

The Role of Women in Worship in the Old Testament

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I. Introduction

In this lecture (1) I aim to offer a broad survey of the role of women in the Bible, with particular emphasis on the Old Testament, to help the Church appraise critically the impact feminism has had upon it. I offer these theological reflections to encourage and to assist the Church to retain what is good from the feminist legacy and to reject what is bad.

Feminism has significantly impacted society at large, our churches and our homes. Mary Kassian in her penetrating analysis of the feminist perspective, which she once embraced, wrote:

"We encounter and interact with the feminist perspective daily on issues such as gender roles, affirmative action, reproduction technology, abortion, rape, abuse, day care and pay equity. Feminist ideology is also visible in the Church. Many books and articles have been published that Scripture supports undifferentiated roles for men and women. The ordination of women to leadership offices is common place. Denominational women's task forces, women's studies courses in seminaries, feminist theology, inclusive language, revised inclusive lectionaries and feminist rituals are well accepted in many denominations." (2)

It is this legacy as it applies to the Church which I aim to appraise in order to sift the wheat from the chaff and thereby edify the Church.

History of feminism. To provide a context for this assessment I will avoid the briar-patch of defining feminism, which is not essential for our purposes, but instead present Kassian's insightful analysis of its history. Probably basing herself on Mary Daly's thesis that to exist humanly is to name the self, to name the world, and to name God, (3) Kassian analyzes its history into three periods roughly congruent with the nineteen sixties, seventies, and eighties.

In the sixties feminism was called "women's liberation," a time when feminists disallowed men to define their identity and called upon women to define themselves. Kassian brings her discussion of this decade to the conclusion:

"As the first decade of the women's movement ended, women all across the continent began to claim the right to name and define themselves. By August 26, 1970, on the fiftieth anniversary of women's suffrage in America, 20,000 women marched proudly down New York's Fifth Avenue identifying themselves as part of the women's liberation movement. Freedman summed up the tenor of the movement, when at the conclusion of the march she blazed: 'In the religion of my ancestors, there was a prayer that Jewish men said every morning. They prayed, "Thank thee Lord, that I was not born a woman." Today all women are going to be able to say, "Thank thee, Lord, that I was born a woman...."' After tonight, the politics of this nation will never be the same again. There is no way any man, woman or child can escape the nature of our revolution. (4)

According to Kassian, when in the seventies women took it in hand to define the world (i.e., psychology, sociology, marriage and so forth) from their perspective, the movement shifted from Women's Liberation to

feminism. She summarizes:

Women were different from men, but this fact was not a source of shame, but rather a source of pride. Feminism taught that women ought to be proud of their different bodies and their different perceptions. The 'male' interpretations of the past were therefore boldly rejected and replaced with interpretations reflecting a feminist definition of reality. The feminist view was so widely accepted in some circles that it became the mode and norm for truth. Women had not only claimed the right to name themselves, but also the right to name and define the world around them. (5)

During the eighties feminism shifted to defining God. Kassian cites Rosemary Radford Ruether as an example:

If we are to seek an image of God beyond patriarchy, certain basic principles have to be acknowledged. First, we have to acknowledge the principal that the male has no special priority in imaging God. Christian theology has always recognized, theoretically, that all language for God is analogical and metaphorical, not literal. No particular image can be regarded as the exclusive image for God. Images for God must be drawn from the whole range of human experience, from both genders and all social classes and cultures. To take one image drawn from one gender and in one sociological context (that of the ruling class) as normative for God is to legitimate this gender and social group as the normative possessors of the image of God and representatives of God on earth. This is idolatry. (6)

Kassian concludes:

The phenomena of inclusive language recognized and further served to reinforce the paradigm offered by feminist theology. It, more than theological rhetoric, brought the feminist debate to the level of the ordinary believer as women's studies had done. Feminist theology was thereby translated from an academic philosophy to the level of practical daily worship of the Christian community. Feminists had named themselves and world, and now, through inclusive language, they and their Christian communities began to name God. (7)

With that historical context I now turn to appraise by Scripture the impact of the feminist perspective upon the church both positively and negatively. I originally entitled this lecture "The Role of Women in Worship" because from the biblical perspective believers offer their entire lives as an act of worship to him, even as Adam and Eve offered theirs in the Garden of Eden. However, for most the term has the more restricted sense pertaining to liturgy.

