

# Adam, Eve, and Paul

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Discerning the Role of Women in the Mission of God

A Theological Reflection of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:11-15

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No biblical text can be properly understood standing alone. A proper understanding of any biblical text should take into consideration the redemptive metanarrative of Holy Scripture. “In the beginning was the Word...” (John 1:1).<sup>1</sup> As John penned the opening words of his gospel, he insisted that Jesus Christ is the beginning and source of everything. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets and only through Him can we properly understand the sacred text. His words and works offer the standard by which all others are to be judged. The Old Testament must be understood through Christ. When the Mosaic Law demands death, Christ offers life (John 8:1-11). When Joshua or Samuel seem to justify genocide, Jesus reminds us that God loves the world (John 3:16). Whereas a Psalmist might rejoice over the death of his enemies, Jesus challenges us to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Although the Old Testament justifies polygamy, Jesus insisted that proper marriage is one man and one woman for life (Matthew 19:3-9). Just as the Law and the Prophets must be interpreted through Jesus; so must the Apostles.

The metanarrative of the Bible is life and redemption; creation and new creation. The purpose of the Incarnation of the Word is new creation, new life, abundant life, and eternal life. As we read through the Bible we become aware of the darkness of the human mind and the hardness of the human heart. In the midst of the hate, violence, and death the narrative of redemption breaks forth and offers hope. The redemptive narrative includes sanctification and glorification. Just as Christ has priority over Moses, new creation has priority over original creation.

## **Women in the Mission of God**

Regarding Paul’s<sup>2</sup> writings about the role of women in the church, William Mounce has written, “If it could be proven that elsewhere Paul allows women to teach... authoritatively within the context of the household of God, then it would have to be concluded that Paul is inconsistent or [has] been misunderstood.”<sup>3</sup> L. T. Johnson has suggested that Paul was “nervous” about the role of women in the church. He offers a very helpful discussion on the various hermeneutical options that inform interpretation. He

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted all scripture references are from the *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995). Hereafter referred to as NASU.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles is assumed. See: Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988) 1-5; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000) xlvi; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 98-99; Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians, Volume 1* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006) 65-68.

<sup>3</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 117.

concludes that the only viable option “is to engage the words of Paul in a dialectical process of criticism within the public discourse of the church, both academic and liturgical.”<sup>4</sup>

This paper will present a specific discussion of Paul’s intentions as it relates to the role of women in the mission of God. In past decades this issue has become increasingly significant in the life of the church. Craig Keener has written that, “Increasing, secular thinkers attack Christianity as against women and is irrelevant to the modern world.”<sup>5</sup> Someone might reply, “Who cares what the world thinks?” The apostle Paul would reply that we must “stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught” (2 Thessalonians 2:15), while simultaneously taking great care that we maintain “a good reputation with those outside the church” (1 Timothy 3:7). Further, our commitment to the veracity of Holy Scripture requires that students be diligent to present themselves “approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Writing to Timothy at Ephesus, Paul said,

A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint (1 Timothy 2:12-15).

Commenting on this text, William Mounce has observed that “interpretations are so varied that one wonders how much of the exegesis is based on the text and how much on presuppositions and varying methodologies.”<sup>6</sup> An example of this is found in the writings of Gordon Fee and Andreas Köstenberger. Fee has written that 1st Timothy, like most of Paul’s letters, was an *ad hoc* correspondence written to address specific issues and was not intended to be a systematic presentation of church order.<sup>7</sup> Contra Fee, Andreas Köstenberger has written that the Pastoral Epistles “transcend mere ad hoc argumentation and deal with important issues of perennial importance.”<sup>8</sup> Reading Fee and Köstenberger

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<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, 206, 211.

<sup>5</sup> Craig S. Keener, “Was Paul For or Against Women in Ministry?” *Enrichment Journal* (Spring 2001). Internet: [http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/082\\_paul.cfm](http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200102/082_paul.cfm) (accessed June 25, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 117.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon Fee, “Reflections on Church Order in the Pastoral Epistles, with Further Reflection on the Hermeneutics of *Ad Hoc* Documents,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 28/2 (June 1985) 141-151.

