

Does The Bible Limit Women's Spiritual Roles?

• FOUR GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

- #1: The rise of F added fuel to this question.
 - #2: II Tim.3:16 is true; yet C is often reflected.
 - #3: Everyone shares a relationship with God in terms of E.
 - #4: This is different then I respected R.
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• FOUR CRITICAL EXAMINATIONS:

- #1. Christianity shows tremendous R for women.
 - #2. Allegations against Paul are B.
 - #3. Such accusers do not believe in complete I.
 - #4. Consider the context of *I Cor. 14 34-35*.
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• FOUR SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS:

- #1. A woman is N to D the formal public worship.
 - #2. A woman M T.
 - #3. A woman M T other women & children.
 - #4. A woman M T a man in a setting which she doesn't have dominion or authority over him.
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CLOSING: "If limitations & specific gender roles are according to scripture,
we must remember: we are living for God, desiring to honor His Will."

Friday Women In the Church

Today's Scripture: Galatians 3:26-28

Men and women have equal acceptance by God. In the Scripture reading for today, Paul said, "There is neither. . . male or female." Both men and women can have faith in Christ, be baptized into Christ, become the children of God, and be one in Christ. This does not mean, however, that men and women lose their identity in Christ. Men are still men and women are still women. In Scripture God has things to say to men as men, husbands, and fathers. God has things to say to women, wives, and mothers. The question is not the equal value or acceptance or equality of men and women before God. The question is what roles that men and women are to fulfill in the church.

Consider the value of women to the church. A good case can be made for the fact that women are more spiritually minded than men. That aside, the church would be impoverished without our women. Everything they touch seems to be better. They teach classes, visit those with needs, prepare food for many, support benevolent programs, encourage their husbands, help train children, send cards of encouragement, clean and arrange church buildings, support the preaching of the word, take people to the doctor, and the list goes on. We need the women of the church.

God has roles for the women of the church. They can teach children, girls, and women. They can teach men under certain conditions (see Acts 18:26). In church leadership and in the worship of the church, God has ordained that men take the leadership roles. Elders and deacons were men as is evidenced by the qualification given for both that they be husbands. The Greek word in the qualifications for women in 1 Timothy 3 refers not to women deacons, but to wives. The Greek word for deacon is used in respect to Phoebe in Acts 16:1, but not in an official capacity because she could not meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3.

Today, I will...*honor and appreciate our women as they serve the Lord in the capacity approved by God.*



Be Blessed By This Bonus Study

The Biblical View of Women



KYLE BUTT, M.Div.



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It has become increasingly popular in our secular culture to caustically criticize God, the Bible, and the Christian religion. Many best-selling books by high-profile atheistic writers are filled with accusations against God and alleged reasons why Christianity cannot be the true religion devised by a moral God. One reason commonly given by the skeptical community for its rejection of the Bible and Christianity is the way that women are purportedly viewed in the Scriptures. According to these secular apologists, the Bible writers viewed women as inferior creatures who are less valuable than men and do not deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

Evangelist-turned-skeptic, Charles Templeton, summarized this view well when he wrote, "The Bible is a book by and for men. The women in it are secondary creatures and usually inferior" (1996, p. 177). In addition, the God of the Bible and various Bible writers are accused of hating women. In his book, *The God Delusion*, Richard Dawkins stated that the God of the Bible is "misogynistic" (2006, p. 31). Dan Barker made a similar assertion when he wrote: "Although the bible is neither antiabortion nor pro-family, it does provide modern antiabortionists with a biblical basis for the *real* motivation behind their views: the bible is not pro-life, but it is anti-woman. A patriarchal system cannot stand women who are free" (1992, p. 212, italics in orig.). Famed skeptic Christopher Hitchens wrote:

A consistent proof that religion is man-made and anthropomorphic can also be found in the fact that it is usually "man" made, in the sense of masculine, as well.... The Old Testament, as Christians condescendingly call it, has woman cloned from man for his use and comfort. The New Testament has Saint Paul expressing both fear and contempt for the female (2007, p. 54).