Hermeneutical issues and the method of criticism. Before looking at specific texts, however, the hermeneutical question of how texts conditioned by historical particularity can be normative for the contemporary Church must be addressed.

The order of creation is normative. To transcend the historically particular and culturally conditioned situation in which Scripture is given and to find what is normative for the practice of the covenant people I first examine the role of women before the Fall. The two creation accounts, Genesis 1:1-2:3 and 2:4-25, represent God's design for men and women, husbands and wives. The rest of Scripture recounts a sacred story that to a large extent is moving toward the restoration of this ideal. (8) It treats this charter for humanity as normative for the covenant community, though sometimes concessions are made because of the hardness of the human heart (Matthew 19:8). In the light of this ideal I will examine the rest of the Old Testament and, in addition, note some of its continuities and discontinuities with the New Testament.

The order of creation, which is set forth in these two accounts, stands behind the order of redemption, which is represented in the rest of Scripture. For example, the Fourth Commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) to refrain from work on the Sabbath is based on the first creation account that God ceased his own work on that day (2:2-3). The Seventh Commandment (Exodus 20:14) to not commit adultery is founded on the institution of marriage in the Garden of Eden according to the second account (Genesis 2:18-25). The Sixth Commandment (Exodus 20:15) protects innocent life because every life is created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28; cf. 5:1-3;

9:6).

Moreover, our Lord aimed to recapture for his Church the Creator's original intention for marriage (Matthew 19:1-9), and the Apostle Paul based on these accounts his arguments concerning the roles of husbands and wives in the home and in the Church (1 Corinthians 11:3-12:1; 1 Timothy 2:12-15).

In sum, the Bible is a story of Paradise lost in the first Adam and being regained in the Second. The Garden of Eden symbolically represents the ideal culture that was lost and that Moses restored in the old Israel through the law given at Sinai and that Christ restores more perfectly in the new Israel through the law written on the heart.

Furthermore, the historically conditioned texts in the rest of the Old Testament cannot be ruled out of hand as not normative practices of the Church in its worship before God for at least three reasons. God ordained Israel's culture. First, God sovereignly ordained the culture in which he became incarnate. The roles played by godly woman in ancient Israel are due to his design, not to chance. The Sovereign God, not Lady Luck, is Israel's Lord. Since his sovereignty extends even to assigning the pagans their gods and their cultures (Deut 4:19), we may rightly suppose that the Sovereign did not hand over to Chance either his representation of himself as Father, Son and Spirit, or the form of government for the nation that he chose to bless the world by embodying and disseminating his teaching (cf. Genesis 18:18-19).

Orthodox theology cannot consent to Krister Stendal's comment, made while he was still dean of Harvard Divinity School, that God's numerous and strong masculine metaphors for himself is largely an accident. (9) According to him, "the masculinity of God and of God-language, is a cultural and linguistic accident, and I think one should also argue that the masculinity of Christ is in the same order. To be sure, Jesus Christ was a male, but that may be no more significant to his being than the fact that, presumably his eyes were brown." (10) In truth, however, the Bible, in contrast to other biographies, curiously does not mention anything about our Lord's physical appearance apart from his masculinity, suggesting it has theological relevance. His incarnation occurred at the right time and in the right way according to God's own sovereign purposes (Gal. 4:2-4).

Prophets critique Israel's culture but not patriarchy. Second, Israel's prophets, God's mouth, were iconoclasts, not traditionalists, who called Israel into the dock for numerous injustices. Abraham Heschel in his justly praised work, *The Prophets*, makes the point:

"They challenged the injustices of their culture. The prophet is an iconoclast, challenging the apparently holy, revered and awesome, beliefs cherished as certainties, institutions endowed with supreme sanctity. They exposed the scandalous pretensions, they challenged kings, priests, institutions and the temple." (11)

However, not one of these cultural revolutionaries regarded patriarchy as an unjust or oppressive form of government. Quite the contrary. They interpreted the rule by women as God's judgment against the sinful nation. Isaiah, for example, ridicules it: "Children are their oppressors, and women rule over them" (Isaiah 3:12). They inveighed instead against abuse of power that oppressed women: "The women of my people you cast out from their pleasant homes" (Micah 2:9). They gave a voice for those too weak to have a voice, especially the fatherless and widows: "They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the widow's cause come before them" (Isaiah 1:23).