<sup>8</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, “Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7/3 (Fall 2003) 10.

demonstrates the “exegetical ambiguities” within the text and “hermeneutical inconsistencies” of the recipients.<sup>9</sup> With Fee, most of Paul’s writings were occasional and addressed to specific concerns of the apostolic church. With Köstenberger, Paul’s apostolic authority gives to his *ad hoc* writings the status of sacred scripture and establishes lasting precedent. It becomes the responsibility of the recipients of these letters to develop a discerning and systematic biblical theology that informs the mission of the church.

A straight-forward exegetical reading of this text seems to imply that: (1) men have an ontological priority over women; therefore (2) women have a limited role in the life and ministry of the church. However, the words of this text do not represent the totality of Paul’s thought about creation, the fall of humanity, or the roles of men and women in the mission of God. Therefore, it would be a mistake to make any final judgments based upon this text alone. If we are to develop a systematic Pauline understanding of women in the mission of God, we must consider the entirety of the Pauline corpus.

### **Adam and Eve in Creation**

For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve (1 Timothy 2:13).

For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).

Throughout his writings, Paul referred to the creation narrative of Genesis 2-3 as the primary authority for his views on women in the church. In Rabbinic tradition it was a common hermeneutic that first signifies priority. There can be little doubt that Paul’s thinking was framed by his Pharisaic background, being “educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers” (Acts 22:3).<sup>10</sup> In 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians Paul insisted on the priority of male over female because Adam was “first created” and Eve originated from Adam. He wrote, “...Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:3). Read literally, it seems that Paul is suggesting an ontological hierarchy in which “woman” is at the bottom. But this would also suggest that Christ is ontologically inferior to God, and therefore not of the same essence of the Father. Therefore, Paul is not suggesting the ontological superiority of God over Christ; or man over woman. Rather, he affirms that Christ originates from God

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding the difficulty in coming to a consensus on the meaning of this text, Douglas J. Moo has written, “This disagreement is all the more serious when it is recognized that it exists... among scholars who hold a similar view of Scripture and hermeneutical procedure.” “1 Timothy 2:11-15: Significance and Meaning,” *Trinity Journal* 1 NS (1980) 62.

<sup>10</sup> Douglas J. Moo, “1 Timothy 2:11-15: Meaning and Significance,” 68.

(eternal generation) and is of the same essence of the Father. Likewise, woman originates from man and is of the same essence of man. The *temporal priority* of Adam in creation does not suggest *ontological priority* of male over female. In fact, Adam without Eve was incomplete. The ontological unity of male and female in creation is affirmed by the Genesis narrative and by the words of Paul.

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27 NRSV).<sup>11</sup>

However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God (1 Corinthians 11:11-12).

Humankind originates from God and by nature of creation is ontologically interdependent as male and female. Just as the Holy Trinity is one divine essence; so too, humankind is one essence. Just as within the singular divine essence of the Holy Trinity there are three distinct, but equal, divine *hypostases*; within the singular human essence there are two distinct, but equal, genders. Just as the three *hypostases* of the Holy Trinity exist in perichoretic union, the interdependent relationship of male and female suggest a similar unity within humankind. Within the Holy Trinity the distinctiveness of each *hypostasis* does not compromise the ontological essence of the one God. Just as each *hypostasis* is fully God within the perichoretic union, within humankind a male is fully human and a female is fully human. Further, just as being male does not make one more human; being female does not make one less human. Any subordination within the Holy Trinity cannot be ontological, but must be relational and volitional. Because humankind is created in the image of God, the same is true. Any subordination, or gender distinction, between male and female is not ontological, but must be relational and volitional. Paul affirms the mutual subordination of male and female within marriage.

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does (1 Corinthians 7:4).

...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... (Ephesians 5:21-25).

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<sup>11</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989). Hereafter referred to as NRSV.

In other words, subordination is a relationship that cannot be legislated or enforced. Rather, it must be born of mutual love and honor that is inherent between those who are ontologically interdependent. Subordination that is legislated or enforced in the home, church, or society is an offense to human dignity.

## **Adam and Eve in the Fall**

And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression (1 Timothy 2:14).

If we assume that this is Paul's final word on the subject of the fall of humanity, then a straightforward reading of this text seems to imply that only "the woman" was deceived and "fell into transgression." If the traditional rabbinic hermeneutic of that which is first has priority; then Paul may be suggesting that Eve bears the greater guilt. If this be the case, then all of the ills of humanity may be attributed to "the woman" and Adam is cleared of guilt.<sup>12</sup> Of course, this is not the case. Paul is adamant that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Furthermore, Paul wrote,

Therefore, just as *through one man sin entered into the world*, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned— for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of *the offense of Adam*, who is a type of Him who was to come (Romans 5:12-14, emphasis mine).