Is it true that the biblical treatment of women presents an immoral code of ethics and falsifies the idea that the Bible was inspired by a perfectly moral Creator? Certainly not. In fact, just the opposite is the case. The Bible's treatment of women is in perfect accord with truth and legitimate moral teaching. The accusations leveled against the Bible in this regard are vacuous and cannot be used in any legitimate way to militate against either the morality of God or the inspiration of the Bible. On the contrary, it is the teachings and logical implications of atheistic evolution that cannot hold up under the scrutiny of reason.

The Darwinian View of Women

Atheistic Darwinism is plagued by a host of problems regarding morality. In fact, it has been conclusively demonstrated that without a belief in God, concepts such as good and evil, moral and immoral, have no meaning (see Butt, 2008). Only a supernatural, moral Creator can explain the very existence of morality in man. Therefore, any attempt to question the morality of the God of the Bible based on atheistic ideas is fraught with error and self-contradiction from its inception.

Furthermore, the logical implications of Darwinism lead the honest thinker to the conclusion that equality for all humans is illusory. Not only did Charles Darwin admit that Darwinian evolution implies that certain races of people are inferior to others, with equal candor he concluded that women are inferior to men as well (see Lyons and Butt, 2009). In his monumental work, *The Descent of Man*, Darwin wrote:

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man's attaining to a **higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman**—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands.... [T]he average of **mental power in man must be above that of woman**.... [M]an has ultimately become superior to woman (1871, pp. 873-874, emp. added).

According to Darwin, males had evolved to a higher level than females. As evidence of his conclusion, he simply stated that males "attain to a higher eminence" in everything that they take up when compared to females. Using this line of reasoning, it would be impossible to condemn men for treating women as inferior, because, if men have the mental or physical ability to treat women as inferior, it must mean that men are stronger or more fit to survive and rule. It is ironic that the atheistic community, which is so enamored with Darwin, is suggesting that the Bible's view of women is immoral. In reality, if their view of atheistic evolution is true, then all male-dominated societies are such because males are more able to dominate. And since survival of the fittest is desired, one must conclude that a male dominated society, in which women are viewed as inferior to men (as Darwin put it), must be at least one very prevalent natural order of things. Even if the skeptical community is right concerning its accusations about the Bible's "mistreatment" of women (which it is not), how could the Bible be accused of maintaining an immoral stance, when that stance coincides perfectly with the Darwinian view of the "natural order of things"? In truth, those who propound atheism and Darwinian ideals have a much more thorny problem with the logical implications of their ideas as they relate to women, than those who teach that the Bible is the inspired Word of a perfectly moral God.

The Value of Women According to the Bible

When they use the treatment of women in their attack on the integrity of the Bible, most skeptics make blanket statements about the Bible's position, without presenting anything resembling a balanced handling of the topic. For instance, Templeton wrote: "Women were associated with evil and weakness. Indeed, Israelite males sometimes thanked God in the synagogue that they had not been born women" (1996, p. 184).

Such generalized statements are designed to appeal to the emotions of a 21st-century audience, but they simply do not accurately represent the true sentiments behind the biblical texts. For instance, using the type of reasoning in which we cherry-pick verses without adequate explanation, we could say that men are treated unfairly in the Bible because husbands are told that they must be willing to give their lives for their wives, while the wives are never commanded to make such a sacrifice (Ephesians 5:25). In addition, we could accuse the Bible of mistreating males, because, throughout its pages, men are told they must work to provide food for their entire households, while women are not held to such a standard (Genesis 3:17-19; 1 Timothy 5:8). Such indiscriminate statements should be viewed by the honest observer as suspect, and a more complete and accurate picture of the biblical view of women should be sought.

Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that both the Old and New Testaments present a picture of woman that appraises her worth as equal to that of the man. While it is the case that the Bible presents **different roles** for men and women, it is not the case that men are **valued** more than women. A look at various biblical passages confirms this truth.

Wisdom as the Portrait of a Woman

The book of Proverbs, written primarily by King Solomon, is a literary genre known as Wisdom literature. The main theme of the book is the concept of wisdom. The writer stated: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom" (4:7). To further stress the importance and value of wisdom, he penned: "For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her" (8:11). Building on the idea of the immeasurable value of wisdom, the writer of the book of Job stated: "But where can wisdom be found? It cannot be purchased for gold, nor can silver be weighed for its price. It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx or sapphire...for the price of wisdom is above rubies.... Nor can it be valued in pure gold" (28:12-19). It is clear that the Bible writers viewed wisdom as a personality trait of inestimable value.

What picture, then, was used to personify this trait of such value? Throughout the book of Proverbs, the idea of wisdom is personified by a woman. The text reads: "Wisdom has built her house" (9:1); "Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill" (8:1-2). The most illustrative picture of the virtue of wisdom that the Proverbs writer could conjure was that of a woman (Willis, 1993, p. 37). How then can the Bible writers be so misrepresented as to suggest that they did not value women, when wisdom, which is "the principle thing" according to Proverbs, is portrayed as a woman? Additionally, the Proverbs writer stated, "A gracious woman retains honor" (11:16). The inspired writer also included a lengthy section (31:10-31) in which he extolled the worth of a virtuous woman who is clothed in "strength and honor," who "opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household." Needless to say, you do not hear these passages about wisdom personified as a woman and the value of virtuous women in the jaded rants of the modern skeptic.

God's Attitude Toward His People as Illustrated with Traits of a Woman

While it is true that God does not have a specific gender as humans do (see Thompson, 2000), it is the case that God sometimes illustrates some of His personality traits by comparing them to personality traits possessed by certain categories of people. For instance, it is a well-known fact that the God of the Bible often compares the love that He has for His created humans with the love that a father has for his biological children (1 John 3:1-2). If the God of the Bible were truly sexist, it would be obvious that comparisons between God and any human being would be confined to the masculine gender. A truly sexist god would never compare Himself to a woman.

Yet the Bible records instances in which the God of Heaven compares traits that He possesses to similar traits found in women. For instance, John Willis noted: "A most compelling piece of evidence that OT writers had a high regard for women is that they describe God as a mother" (1993, pp. 37-39). Willis then mentioned at least three passages as examples, including Isaiah 66:12—"For thus says the Lord.... As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

Furthermore, if it truly were the case that the apostle Paul was a misogynist, was afraid of women, and had contempt for them, it would be unreasonable to imagine him comparing himself to a woman. Yet in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 he wrote: "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So affectionately longing for you." Surely a misogynistic man who is "afraid" of women would never describe himself in such feminine terms. Such examples as these bring to light the fallacious idea that the Bible writers hated women or viewed them as inferior to men.

Women Made in the Image of God

Many skeptics insinuate that the creation of Eve from Adam's rib to be a helper for man manifests a view that woman is less valuable or inferior to man. Recall the claim of Hitchens when he wrote: "The Old Testament, as Christians condescendingly call it, has woman cloned from man for his use and comfort" (2007, p. 54). Supposedly, the fact that Eve was Adam's helper somehow "proves" inferiority.

The problem with this line of reasoning is at least two-fold. First, it completely ignores the stress that the Bible places on women being made in God's image **exactly like man**. Genesis 1:27 states: "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him, **male and female** he created them." Contrary to many religious groups and male chauvinist thinkers, from the very first chapter, the Bible insists that both male and female were made in God's image, and both deserve to be treated with the dignity that is inherent in that composition.