Practice of Christ Jesus confirms patriarchy. Third, our Lord was a revolutionary in his age own with regard to the role of women in worship. He amazed his disciples by conversing with a woman because he violated the prejudice of both the Jews and the Romans against women (John 4:27). The Son of God bestowed dignity upon this Samaritan adulteress, "unclean" by Jewish standards, by revealing to her for the first time that worship would now be directed toward the Father in heaven, not toward "mecca-like" Jerusalem on earth (John 4:21-25). Moreover, our Lord entrusted women to be the original witnesses to his resurrection, the cornerstone of the Christian faith, though their testimony would have been discounted in a Roman court (Luke 24:1-4). He rewarded the devotion of Mary of Magdala, out of whom he had cast seven demons, by allowing her to be the first person to meet him after his resurrection (Mark 16:9-10; John 20:14-18). His disciples

refused to believe Mary's report of the Risen Lord. In fact, they dismissed it as an 'idle tale' (Mark 16:11; Luke 24:11). Later, Jesus rebuked them for their unwillingness to believe her (Mark 16:14). Yet he implicitly confirmed the Old Testament patriarchy by not appointing a woman as an apostle, though women followed him, ministered to him, and were his close friends. It is nonsense to argue that the counter-cultural Jesus appointed only male apostles because he was culturally conditioned. Is it not plausible to think that had he intended to empower women to have equality with men in leadership he would have called a woman to be an apostle, either before or after the resurrection?

II. Forbidden Fruit

If Kassian's analysis of the history of feminism is accurate, those forms of feminism which base their perspective about women, the world, and God on human autonomy, apart from the Bible's teaching, is fundamentally flawed. Elsewhere I have argued that an adequate epistemology must be based on revelation, not on human reason, experience (e.g., so-called "callings") (12), and/or tradition (cf. Deuteronomy 8:3; Ezekiel 28:6, Ezekiel 15-17). (13)

This truth is symbolically represented in the Second Account by God's prohibition not to eat of the "tree of knowledge and good and evil." "The tree of knowledge of good and evil" represents knowledge that is God's prerogative. As Christians we know that the only accurate description of reality is that which is known to God. He is the maker of reality and our only clear interpreter of it. Therefore only the good Creator and moral Sovereign of the universe can legislate inerrantly what promotes life and social well-being and what harms them. Our first parents, by seizing this prerogative for themselves in order to become equal with God, died spiritually and lost Paradise. To be sure eating the forbidden fruit (i.e., living independently from God's revelation) appeared good for food (i.e., of practical value), pleasant to the eye (i.e., having aesthetic appeal), and desirable to make one wise (i.e., provided intellectual gratification). The price, however, was too high. They lost a relationship both with God, symbolized by hiding among the trees, and with one another, symbolized by putting a barrier of clothing between them.

Biblical feminists acknowledge the authority of the Bible, but they tend, I suggest, to interpret Scripture in a way that favors their social agenda, viz: the equality of women in authority and leadership. Regarding their zeal to ordain women leaders, we need to ask, are they projecting their system upon the Bible, as a better system, and thereby inflicting their own will for power against God's design? Until the twentieth century the Church universally understood Scriptures to teach male rulership in the Church, (14) but I observe that many evangelical churches, certainly not all, have overthrown that heritage on the superficial basis that scholars are divided on the issue. The truth is scholars are divided on most theological issues, including the Bible's trustworthiness. On that basis no doctrine is safe, and the more liberal perspective must prevail. Like the Bereans, we need to examine "every day" the Scriptures for ourselves to see what is the truth. Thistleton, citing Robert Morgan, rightly advised pastors to be on guard that "some disagreements about what the Bible means stem not from obscurities in the texts, but from conflicting aims of the interpreters." (15)

III. Marriage and Motherhood

Feminism is also flawed in tending to give priority to fulfillment in careers outside of the home over against fulfillment in childbearing within the marriage structure. Recently I counselled a female student who felt guilty in wanting to marry and bear children because her church wanted her to remain single and minister to its needs.