Paul's full presentation of the fall of humankind requires that both human progenitors are culpable. It has been suggested that females are especially culpable to deception and that Eve's being "deceived into transgressing God's design suggests the woman's fallible grasp of the truth, susceptibility to false teachers' blandishments, and consequent unsuitability to teach publicly."<sup>13</sup> However, this suggestion ignores the fact that throughout Paul's writings he names several false teachers, all of whom are men. It seems that men and women equally share the capacity to be deceived. The ontological unity of humankind implies that if sin affected the one, then all are affected. In the Genesis narrative both Adam and Eve are

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<sup>12</sup> Douglas Moo has written, "The assertion that Eve alone was 'deceived' finds no parallel in the NT; nor is the fall elsewhere introduced into a discussion of sexual roles. The situation is different in contemporary Judaism: it became popular to lay virtually sole blame for human sin and death on Eve's shoulders, as the well-known statement in Sirach demonstrates: 'Woman is the origin of sin, and it is through her that we all die' (25:24). But in light of Paul's very clear assertions about Adam's responsibility for sin and death in Romans 5 and elsewhere, it is most unlikely that he is attempting to exempt man from blame and to picture Eve as the sole culprit." "1 Timothy 2:11-15," 69.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Fiore, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2007) 70.

judged by God. Although the judgment pronouncements are gender distinctive (Genesis 3:16-19), the ultimate penalty of sin – death – is shared by all humankind. The deception of Eve and the disobedience of Adam effected an ontological degeneration that afflicts all humankind.

So then, why does Paul point to the deception of Eve? Bruce Barron has written that Paul was challenging a Gnostic reinterpretation of Adam and Eve in which Eve is the heroine and Adam is enlightened after eating the fruit offered by Eve.<sup>14</sup> Philip Towner suggests the possibility that Paul was addressing a specific heresy in which Adam was the primary offender. Some of the women in the Ephesian church may have been embracing a heretical view of human sinfulness that “influenced women to think they were free from the constraints and limitations brought on by the fall into sin.”<sup>15</sup> When we consider that Ephesus was renowned for its devotion to the Artemis cult this view becomes plausible. Artemis of Ephesus was a female deity of great authority and power, acclaimed as “Queen of Heaven,” and Lord and Savior. Ephesus was home to the primary shrine to Artemis, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.<sup>16</sup> It is almost certain that the Ephesian Christians worshipped Christ in the shadow of the great Temple of Artemis. It is possible that the heresy involved a syncretism of Gnosticism, and the Artemis cult with the biblical Eve. Therefore, among Paul’s concerns in writing 1 Timothy would have been to challenge the encroaching heresy, to remind the Ephesian women of Eve’s complicity in the fall and of their own sinfulness.

### **The New Adam, the New Eve, and New Creation**

The Genesis narrative of the fall of humankind demonstrates the mutual culpability of Adam and Eve. Both ate the fruit, “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked,” (Genesis 3:7), both were clothed by Yahweh with animal skins, and both were judged by Yahweh.<sup>17</sup> The judgment of Yahweh is mutually shared by male and female; they were both exiled from Eden, and they both suffered death.

Further, it is striking that the words of judgment to the human couple from Yahweh contain no element of hope. Rather, the element of hope is found in Yahweh’s curse upon

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<sup>14</sup> Bruce Barron, “Putting Women in Their Place: 1 Timothy 2 and Evangelical Views of Women in Church Leadership.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33/4 (December 1990) 454-455. Andreas Köstenberger also sees “proto-gnostic” influences behind Paul’s concern. “Ascertaining Women’s God-Ordained Roles: An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 7 (1997) 133-135.

<sup>15</sup> Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) 232.