So what of the word "helper"? Is it true that a "helper" implies that the person he or she is helping is viewed as superior or of greater worth? Such an incorrect position is impossible to maintain in light of the clear biblical teaching regarding those who help others. For example, in John 15:26, Jesus explains that the Holy Spirit was going to visit the apostles after His resurrection. He stated: "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." Using the skeptic's reasoning, we would be forced to conclude that the Holy Spirit is inferior to the apostles, since He is referred

to as “the Helper.” Such a conclusion is obviously absurd. [NOTE: It is understood that the skeptic will not concur that there even is a Holy Spirit. This example, however, is used only to show that the Bible consistently maintains a picture of “helpers” and “helping” that in no way insinuates inferiority or less value.]

In Philippians 4:3, Paul urged the receiver of his epistle to “help these women who labored with me in the gospel.” Did that mean Paul viewed the one who received his letter as inferior to those women with whom he had labored? Not in any way. Furthermore, Jesus Christ Himself stated that He came into this world not “to be served, but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Would that imply that since He was “serving” or “helping” mankind, He was inferior in some way to humans? Certainly not. The concept of “helping” or “serving” carries with it no inherent meaning of inferiority.

Many Examples of Worthy Women in the Bible

In an attempt to bolster their misrepresentation of the biblical view of women, skeptics often “count noses” and insist that far too much biblical “press” is given to narratives whose central figures are men, while not enough time is given to women. In addition, many in the skeptical community insist that if God truly viewed women as equal, they would have been granted equal positions of leadership in both Old Testament times and in the ministry of Jesus. Dan Barker stated: “Jesus upheld the Old Testament view of women. Not a single woman was chosen to be among the 12 disciples or to sit at the Last Supper” (2008, p. 179).

Such statements are plagued with dishonest selectivity. When the entire biblical picture is viewed objectively, it is easily seen that women in both the Old and New Testaments played vital, powerful roles in God’s plans for the national rule of Israel, and for the spiritual Kingdom established by Jesus Christ. And, while space is lacking in this article to adequately list and describe each of these women, a few of the most notable will be addressed.

Deborah

The fact that women attained prominent, powerful positions in Israel militates strongly against the skeptic’s accusation that the biblical view of women is sexist. For instance, the book of Judges relates the story of Deborah, a prophetess and the recognized judge and ruler of the Israelite nation during her lifetime (Judges 4:4). A close look at the narrative shows that Deborah was the woman who commissioned Barak, a man, to lead the Israelites in battle against the foreign forces. When the time came for action to be taken, it was Deborah who said to Barak: “Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?” (Judges 4:14). After the battle was won, and Sisera, the opposing general, was killed by a woman named Jael, Deborah and Barak composed and sang a victory hymn. Throughout the hymn, Deborah is mentioned as the leader of Israel who, with Barak’s help, defeated Sisera and Jabin. The text says: “Village life ceased, it ceased in Israel, until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel” (Judges 5:7). “And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah” (5:15).

Using the skeptic’s logic, should we conclude that the Bible views all men as inferior to women since Deborah was a female leader of Israel at the time? Should we conclude that since Deborah’s story is recorded in a book that claims inspiration, such a claim is negated because, based on the Deborah narrative, whoever wrote the Bible hates men, shows contempt for them, and treats them as less valuable than women? Such reasoning is obviously flawed.

Once it is shown that the story of Deborah exalts women to an equal position with men, however, the skeptic is forced to back peddle and attempt another tactic. While it cannot be denied that the story of Deborah manifests an exalted view of women, the skeptic contends that such stories are few and far between. If God and the Bible really viewed women as equal in worth to men, then the Bible would have just as many stories about women rulers and leaders as it has about men.

This faulty assertion can be answered in two ways. First, how many examples would the Bible need to provide of the Gospel being preached to Ethiopians to prove that the Bible writers considered them just as valuable as Jews, and just as viable candidates to hear the Gospel? Would anyone contend that in order for the God of the

Bible to be vindicated of bigotry against Ethiopians, the text must contain just as many conversion stories about Ethiopians as it does about Jews? Certainly not. When the book of Acts records that Phillip the evangelist delivered the Gospel to Candace's Ethiopian treasurer (8:26-40), that one example is sufficient to provide evidence that all Ethiopians are just as valuable to God as all Jews, Arabians, or Egyptians.