According to the first creation account God created humanity as male and female (Genesis 1:26-28; cf. Matthew 19:4), whereupon he blessed them (i.e., filled them with potency to reproduce life and to triumph over enemies (cf. Genesis 22:17) and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. He intended that they procreate his image and similitude (cf. Genesis 5:1-3), thereby affording the opportunity to as many people as possible to sit at his banquet table of life. Humanity is grounded in being male and female, an immutably fixed, natural reality. Feminism in its desire for freedom and power depreciates this fundamental design. "Grace," as Pope John Paul II noted in his remarks to Roman Catholic bishops, "never casts nature aside or cancels it [nature] out, but rather perfects it and ennobles it." (16)

In the second creation account God gives Adam his bride and thereby institutes marriage, defining them now as husband and wife. By instituting marriage in the Garden of Eden, God represents marriage as an ideal and holy state, an act of worship (Hebrews 13:4). Recall the Church restores the Garden. Therefore, believers commit themselves in marriage to one another in the presence of God. Marriage is the only social institution that precedes the Fall, and the homes established through marriage provide the foundation stones for society. After the Fall God instituted the State to protect society from criminals and the Church to promote a new community of love in a world of hating and being hated (Titus 3:3).

The Gift of the Bride story emphasizes the goodness of marriage. The Lord's statement that Adam's singleness "is not good" (2:18) is highly emphatic. Instead of saying "it is lacking in goodness," a normal Hebrew way of saying that a situation is less than ideal, he emphatically calls it in effect "bad." This account, with no trace of male chauvinism, ends with the coda that the man leaves his parents to cling to his wife (2:24).

The rest of the Old Testament also defines marriage as a holy and an ideal state. The most holy people in the Old Testament were married. The High Priest, who alone could enter once a year with awe and trembling into God's presence in the Most Holy Place, was married. He had to marry a virgin, not a widow or divorcee, to guarantee that the successor to his high and holy office was Aaron's offspring (Leviticus 21:13-15), not because a formerly married woman was discarded as used property. In fact, the Old Testament looks with compassion on both (Malachi 2:13-16, 3:6).

The Nazirite, the most holy person in the Old Testament by choice, not by birth as in the case of the high priest, likewise was married (see Numbers 6:1-21). By definition he or she was "separated" to God, but Nazirites never fasted sexually. They showed their separation to the Creator by not cutting their hair, just as an orchard was set apart to God by not pruning it and an altar dedicated to God was not made of cut stones. They symbolized their separation from earthly pleasures by not eating the fruit of the vine that cheers both gods and people (Judges 9:13), and they showed they belonged to the God of life by a total separation from death. However, they did not show their separation to God by celibacy. Marriage was part of their consecration, worship, and holiness.

Paul, however, elevates singleness for "gifted" individuals to an even higher state (1 Corinthians 7). His design, however, is not to favor women's careers outside the home over motherhood within it but partially to enable them to be fully devoted to Christ without distraction. He teaches as normative behavior that older women teach younger women "to love their husbands and be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:4-5).

God elevates godly mothers to the highest status after the Fall. In sovereign grace he changed the fallen woman's affection against Satan and by so much toward himself (Genesis 3:15). By his promise to give this new woman a triumphant, though suffering, offspring, he implicitly assigned this new woman the role of bearing the seed that would destroy the Serpent, the Adversary of God and humanity. The quintessential expression of that seed is Christ who defeated Satan on the cross, but the mandate finds its fulfillment in every covenant child: "The God of peace," says the Apostle to the Church at Rome, "will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 16:20). In response to the promise to give the woman seed to defeat Satan, believing Adam named his wife Eve, "because she would become the mother of all the living" (Genesis 3:20). Every Christian mother by being in Christ bears his holy children (1 Corinthians 7:14; cf. Isaiah 53:10). If a woman has suffered any loss of leadership through her creation (1 Timothy 2:12--13; cf. Genesis 2:18-25) and her historical guilt in connection with the Fall (1 Timothy 2:14; cf. Genesis 3:1-14), says the Apostle-if I understand him correctly-she will be saved from that loss through bearing children in Christ, if the children continue in the faith, love, and holiness with propriety (Genesis 3:15; 1 Timothy 2:15). In short, the Apostle is saying, "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Pastors need to hold before the women of their churches Mary's response to the angel's announcement that she would be with child: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said." Mary models for Christian women a most important aspect of woman in worship and ministry.

