context has been allowed to exercise an influence.

B. In addition, the contemporary pagan society of Old Testament as well as New Testament times would have favored extending the pastoral ministry to women, since the mystery religions had their priestesses. A feminine pastoral ministry would not then have been surprising. Indeed, it would have been expected.

C. That is all the more true for the New Testament, for women occupy an important place there. This fact is clearly apparent.<sup>46</sup> Far from resolving our problem in a favorable sense, the prominence of women in the New Testament raises a more serious question. Indeed, since women were welcomed into the immediate group attending Christ and the apostles, what would have prevented them from taking one step more? Jesus took other more formidable liberties with the Sabbath, the temple, and the Jewish people! And Paul was no less bold with respect to the priestly laws! Consider also his recommendations regarding the family or the society. All that is not local color. No, in actual fact, a further step would have created no greater crisis than already existed. If he did not cross the line, it was because he had other reasons—more profound ones—clearly indicated in the passages we have considered. We are always surprised when someone quotes Paul so faithfully in what he thinks he can read in Galatians 3:28, but is in a hurry to forget all that Paul wrote elsewhere.

### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

1. We do not find any trace of misogyny ["hatred of women"] from Paul's pen. Women's temperament certainly can lead them to certain errors. The same statement is valid also for men.
2. The Holy Spirit, which abolished the distinction man-woman in the plan of salvation of the New Covenant, in no way liberates them from the elemental conditions of their existence. From this point of view, Paul assigns to women in the hierarchy of beings and their responsibilities, a



place other than the one for man. It is not a pejorative decision on his part. The hierarchy is functional, not ontological. The role which belongs to her does not disqualify her, but places her in her area of specialty.

3. The man who would become vain from the role which falls to him would be thereby disqualified, since his attitude should be clothed with a love patterned on that of Christ.
4. The whole of ecclesiology is concerned as much as is family life, and for the same reasons. Besides, the mystery of the relationship, Christ-church is at issue, so that it is impossible to foresee what disorder is risked by rejecting the recommendations of the Lord.
5. It is here that basic principles are revealed. They do not follow the current trend, to be sure. But that should not influence our decision, for every unique feature of the Adventist Church would be jeopardized if we follow that reasoning.
6. In the end we are confronted by a choice of hermeneutic. We cannot see how it would be possible to abandon the anthropological and ecclesiological principles introduced earlier without seriously compromising, in the name of modern thinking, the fundamental principle of the inspiration and the authority of the Holy Scriptures. "What pride," said Calvin, "can one imagine greater than to resist the authority of God by this puny word: 'It seems otherwise to me.'"<sup>47</sup>
7. It would be bold indeed to invoke situational cultural factors to explain away the teaching of the New Testament. One must take account at the level of practical application of the principles. The principles, on the contrary, proceed from the divine order.
8. Woman has a perfect right to her place in the church of Christ, not only in a passive manner, but also in an active manner. For example, she can pray, prophesy, or speak. Many other tasks can and should be entrusted to her in the educational, musical, medical, social field, and so on.
9. The pastoral ministry and the office of elder, which is very close to it, are reserved for men for

reasons essentially theological, touching on anthropology and ecclesiology. The desire to entrust the task indiscriminately to men or women, is to upset the order planned by God, to break it by a secular practice in the name of modernism, to risk compromising the peace and unity of the church without a serious Biblical mandate.

10. The issue is not at the level of the laying on of hands as a sign of ordination. We see no valid, decisive reason for refusing to ordain women called upon to exercise the function of deaconess.

### A Final Word

The essential point that we not approach the problem in the light of the rights demanded, for in the affairs of the church, all is grace. "Nobody, men no more than women, has the right of being a pastor. To be a pastor is always of grace, and if this grace confers on the pastor certain rights, it is uniquely so that it can be exercised and extend within proper conditions. A person's thinking is faulty and he does not solve the problem when he says that it is not fair that women do not have, like men, the right to be pastors. It is a grace which is not destined for them, because it would lead them away from their being and their vocation, like the grace of motherhood for example, which could not be given to a man."<sup>48</sup>

The ordination of women to the pastoral ministry or to the position of elder would be:

To misunderstand grace

To misrepresent women

To belittle the church

To weaken or compromise the Word of God



## FOOTNOTES

1. Aristotle, "De generatione animalium," ¶ 3.
2. Thomas Aquinas, "Somme," I a, 92, 1, ad. and ad. 2.
3. Josephus, "Contre Apion," II, 24.
4. Traite Vaudois du Vergier, quoted by Ed. Montet, History of the Literature of the Vaudois of Piedmont, p. 108.
5. Luther, "On married life," Works, vol. II, p. 238, edition Labor et Fides, Geneva 1963.
6. Luther, op. cit., p. 248.
7. Franz J. Leenhardt, "The Place of Woman in the Church According to the New Testament" in Theological and Religious Studies, 2nd quarter 1948, pp. 3-50.
8. Ibid., p. 5.
9. Ibid., pp. 40-44.
10. Ennio Floris, "Woman and the pastoral ministry," in Social Christianity, No. 9-10, September-October 1964, pp. 535-553.
11. News Bulletin of the Reformed Church of France, No. 2, March 1964.
12. Ibid., p. 547.
13. Ibid., p. 549.
14. Frank Michaeli, "The Book of Genesis," ed. Delachaux and Niestle, Geneva, 1975, I, pp. 27-29.
15. Ibid., p. 42.
16. Frank Michaeli, op. cit., pp. 45-46.
17. 1 Sam 8:13; Gen 18:6; 24:11-20; Prov 31:19, 13, 22, 24.
18. Exod 38:3; 1 Sam 2:22.
19. Exod 35:25-26; 26:36; 28:39.
20. Gen 29:9; 1 Sam 25:40-42; Ps 123:22.
21. 1 Kgs 18:13; 2 Kgs 11:3.
22. Certain manuscripts coordinate "spiritual house" and "holy priesthood." Others subordinate

them by eis. This second reading is better attested.

23. a. Verse 10 in particular. Exousia means "capacity, right, permission, liberty, legitimate power," whence the meaning of the capacity for. Certain people see there the sign of marital power. Maurice Carrez translates it: "This is why the woman should carry a power on the head, because of the angels." And he paraphrases it: (By wearing a headdress) the woman has on her head the sign of her capacity (to participate in worship) (by doing this she respects the sacredness) because of the angels." Why because of the angels? Some say that they should provide against attacks from angels. Others refer to the Qumran texts where angels are considered as the vigilant guardians of decency and behavior in meetings. ("Christianity in the 20th Century," 29 Sept. 1975, p. 3.)
- b. "The meaning is plain. If a woman thinks lightly of shocking men, she must remember that she will also be shocking the angels, who of course are present at public worship." (Robertson and Plummer, Commentary on I Corinthians, 2nd ed., p. 233.)
24. "Strack and Bullerbeck, Commentary on the New Testament From the Talmud and Midrash, III, 435, translate doxa by glory and quote passages from rabbinical literature which prove that among the Jews the glory of God is placed in relationship to man and that woman is considered as the glory of man." (Ginsburger, R. H. P. R., 1932, p. 246.)
25. Maurice Carrez, p. cit.
26. Ibid.
27. Jean Hering, Commentary, ed. Delachaux and Niestle, Geneva 1959, p. 93.
28. Maurice Carrez, op. cit.
29. John Chrysostom, "Complete Works," XVII, p. 46.
30. C. E. B. Allo, First Epistle to the Corinthians, ed. Gabalda, Paris, 1935, pp. 256 on.
31. Cf. Ph. Bachmann, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, 1905, i.1.
32. C. J. Weiss, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Göttingen, 1910, p. 342. R. Bultmann adopts the same solution.
33. Maurice Carrez, op. cit.
34. The oldest manuscripts say only: "Women to their husbands as to the Lord." Others have the



verb "Be subject." Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, A textual Commentary on the New Testament, p. 608.

35. F. J. Leenhardt, op. cit., p. 25.
36. Jean-Jacques von Allmen, "The ordination of women to the pastoral ministry," in Verbum Caro, vol. XVII (No. 65), ed. Delachaux and Niestle, 1963, pp. 16-17.
37. P. Dornier, P. S. S., The Pastoral Epistles, ed. Gabalda, Paris, 1969, pp. 54-55.
38. Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 296.
39. Hebert Roux, The Pastoral Epistles, ed. Labor and Fides, Geneva, 1959, pp. 48-50.
40. P. Dornier, op. cit., p. 61.
41. Jean-Jacques von Allmen, op. cit., pp. 7-23.
42. Let us consider the twelve: They were chosen by Christ and perfectly integrated into the group of the 120 before Pentecost which was a spiritual event of the highest order. Matthias and Joseph were put forward to be the twelfth apostle. They were chosen by the community. But Matthias alone was destined by God at the time of the drawing of lots. The action of the community was the act of God. It was the same concerning the seven. Saul himself, called directly by God, had to call upon Ananias, and his vocation was thus confirmed. Behind Ananias there stood the whole community of Damascus. See also the beginning of Galatians where Paul says that he had received his ministry directly from God, but confirmed by the pillars of the church.

Barnabas and Paul, at the time of leaving for their missionary journey, were designated by the Holy Spirit; but the church of Antioch laid hands on them.

The Pauline churches chose delegates for the offering destined for Jerusalem. Paul delegated Titus to Greece to establish elders there in each city. But these men had to have a good reputation and then be recognized by the community.

43. J. J. von Allmen, op. cit., p. 15.
44. Ibid., p. 7 N.B. For myself I would not use the word "sacraments."
45. Ibid., p. 22.
46. See for example, Charles Westphal, "Woman and the pastoral ministry in the church," in Faith

and Life, November-December 1949, No. 6, pp. 473-486.

47. John Calvin, Christian Institutes, I, XVIII, 3.

48. J. J. von Allmen, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.