Furthermore, let us apply the skeptic's reasoning to a brief history of the United States of America. Were we to attempt to relate the history of our country, spending our time dealing with the Presidency, how many stories about women would we be able to include who have ascended to the presidency? To date, our nation has inaugurated 44 presidents, and not a single one of them has been a woman. Using the skeptic's accusations as a springboard, should we insist that the ancient nation of Israel had a more "enlightened" and elevated view of women than does the United States in the 21st century? Moreover, would we despise and accuse of sexism those history writers who spent the majority of their texts focusing on the men who held the office of President? Such thinking flies in the face of common sense and could only be concocted by those who refuse to deal honestly with actual history and the biblical text.

Huldah, the Prophetess

Second Kings 22 records the life and reign of Josiah, the righteous king of Judah. In the course of his attempts to eradicate idolatry from Judah, he made a focused effort to repair the temple of God that had fallen into a state of disrepair. He commissioned Hilkiah, the high priest, to collect money to be used to clean out and repair the temple. During Hilkiah's labors to revamp the temple, he stumbled across a copy of the book of the Law of Moses. Having read it, he sent it to Josiah, who listened to the words of the Law and was heartsick because the nation of Israel had wandered so far from God's commands. Josiah commanded Hilkiah and several of the other religious leaders to "go, inquire of the Lord for me, for the people and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found" (2 Kings 22:13). The text then states: "So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. (She dwelt in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter.) And they spoke with her" (22:14). After speaking with her, Huldah delivered a message from God to Josiah through these officials.

Not only did these leaders in Israel seek out a woman prophetess, though she was married, there is no indication that the advice or counsel of her husband was sought. The envoy journeyed to a woman's house to hear a message that the Lord related to a woman. Also notice that Josiah was recognized as one of the greatest rulers that Judah ever had, yet this passage shows that he sought the counsel of a woman of God. Here again, the narrative about Huldah undermines the skeptics' assertion that the Bible views women as inferior.

Various Women in the Bible

Much could be said concerning women of prominence in the Bible, such as Esther, about whom an entire book is written. She ascended to the queenly throne of Persia and heroically saved her people. A lengthy section relating the selfless sacrifice of Ruth for her mother-in-law (Naomi) would further undercut the skeptics' argument, especially in light of the fact that Ruth is listed in the genealogy of Christ as the great grandmother of David. Moreover, the faith of Hannah and her prayer for, and subsequent birth of, Samuel, one of the greatest prophets to ever live in Israel, would go far to put to silence the skeptics' assertion that women are viewed as inferior by the Bible writers. Attention could be directed to Lydia, the seller of purple whom Paul and his companions found praying by the riverside, or Priscilla, who helped her husband Aquila teach the eloquent Apollos the Gospel of Christ (Acts 18:26). Additional information refuting the skeptics' claim could include the faith of Jochebed, or the leadership skills and prophesying of Miriam, or the courage of Rahab, or the faithfulness of Jesus' mother Mary, or the good deeds of Dorcas. One wonders how many examples of women in exalted positions the skeptical community would need in order to be satisfied that the biblical treatment of women is not sexist. Unfortunately, no matter how many examples are given, the skeptical answer about this and so many other things is, "Just a few more than we have." In reality, the biblical examples of how the God of the Bible views women are more than sufficient to refute the tenuous complaints of the naysayers.

Numbering, Genealogies, and Traveling Groups

Certain practical matters must be properly considered in order to achieve an accurate picture of the biblical view of women. Some people who read the biblical text are struck by the fact that some of the genealogies only include the names of the men in the family. As Templeton wrote: "In the long list of Adam's descendants over the hundreds of years that intervened before the Great Flood, *not one female is so much as named*" (1996, p. 178, italics in orig.). Furthermore, it is often the case that, when counting or listing the numbers of people involved, the Bible generally only counts the males. These instances have been viewed as sexist and discriminatory against women.