IV. The Equality of Men and Women

Most debated issues have the heuristic value of enabling one to see truth in a new way. Feminism, as the

history sketched above shows, has had the heuristic value of reasserting the equality of women with men. Unfortunately, as has been documented many times, both the synagogue and the Church have not only failed to proclaim this glad truth but have shouted it down. It is black mark in sacred history.

The error, however, lies in the interpreters of Scripture, not in the Holy Bible itself. In the First Creation Account both men and women are created in God's image. An image of the deity in the ancient Near East, as D. J. A. Clines has shown, entailed dominion. (17) He cites a cuneiform text dated about 675 B.C.: "It was said to Esarhaddon [the Assyrian king], 'A free man is as the shadow of god, the slave is as the shadow of a free man, but the he is like unto the very image of god.'" (18) God crowned men and women as queens to rule over his entire creation, including the mysterious serpent who "was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made" (Genesis 3:1). Together, as his image, they share this derivative authority to be culture makers.

The Second Account reinforces this equality and clarifies it. When the Lord says, "I will make for Adam a helper suitable to him," he means, he will form a woman who is equal to and adequate for the man. She stands opposite him in her sexual differentiation and equal with him in her personhood and dignity. Adam's repose to her formation from his own body are a human being's only words preserved from before the Fall. Untouched by envy and/or a desire to dominate and control her, he celebrates with admiration her equality with him in elevated poetry, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." At the same time he recognizes her sexual differentiation from him: "She shall be called 'woman' for she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23).

The rest of the Old Testament reinforces woman's equality in nature and in dignity with men. Let me cite a few of many illustrations to make the point. After Sarah over-reacted to the arrogance of her maidservant, Hagar, and had driven her out of the house, the angel of the LORD found the run-away at a well. He said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai...." The modern reader misses the significance of that address. This is the only instance in all of the many thousands of ancient Near Eastern texts where a deity, or his messenger, calls a woman by name and thereby invests her with exalted dignity. Hagar is the Old Testament counterpart to the Samaritan woman (see John 4). Both were women, both were not of Abraham's family, and both were sinners, yet God treated both with compassion, gave them special revelations and bestowed on them unconventional dignity. In the Old Testament women were called to be "prophetesses," God's mouth in the world, on an equal footing with prophets. Miriam (ca. 1400 B.C.) (Exodus 15:20f) was the first of several who are named, including Deborah (Judges 4:4-7), Isaiah's wife (725 B.C.) (Isaiah 8:3), Huldah (640 B.C.) (2 Kings 22:13-20), and the false prophetess, Noadiah (ca. 450 B.C.) (Nehemiah 6:14). Joel (2:28) predicts that in the last days the LORD will fulfill Moses's prayer that all the Lord's people, men and women alike, become prophets (Numbers 11:29). At Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to both men and women, young and old alike, to enable them to proclaim boldly the triumphant news, Jesus is Lord of all, and to build his Church.

Huldah is a most remarkable prophetess with regard to the question of women's roles in worship and ministry. During the reformation of Josiah, his workmen, who were repairing the temple, found the Book of the Law, which King Manasseh had neglected during the previous generation. Josiah directed five leaders to inquire of the LORD about the book. They went directly to the married prophetess to verify the book, not to her famous contemporaries, Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Clarence Vos in his doctoral dissertation on our topic comments:

"That officials from the royal court went to a prophetess relatively unknown with so important a matter is strong indication that in this period of Israel's history there is little if any prejudice against a woman's offering of prophecy. If she had received the gift of prophecy, her words were to be given the same authority as those of men." (19)

Women and men were also equal in prayer. Covenant women prayed directly to God without the priestly mediation of their husbands. For example, when carnal Jacob defaulted in his responsibility to pray for his barren wife (Gen 30:1-2), in contrast to his godly forefathers who prayed for their children and wives (cf. 24:7, 12-15; 25:21), Rachel petitioned God directly, and he listened to her and opened her womb (30:22-24). Barren Hannah also sought dignity and worth through child-bearing. She too went directly to God in prayer, independently from her husband, Elkanah, and the high priest, Eli, both of whom were insensitive to her need. In fact, when challenged by Eli, she spoke up and defended her right (1 Samuel 1:15-16). She named her boy, "Asked of God," and dedicated him to the LORD with the prayer that he would introduce kingship into Israel

(1 Samuel 2:10B). Hannah's prayer turned Israel around from the nadir of its spiritual history and political misfortune and started it on its upward ascent to its glory under David. A mother's prayer saved Israel and ruled it.