<sup>16</sup> Acts 19:24-34. Also, see: Clinton Arnold, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 31-32.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon J. Wenham points out that “neither the man nor the woman is *cursed*: only the snake (v 14) and the soil (v 17) are cursed because of man.” *Genesis 1-15* (Dallas: Word, 2002), 81.

the serpent: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Genesis 3:15). Traditionally known as the *protoevangelium*, this text serves as the motif of messianic hope throughout the New Testament and subsequent Christian writers.<sup>18</sup> The promise within the curse is that humankind will ultimately overcome the serpent, that is, the “schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). The serpent will be overcome by the seed of the woman. Just as the man and woman were mutually culpable in the fall of humankind, the *protoevangelium* suggest that man *and* woman will be instrumental in the defeat of the serpent. Yahweh’s judgment upon Eve, and all women, is “I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children” (Genesis 3:16). With this judgment there is hope, for in the pain of childbirth a daughter of Eve will bear a son who will crush the head of the serpent.

Paul declared, “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...” (1 Timothy 1:15). Throughout the writings of Paul, Jesus Christ is understood to be the new Adam who is also the sovereign Lord (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28). Christ, the new Adam is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). Jesus was also “*born of a woman*” (Galatians 4:4).

The Genesis narrative is the frame of reference for Paul’s teaching about the role of women in 1 Timothy. Therefore, the Genesis narrative, and its subsequent role in informing the Christ narrative must be considered when interpreting Paul’s words: “σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας, ἔάν μείνωσιν ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ καὶ ἀγιασμῷ μετὰ σωφροσύνης.”<sup>19</sup> This sentence has proved to be profoundly difficult. A straightforward reading of the text suggests that women are sinners because “the woman” was deceived (ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἐξαπατηθεῖσα). But as we have discovered, a straight forward reading of the text often misses significance of the greater theological narrative. Yahweh’s judgment of Eve was that she would have multiplied pain in childbirth; but would be “saved through childbearing.” The primary concern here is what does σωθήσεται δὲ διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας mean? A literal translation could be “**she shall be saved through the childbirth.**”<sup>20</sup> Although is this a minority translation, it has significant attestation.<sup>21</sup> First, we must determine to whom does

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<sup>18</sup> Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12; 20:2; Ignatius, *Ephesians*, 19; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*, 100; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.22; 5:19; Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger and Allen Wikgren, *The Greek New Testament* (Federal Republic of Germany: United Bible Societies, 1997, c1982), 1 Timothy 2:15. The NRSV translates as “Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.”

<sup>20</sup> George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992) 146-148.

<sup>21</sup> None of the prominent English translations of the Bible follow this suggestion. However, Mounce offers significant attestation in the literature (although he disagrees). *Pastoral Epistles*, 145; Also see: Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians 1*, 229-230; Thomas C. Oden, *First and Second Timothy and Titus* (Louisville: John Knox, 1989) 102.



σωθήσεται (she shall be saved) refer? Σωθήσεται is singular and therefore should not be translated in the plural form. Paul begins with reference to Eve (2:13), then seamlessly moves to speaking of δὲ γυνή (the woman, 2:14), and finally to a plurality of women (ἐὰν μείνωσιν, 2:15). The phrase τῆς τεκνογονίας is singular and does not suggest a plurality of childbirths, but one. Therefore, Paul begins by speaking in reference to the fall of Eve. He then moves to salvation διὰ τῆς τεκνογονίας (through the childbirth), which is likely a reference to Mary and the Incarnation. Finally, he speaks to a plurality of women (the Ephesian women) suggesting that they should follow the model of the woman's (Mary) obedience to God. Therefore, in this context σωθήσεται is inclusive of Eve, the woman through whom the child is born (Mary), and all women who follow Mary's example of obedience to God. This is consistent with Paul's use of the *protoevangelium*. This translation recognizes that Paul acknowledges the role of a woman, specifically the Virgin Mary, in the salvific mission of God. Just as Jesus is the new Adam, Mary is the new Eve.<sup>22</sup>

Some New Testament scholars reject any reference here to the *protoevangelium* and believe that Paul nowhere suggests that salvation is by the Incarnation.<sup>23</sup> Andreas Köstenberger goes to great length to argue that 1 Timothy 2:15 is little more than “echo of Genesis 3:16, reflecting a perhaps unconscious reference to a passage with related content (i.e., childbearing).” Therefore, the only contribution of the Genesis narrative is to suggest that “Eve... was deceived and fell into transgression. Christian women... will escape or be kept safe from Satan, if they adhere to their God-given domestic role...”<sup>24</sup> Gordon Fee concurs: “More likely what Paul intends is that woman's salvation... is to be found in her being a model, godly woman, known for her good works... [which] include marriage, bearing children..., and keeping a good home.”<sup>25</sup> Mounce suggests that childbearing is significant to the salvation of the Ephesian women because “false teachers are downplaying the importance of marriage and ...childbirth.”<sup>26</sup> B. W. Winter suggests that Paul was challenging the practice of abortion. He wrote, “the Christian wife would be preserved by continuing in her pregnant condition (and thereby bearing a child) instead of terminating her pregnancy.”<sup>27</sup>