Upon further inspection, it becomes apparent that such accusations fail to take into account certain practical aspects and the cultural context. For example, Templeton mentioned the genealogy in Genesis five as an example of a "sexist" view, but he failed to mention the genealogy of Jesus Christ that is listed in Matthew 1:1-17 in which the women Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Mary are mentioned. Additionally, the text states: "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, **of whom** was born Jesus who is called Christ" (1:16, emp. added). The prepositional phrase "of whom" relates back to Mary, thus indicating that Jesus was the biological son of Mary. Would it be proper to use this genealogy to insist that God has a lower view of men, since the text specifically mentions that the Christ descended biologically from a woman? No. And neither can the "male genealogy" idea be used to sustain the false accusation that the Bible views women as inferior. Add to that the fact that even today in 21st century America, the majority of wives assume their husbands' last names and daughters assume their fathers' last names, and are thus recorded in modern genealogical records [such as Annaka Harris, the wife of Sam Harris, or Juliet Emma Dawkins, daughter of Richard Dawkins (Periera, n.d.)], and the skeptics' charge becomes manifestly erroneous.

In a similar vein, biblical numbers often only included the men. For instance, Numbers 1:2 states: "Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses, according to the number of names, **every male individually**" (emp. added). Is this numbering an example of biblical sexism, or evidence that the Bible writers thought women of so little value they did not need to number them? Not in any way. The simple, practical aspect of this numbering system had only to do with able-bodied men who went out to war. As the text explains: "according to the number of names, every male individually, from twenty years old and above, **all who were able to go to war**" (Numbers 1:20, emp. added). In the same way that we could not use such numbering systems to insist that the God of the Bible, or the Bible writers, devalued children under 20, or old men past the age of battle strength, we could not use this method of numbering to disparage the biblical writers' view of women. And, while the skeptic might attempt to argue that it was sexist for women to be excluded from military service in Bible times, a simple response could be that it was unfair to men to force them to be numbered for military service, while women were exempt from such. Would it be fair to state that since men were "serving" their women by providing military protection, their "service" shows they were inferior? To ask is to answer.

Other practical matters, including such simple concepts as travel and sleeping arrangements, must be factored into this discussion. For example, Dan Barker was quoted earlier in this article as saying: "Jesus upheld the Old Testament view of women. Not a single woman was chosen to be among the 12 disciples or to sit at the Last Supper" (2008, p. 179). While this statement is true, the skeptic Charles Templeton offers an extremely plausible reason for this:

The New Testament frequently reveals Jesus' concern for women.... There were no women in Jesus' band of apostles, **but there would have been compelling reasons for this**. Jesus and the disciples travelled frequently, often daily, invariably on foot. Often they slept out in the open. In the circumstances it would have been impossible—and potentially scandalous—for a woman to be a part of that male group (1996, pp. 184-185, emp. added).

Even a cursory consideration of certain practical matters that relate to numbering, genealogies, and travel arrangements serves to defeat the skeptics' claim that the Bible devalues women.

Was Jesus Rude to Women?

Those who are antagonistic to the Bible sometimes accuse Jesus of being rude to others, especially his own mother. Christopher Hitchens quipped: "Jesus makes large claims for his heavenly father but never mentions that his mother is or was a virgin, and **is repeatedly very rude and coarse to her** when she makes an appearance, as Jewish mothers will, to ask to see how he is getting on" (2007, p. 116, emp. added). Richard Dawkins commented in a similar vein: "Jesus' family values, it has to be admitted, were not such as one might wish to focus on. **He was short, to the point of brusqueness, with his own mother**" (2006, p. 250, emp. added).