In addition to these prophetesses other women also received direct revelations from God. When Rebekah felt the twins struggling in her womb, she asked the LORD, "why is this happening to me?," a question written large across the page of history. The LORD revealed to her Jacob's triumph over Esau. Isaac, however, gave priority to his sensual appetite over God's revelation, set himself against his wife, and made the holy family dysfunctional (Genesis 25:22-23, 28; 27:1-40). When King Jeroboam wanted a revelation from God he sent his disguised wife to the prophet Ahijah, who entrusted God's word to her, and she in turn mediated it to her husband (1 Kings 14:1-18).

Women sang and danced in worship, expressions of the acme of life. Miriam and Deborah composed the two oldest pieces of literature preserved in the Bible, which are regarded by scholars as literary masterpieces (Exodus 15 and Judges 5). Women celebrated before the LORD with singing, dancing, and tambourines (e.g., 1 Samuel 18:6; Psalm 68:25), but they were not a part of the temple choir.

Mothers stood on equal footing with fathers in teaching children: "She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue" (Proverbs 31:26). Israel's sages were also cultural revolutionaries with regard to the role of women teaching in the home. The father's command to the son, "do not forsake your mother's teaching" (Proverb 1:8), seems unexceptional to the modern reader. However, nowhere else in the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East, from the Euphrates to the Nile, is the mother mentioned as a teacher. In order for the mother to teach Israel's inherited wisdom, she herself had first to be taught, suggesting that "son" in the Book of Proverbs is inclusivistic, not gender specific.

Women in the Old Testament offered sacrifices and gifts along with men (cf. Leviticus 12:6). The laws for ceremonial cleansing in connection with bodily emissions were essentially the same for both sexes (Leviticus 15). Women as well as men consecrated themselves to God as Nazirites (Numbers 6:2). Sarah, when wronged by her female servant and by the apathy of her husband to the injustice inflicted upon her, appealed to God for justice, but she did not issue an ultimatum to Abraham that either Hagar goes or she goes (Genesis 16:5).

The role of women in ministry in the New Testament is better known. Luke takes pains to stress the important role that woman played on Paul's second missionary journey when he established the church in Macedonia and Achaia (cf. Acts 16:13; 17:4, 12, 34; 18:2). The Apostle had a vision of a man of Macedonia begging him to come and help him (16:9), but when he arrived he found women in prayer who became his first converts (vv. 11-15). Phoebe, Prisc(illa), Junia, Euodia, Syntyche are celebrated as "minister" (diakonos), "co-worker" (sunergos), and "missionary" (apostolos).

The mutual submission of men and women to one another is unique to the New Testament. However, their equality before God in their nature, spiritual gifts, and prayer is found in both testaments. It is a dramatic irony that feminists, who malign the Old Testament for its patriarchalism, opened my eyes to this truth.

The question of the role of woman in worship is not whether women should participate in ministry—they obviously should—but whether they should rule the Church. We now turn to that question.

IV. Male Priority in Government

Feminist, however, universally reject the patriarchal religion of the Bible. Nevertheless, male authority in the home and in the Church is founded on the order of creation and reinforced in the order of redemption.

God established a patriarchy by creating Adam first and the woman to help the man (Genesis 2:18, cited above). As Paul noted in a passage dealing with the role of men and women, one which demands its own study: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man, neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Corinthians 11:8-9). Presumably, God designed patriarchy as his ideal form of government. Had he intended democracy he could just as easily have formed Eve and Adam at the same time and have said, "it is not good for the man or woman to be alone, I will make them to be helpers suitable to each other." If he wanted a matriarchy, he would have formed Eve first and created the husband to be a suitable

helper to his wife. However, he created a patriarchy in which the husband has authority.