Paul sought to encourage the “faith, love, and sanctity” of the women at Ephesus (1 Timothy 2:15). He does that by suggesting Mary as an exemplar of the Faith. Contrary to

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<sup>22</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996) 1-66; Thomas C. Oden, *The Word of Life* (Peabody, MA: Prince, 1998) 148-151.

<sup>23</sup> Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 75; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 145.

<sup>24</sup> Köstenberger, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:15,” 138-139, 142.

<sup>25</sup> Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 75. Also: Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus*, 77.

<sup>26</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 146.

<sup>27</sup> B. W. Winter, *Romans Wives, Roman Widows* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 111.

those who suggest that Paul never refers to the Incarnation or Mary's role therein,<sup>28</sup> his writings allude to the Incarnation. Jesus Christ was "born of a woman" (Galatians 4:4) and "a descendant of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1:3). Some scholars suggest that γενόμενον ἐκ γυναίκος (born of woman) is nothing more than a Jewish idiom signifying humanness.<sup>29</sup> However, it is inconceivable that Paul could refer to the birth of Christ without reflecting on the significance of the virginal conception.<sup>30</sup> Certainly Paul and the Ephesian believers would be aware of the narratives which recount the annunciation, virginal conception, and birth of the Christ child (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:6-7).<sup>31</sup> Σωθήσεται (she shall be saved) is passive, which suggests that "the woman" (Mary) is saved by the child she births.<sup>32</sup> Paul's point is that Mary is a model of faith and obedience for Christian women to emulate. To affirm Mary as an exemplar of the Faith does not imply that she is the savior of women, or co-redemptrix of humankind. Paul is adamant that "there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human" (1 Timothy 2:5 NRSV).

As an obedient and virtuous servant of Yahweh, Mary is unique in salvation history. Mary is "the mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43). The ancient theologians referred to Mary as *Theotokos*, that is, God-bearer. As God-bearer, Mary is bearer of the Spirit and the Son. Mary is bearer of the Holy Spirit in a manner that is unique to humanity. The Incarnation of Christ was effected by will of the Father, the submission of the Son, the agency of the Holy Spirit, and the obedience of the Virgin. As the Spirit of God came upon Mary and effected the conception of Jesus, the Spirit also effected Mary's sanctification. God the Son was united to humanity through the flesh of Mary. The Christ child was unaffected by human corruption because Mary was sanctified, or perfected, by the Holy Spirit. Only the Virgin Mary has birthed a child conceived by the Holy Spirit, a child who is fully human and fully God. That Jesus is fully human, and that his divine humanity is derived from conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary, suggests that male and female are of the same human essence and are therefore consubstantial. To suggest that females are ontologically subordinate to males in any way is inconsistent with the role of Mary as *Theotokos*. As an obedient servant of Yahweh, Mary embodies all the faithful and anointed women before her, and after her. Mary's unqualified obedience to God is presented as an answer to Eve's disobedience. Therefore, Mary is the paradigm for the inclusion of women in the mission of God.

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<sup>28</sup> Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009) 78; Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, 75; Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 145.

<sup>29</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians* (Dallas: Word, 2002) 171; Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992) 150.

<sup>30</sup> Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Louisville: John Knox, 1982), 94-95.

<sup>31</sup> A post-Pauline example of Mary's role in the mission of God may be found in Revelation 12:1-2, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 147.

## Women in the New Creation

All humans, male and female, are saved through Jesus Christ. Paul declared, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new” (2 Co 5:17 NRSV). The advent of Jesus Christ inaugurated an ontological transformation of creation in which the degeneration caused by the fall of humankind is being reversed. Slavery to sin and death are giving way to freedom and life. This present age is “old” and “according to the flesh” (5:16) and “has passed away.” Because of “the Childbirth,” there is a new ontological reality that is primarily anthropological, but effects all creation.<sup>33</sup> Just as “in Adam” creation was corrupted; “in Christ” all things are being made new. Christ is the πρωτότοκος (firstborn); the “firstborn over all creation,” the “firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:15, 18) and the “firstborn among many brothers” who are conformed to his image (Romans 8:29). Πρωτότοκος speaks to Christ as the creator and sustainer of creation who has initiated a new eschatological reality, and a new human community. The primary salvific act of Christ is reconciliation. In Christ the world is reconciled to God (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Colossian 1:20). Also, in Christ all of humanity is reconciled into one body (Ephesians 2:11-18). Christ as the πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς (firstborn among many brothers) has united all of redeemed humanity into Himself.<sup>34</sup> This is profoundly demonstrated by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians:

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity (Ephesians 2:14-16).

In the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile, Christ has destroyed the enmity between the two, established peace, and reconciled the two groups into one body. Within the new humanity there are no divisions and no enmity. Therefore, should we not also understand that in Christ the division and enmity between male and female, that is, the effects of the Edenic

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<sup>33</sup> Jan Lambrecht, *Second Corinthians*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999) 97; Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, (Dallas: Word, 2002) 152.

<sup>34</sup> “εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς” The phrase πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς (many brothers) if taken literally would suggest that only males will be conformed to the image of Christ. It is striking that some of the major commentaries on Romans do not address the gender significance of this phrase. This may be that it is assumed that ἀδελφοῖς is not to be understood in terms of gender, but rather as a familial relationship between all who have received the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15). That is certainly the intent of Paul. Therefore, females who are “in Christ” will be conformed to His image in glorification. This implies that to bear the image of Christ transcends gender. Without doubt the historical Christ, God in flesh, was male. But the ontological and salvific issue is not his gender, but his human essence. In the new creation all of humankind, male and female, will share in Christ’s glory.

judgment, has been put to death? That certainly seems to be the implication of Paul's earlier words to the Galatians:

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:27-28).

To be "baptized into Christ" is to "walk in the newness of life... in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5). Baptism is the bath of new creation in which the Holy Spirit washes away the stain of sin, renews the believer, signifies adoption into the family of God (Galatians 3:26), and unites the believer with Christ (Acts 22:16; Romans 6:5; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5). Also, because baptism is to be united with Christ, in baptism the dividing wall and enmity that has separated humans is washed away. Richard Longenecker has written that in Christ "old divisions and inequalities have come to an end and new relationships have been established." Therefore, baptism should be a signpost that points the way toward a more Christian personal and social ethic.<sup>35</sup> In this "old" age - the age of the flesh - Gentiles, slaves, and women are of an inferior status. Jews, freemen, and males are assumed to have priority. However, in the new creation - the age of the Spirit signified by water baptism - Gentiles, slaves, and women inherit a new status. In the human community of the new creation all social and political distinctions of the old order have passed away. In the new creation all humans - Jews and Gentiles, free and slave, male and female - share in the glory of Christ.

The apostolic church certainly understood the significance of baptism for men *and women*. When many Samaritans responded in faith to the preaching of Philip, Luke records that "they were being baptized, men and women alike" (Acts 8:12). This demonstrates that baptism for men *and women* was the paradigm of Christian initiation in the apostolic church. This is a significant event when we remember that the covenant sign of Abraham was circumcision. The rite of circumcision could only be performed upon males, therefore women were ontologically restricted. The correspondence between the Jewish ritual of circumcision and Christian water baptism was significant in the mind of Paul.

...and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:11-12).

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<sup>35</sup> Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156.

“The circumcision of Christ” is a metaphorical reference to his violent death on the cross. The phrase “a circumcision made without hands” refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in the transformation of the human heart. Christian baptism is to share in the death and resurrection of Christ, and is associated with reception of the Holy Spirit.<sup>36</sup> Many of the errors and heresies that proliferated in the apostolic church concerned circumcision. In fact, the circumcision of Gentile believers was the primary issue discussed at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15). If the leaders of the apostolic church had affirmed the necessity of circumcision, then women would have been restricted from full participation in the church. Long after the matter was settled at Jerusalem the issue continued to trouble the early church. Regarding the issue of circumcision, Paul was adamant that water baptism is the all-sufficient sign of being “in Christ.” Water baptism is a sacramental sign that signifies being sealed by the Spirit and anticipates Spirit baptism.