God prepares the husband for leadership before giving him his bride by having Adam name the living creatures (Genesis 2:19-20). In the ancient Near East, as today, naming is a form of leadership. For example, when the Israelites conquered Transjordan, they asserted their authority by renaming the rebuilt cities (Numbers 32:38), and Pharaoh Neco asserted his rule over Eliakim by renaming him Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34). After the Lord gave Adam his bride, Adam tactfully used the passive form of construction, presumably not to dominate, to give her generic name: "she shall be called woman..." (Genesis 2:23b) (21). After the Fall, he calls out her personal name, "Eve" (Genesis 3:20). In the rest of the Old Testament both parents name the children. (20)

As a result of the Fall and God's judgment upon them, the woman desires to rule her husband, and he seeks to dominate her (Genesis 3:16B) (21) The solution to this tragic power struggle that divides the home is the new creation in Christ, in which the husband humbles himself and in love serves his wife, and the wife submits herself to him in faithful obedience in everything.

The rest of Scripture sustains patriarchy, not democracy or matriarchy.

God, who is over all, represents himself by masculine names and titles, not feminine. He identifies himself as Father, Son and Spirit, not Parent, Child and Spirit, or Mother, Daughter and Spirit. Jesus taught his Church to address God as "Father" (Luke 4:2) and to baptize nations "in the name of Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). God's titles, are King, not Queen; Lord, not Mistress. (22) God, not mortals, has the right to name himself. Its inexcusable hubris on the part of mortals to change the images by which the eternal God chooses to represent himself. We cannot change his name or titles without committing idolatry for we will have re-imaged him in a way other than the metaphors and the incarnation by which he revealed himself. representations and incarnation are inseparable from his being. Moreover, in contrast to male imagery, one cannot introduce feminine imagery without introducing sexual connotations. In Hebrew grammar the masculine form is inclusivistic (i.e., with reference to animate beings it can be used of male and female), but the feminine form is marked (i.e., with reference to animate beings only the female is in view). (23)

In the mystery of Godhead, in which the three persons are both one and equal, the Son obeys the Father, and the Spirit obeys both. Paradoxically Jesus says both that "I and the Father are one" (John 10:28) and "the Father is greater than I." Jesus veiled his own glory to follow the path of humble obedience (Philippians 2:6-11). The idea that hierarchy is an evil that can be transcended is a failed Marxist notion, not biblical teaching.

Although God gave Israel prophetesses, he did not give them priestesses in contrast to other religions in the ancient Near East. Recall it was the priests duty to the teach the Law of the Lord to the people (Deuteronomy 17:11; 33:10)

A woman has the right to make vows to the LORD independently from her husband, as in the case of Hannah, but the husband, in the case of a married woman, and the father, in the case of a young daughter living in her father's house (Numbers 30:16), had the right to overrule it: "But if her husband overrules her on the day that he hears it, he shall make void her vow which she took ..., and the LORD will release her" (30:8). A wife or daughter cannot overrule the husband's or father's authority in the home by claiming she made a vow to the Lord, a higher authority than her male attachment, which she must obey. The Lord stands behind the authority of a husband or father. This is not because woman is inferior but to protect the government of the home. The vow of a widow or a divorcee is as binding on these unattached women as a vow is upon the man (Numbers 30:9).

It is on the spiritual foundation that husbands and wives submit to one another out of reverence for Christ that Paul commands wives to submit to their husbands: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:21-24). Peter holds up Sarah as an example of a godly wife. In her self-talk (cf. Genesis 18:12) she referred to Abraham as her lord: "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master" (1 Peter 3:1-6). If we want to be

revolutionary, let's put "obey" back in the woman's wedding vows.

There are many texts in both testaments that teach husbands have authority over their wives. For example, "the elder must be the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2), never "... the wife of one husband." One cannot appoint a wife as a leader of the local church without upsetting this government for if a wife were an elder her husband would be subject to her authority: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority" (Hebrews 13:7).