Through the prophet Joel, Yahweh declared, “I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy... even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit...” (Joel 2:28-29). The Lukan narrative suggests that the pouring out of the Spirit began when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Virgin Mary and she conceived the Christchild (Luke 1:35). After Mary, Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41). If we were to adopt the ancient Jewish hermeneutic, that which is first has priority; then we could suggest that in the new creation women are given priority. Of course, that is not the point. However, the point is that in the new creation, inaugurated by the Spirit and the Christ, women are given significant roles in the mission of God. As the Spirit is poured out, women and men are filled with the Holy Spirit. This implies that in Spirit baptism women and men receive the *charismata*, including the gifts of speech (prophecy, tongues, and interpretation) and the gifts of leadership (apostles, prophets, teachers, administrations) (1 Corinthians 12:8-11, 28). To be filled with the Spirit is to be given authority to teach (Matthew 28:19-20); and empowered for the sake of the mission of God (Acts 1:8). If women are to be prohibited from certain functions; then we might suggest that the Spirit-baptism they receive is somehow less than the Spirit-baptism men receive. Of course, this suggestion is ridiculous. The promise of Joel, and the fulfillment of Pentecost, is that sons and daughters are filled with the Spirit and son and daughters will prophesy. Men and women, baptized into Christ and baptized in the Spirit, exist consubstantially in one body – the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head. Women and men are called to submit to the headship of Christ.

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<sup>36</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians to Philemon and to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 103-106; Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Colossians, Ephesians* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000) 99-100, 106-107. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 158-160.

## The Authority of Women in the Mission of God

A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

Now we must return to consider these enigmatic words. Actually, the words of verse 11 are not significant to our discussion. All students and disciples of Christ, male and female alike, should receive instruction “quietly... with entire submissiveness.” Likewise, the question of the proper exercise of authority is appropriate to males and females. Spiritual abuse through the misuse of authority is common to male and female. Throughout the Pastoral Epistles and other writings Paul insists that the proper exercise of authority should reflect the humility of Christ and respect for all persons. No one, male or female, has the authority to dominate, intimidate, or manipulate others. The primary question before us is: “Are women full partners in the mission of God with full authority to teach and lead the people of God?”

We must discern Paul’s intent when he wrote, “I do not allow...” Was Paul offering a personal judgment, limited to the churches he founded? Or, is Paul speaking an authoritative word for the church catholic? Paul sometimes distinguished when he was speaking according to divine authority or making informed personal judgments (1 Corinthians 7:6, 12; 2 Corinthians 7:25). Mounce offers an extensive survey of Paul’s use of “I” and concludes that even when Paul is offering his personal opinion he intends his opinion to be authoritative.<sup>37</sup> This may be conceded. So then, does Paul intend for women to be restricted only at Ephesus? It does not appear so, for when addressing church problems at Corinth he wrote, “The women are to keep silent *in the churches*; for they are not permitted to speak...” (1 Corinthians 14:34, emphasis mine).<sup>38</sup> William Mounce has concluded that “Paul does not want women to be in positions of authority in the church” and that the “specificity of the application does not relegate the principle to the halls of cultural relativity.”<sup>39</sup> Likewise, Douglas Moo has written, “As a matter of fact, none of the texts clearly portrays a woman in the role of a leader or teacher of the church. Jesus, in a

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<sup>37</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 120-123.

<sup>38</sup> Gordon Fee has written, “On the whole, therefore, the case against these verses is so strong, and finding a viable solution of their meaning so difficult, that it seems best to view them as an interpolation... first written as a gloss in the margin by someone who, probably in light of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, felt the need to qualify Paul’s instructions...” *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 705. These words may indeed have been a gloss; however they have been subsequently canonized and must be respected as such.

<sup>39</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 130.

contrast to his Jewish culture, certainly accorded a status to women equal with men, but he stopped short of appointing them to any position of authority.”<sup>40</sup>

So we find ourselves returning to the problem of “exegetical ambiguities and hermeneutical inconsistencies.” Even though Paul seems adamant, his words do not reflect the redemptive narrative of the Scriptures in which many women have an authoritative voice. Even in the Pauline texts women speak in church – offering prayers, prophesying, and speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 11:5). Certainly anyone who is speaking “in the Spirit,” even a woman, is speaking with authority. This begs the question, “If women are to be silent in church, then why is a sign of the Spirit daughters who prophesy?” The Virgin Mary was the first daughter of Zion to prophesy.