Deborah, however, who was married, is one clear exception to patriarchy (Judges 4:4-7). Probably, however, it is the exception that proves the rule. In addition to being a prophetess, Deborah was "judging" (i.e., "ruling") Israel. The narrator, however, makes his intention clear by carefully shaming the Israelite men at that time for their fear so that none dared to assume leadership. Note, for example, how Deborah shames Barak, the military commander of Israel's army, for his failure to assume leadership. After she mediated God's command to him to join battle with Sisera, commander of the Canaanite army, Barak replies: "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." To which Deborah responds, "Very well...I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this (i.e., full of fear) the honor will not be yours, the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman (i.e., to shame him (cf. Judges 9:54). Apparently, the LORD raised up this exceptional woman, who was full of faith, to disgrace the men of Israel for their lack of faith, which is essential to leadership in the holy nation. If so, the story aims to reprove unfaithful men for not taking leadership, not to present an alternative norm to male authority. The story also shows, however, that the Lord is above culture and not restricted by normative patriarchy.

VI. Conclusion

We commend feminists for asserting the equality of women with men as equals in nature, dignity, gifts and ministry. However, we condemn the arrogance of those who autonomously name God, the world and self. We also contend against those who see marriage as a galling bondage and/or who look down upon motherhood within the structure of marriage as a lesser ministry than ministries outside the home. Finally, we find the insistence of feminists on the equality of wives with husbands in authority and leadership as unbiblical.

It is essential to the message of the gospel that husbands love their wives and that wives submit to the authority of their husbands. If husbands and wives are equal in leadership, how does the husband exemplify a new model of leadership wherein the ruler becomes a servant (Matt 20:25-28). And if a woman seeks to become empowered as an equal to her husband in authority, how does she show the submission of the Church to the Lord?

Tragically the elders in the Church and husbands in the home, often out of a distorted emphasis on their headship and their depreciation of the Spirit's gift that empower women to minister, have both consciously and unconsciously suppressed women and quenched the Spirit. The feminist perspective has rightly exposed this abuse.

Again, however, the problem is our failure to interpret the Bible accurately. The model of leadership is that of a servant. Jesus models the servant King who so loved his queen that he died for her. The willingness to do the grand gesture of dying for a loved one becomes a practical reality only to the extent that one practices self-surrendering services as a way of life. The "servant" empowers his wife to use her spiritual gifts to their fullest potential. On the other hand, the Bible instructs the wife to respect her husband as her lord, which entails obeying him in everything. It is important to note the Bible neither instructs the woman to manipulate the man to serve her, to be the proverbial "neck that turns the head," nor the husband to have his wife in subjection, to be the head that lords itself over the body. Serving and obeying in mutual subjection are inward beauties worked in our hearts, consciences, behaviors and customs by the Holy Spirit. These are ideals for which we strive, though recognizing we never fully attain them any more than other perfections of holiness. Our failure to realize them perfectly should be accompanied with repentance and renewed faith, not by cynicism, despair, or seeking new social structures.

I am a member of a church where I submit to women leaders because I am called upon to endeavor to keep the

unity of the Spirit until we come to the full knowledge of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-13). It is wrong to divide the body of Christ, which confesses Jesus as Lord and believes in its heart that God raised him from the dead, on such nonmoral issues as modes of baptism, eschatology, belief in the continuation or cessation of gifts, or the Church's form of government. However, I ask my church and others like it which I am full persuaded sincerely "want to find out what is acceptable to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10), to reassess whether their practice of ordaining women to rule them has been impacted by the feminist perspective or by the biblical.

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3. Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 58
4. Kassian, pp. 67
5. Kassian, pp. 87f.
6. Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Feminist Theology and Spirituality," *Christian Feminism* , p. 16, cited by Kassian, p. 140.
7. Kassian, p. 147.
8. Revelation 21 and 22 present the end of that history in images representing the Garden of Eden as regained.
9. God uses six feminine similes for himself (e.g., Isaiah 42:14).
10. Cited by Kassian, p. 141.
11. Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 10.
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16. Richard John Neuhaus, "True Christian Feminism," *National Review* (November 25, 1988), p. 24.
17. D.J.A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *Tyndale Bulletin* , 19 (1968):53-103. Ibid., p. 84.
18. Ibid., p84.
19. Clarence J. Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Delft: N.V. Verenige Drukkerijen Judels &

Brinkman, 1968), p. 168

20. The naming of children is ascribed to woman 26 times, to men 14 times, and to God 5 times.

21. I arrived at this interpretation independently from Susan T. Foh, *Woman and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 68f.

22. In Psalm 123:2 David uses the simile of a maid to a mistress, but none uses "mistress" as a title for God.

23. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1990), p. 108.

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