My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant; for behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him. He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble. He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed. He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his descendants forever” (Luke 1:46-55).

The prophetic words of the Virgin Mary are indeed authoritative and have informed Christian teaching since the first century. They have been recited in Christian churches for centuries; hence her voice reverberates throughout the vast cathedrals and small chapels of Christendom. Anna the prophetess “never left the temple” and was present when the infant Jesus was presented for dedication. Luke tells us that “she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem” (Luke 2:36-38). A woman of Samaria encountered Jesus at a well. She was overwhelmed by his presence and began to tell the people of Samaria of her encounter. John tells us that “many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified” (John 4:39). When Jesus was in Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, Martha of Bethany confessed, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world” (John 11:27). This is one of the most profound confessions of faith in the gospels. On the first Easter, Mary Magdalene proclaimed, “I have seen the Lord!” (John 20:18). Her testimony is the first witness to the resurrection. There are many women mentioned throughout the New Testament who

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<sup>40</sup> Moo, “1 Timothy 2:11-14,” 76.

suffered and toiled for the sake of the gospel; women who served as deaconesses and apostles; and women who led house churches. Priscilla, with her husband Aquila, mentored Apollos and “explained to him the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). Priscilla was also a prominent leader of the church at Ephesus (Romans 16:3-5). Chloe apparently was a house church pastor at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11). Other house church pastors may have included Nympha (Colossians 4:15); Phoebe (Romans 16:1); and the “elect lady” of Asia Minor (2 John). Junia served Christ as an outstanding apostle (Romans 16:7).<sup>41</sup> The teaching and witness of Lois and Eunice were a profound influence in the life of Timothy, and most likely many others in Ephesus (2 Timothy 1:5). Prominent leaders of the Roman church included at least five named women: Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Julia (Romans 16). This list is not inclusive of many other named and anonymous women in the early church who served with distinction and honor.

Women were indeed speaking with authoritative voices in the apostolic church. So, is Paul inconsistent and conflicted? I suggest that Paul held his view of women in tension with the social conventions of his day and his understanding of the gospel of Christ. Many early Jewish Christians could not come to terms with Gentile inclusion. For some, maybe including Paul, it seems that it was easier to accept Gentiles, than to accept women in authority. Paul’s word’s restricting women in leadership, and his words encouraging the obedience of slaves, were very much in tension with his understanding of being baptized into Christ and baptized in the Spirit.<sup>42</sup> Even so, it should be understood that Paul’s concern was for peace in the church (1 Corinthians 14:33), even as the church suffered in this present age, awaiting the glorification of the cosmos. It may be that Paul understood the oppression of women and slaves to be but a momentary affliction (Romans 8:18-19). If we are to be true to Paul’s teaching about the significance of the new creation, then we must recognize that the Spirit continues to teach and transform throughout this present age. Wise discernment of the scriptures requires us to be aware of the conflicting duality that often exists between the gospel and culture.<sup>43</sup>

In conclusion, I would like to offer a reflection on one of Jesus’ parables:

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<sup>41</sup> Some contest whether Ἰουνιάς should be translated as Junia (female) or Junias (male). Joseph Fitzmyer points out that the female rendition was common until the 13<sup>th</sup> century and that the majority of contemporary translations favor the feminine over the masculine. *Romans* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993) 738-739.

<sup>42</sup> The same hermeneutic that restricts women also justifies slavery. For an example of this hermeneutic see James Henry Thornwell, “A Southern Christian View of Slavery,” (1861). Internet: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/a-southern-christian-view-of-slavery/> (accessed July 23, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Lesslie Newbigen, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 184-197. There is no attempt here to suggest that the gospel is to be adapted to culture. Rather, that the gospel transcends transforms culture.



Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, "Give me legal protection from my opponent."

For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, "Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out" (Luke 18:1-5).

The woman of this parable was neither quiet, nor submissive. Instead, she was persistent in the pursuit of justice. Jesus presents her as a model of hope and faith. I am prayerful that my sisters in the faith will be persistent; and that my brothers will be discerning and just.

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