A more thorough analysis, however, reveals that what these writers are attempting to label as rudeness was nothing of the sort. In his article, "How Rude!?", Eric Lyons effectively demonstrated that the way Jesus addressed His mother was neither rude, nor disrespectful (2004). Jesus' statements in response to His mother are in perfect accord with the biblical injunction to honor one's parents. Only a misunderstanding of the original languages and phrases used, and a cynical approach to the text, could lead a person to accuse Jesus of rudeness in these instances. His statements to His mother coincide completely with the fact that the Bible's overall treatment of women presents them as neither inferior nor superior to men, but as equals.

Galatians 3:28—The Golden Text of Equality

The apostle Paul is often demonized as a woman-hater who feared the opposite sex and held them in contempt. The skeptical attitude toward Paul is summed up well in Templeton's statement: "To judge by his epistles, the apostle Paul was a confirmed misogynist" (1996, p. 185). Such statements conveniently overlook one of the boldest statements of gender and race equality in all religious literature. In Galatians 3:28, Paul wrote: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither **male nor female**; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (emp. added). About this verse, Jan Faver Hailey wrote: "Common exegesis understands Paul here to be advocating that access to God is open to all through faith in Christ, without regard to race, social standing, or **gender**" (1993, p. 132, emp. added). To insist that Paul was a misogynist in light of his statement in Galatians 3:28 runs counter to evidence-based reasoning.

So why do some aver that Paul hated women, even with Galatians 3:28 in view? The main reason for this assertion is that Paul consistently maintained that, while men and women are equal in God's sight, they have been given different duties and roles. The skeptical community mistakenly equates the concept of **different roles** with the idea of **different status**. As Templeton wrote: "In his first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul states unequivocally that men and women have a different **status** before God" (1996, p. 186, emp. added). Allegedly, since Paul instructs men to be elders (Titus 1:5-9), and to lead publically in worship (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:8-15), and husbands to be the "head" of their homes (Ephesians 5:22-24), then he must view women as less able, less valuable, or inferior to men. [NOTE: See Jackson, 2010 and Miller, 2005 for biblical expositions of these verses.]

Is it true that since the Bible assigns different roles to the different sexes, their status or worth must be unequal? Certainly not. In Titus 3:1, Paul explained to Titus that Christians were supposed to be subject to rulers and authorities and to obey the government (see also Romans 13). From that statement, is it correct to conclude that Paul views all those in governmental positions to be of more value than Christians? Does this passage imply that, because Christians are to obey other humans who are in governmental positions, Paul sees those in governmental positions as mentally, physically, or spiritually superior to Christians? Not in any way. The mere fact that Christians are to obey those in the government says nothing about the spiritual status or value of either party. It only addresses different roles that each party plays.

Again, in 1 Timothy 6:2, Paul instructs Christian servants to be obedient to their own masters. Does this imply that Paul believed masters to be superior, or to be of more inherent worth than servants? No. It simply shows a difference in roles, not of status. Logically speaking, different roles can never be used to support an accusation that such roles necessitate different value or status.

Furthermore, while the skeptic is quick to seize on Paul's ordination of men as elders and leaders in their homes, those skeptics neglect to include the responsibilities involved in such roles. Husbands are called upon to give their lives for their wives (Ephesians 5:25), physically provide food, shelter, and clothing for their families (1

Timothy 5:8), and to love their wives as much as they love themselves (Ephesians 5:28). While much is said about the “unfairness” of Paul’s instructions, it is productive to ask who would get the last spot on a life boat if a Christian husband and wife were on a sinking ship? The Christian husband gives himself for his wife in such instances. Is that fair that he is called upon to accept the sacrificial role of giving himself for his wife? Is she more valuable than he because God calls upon him to protect and cherish her and die for her if necessary? No. It is simply a difference in assigned roles, not in status or worth.

CONCLUSION

The militant skeptical community incessantly attempts to discredit the Bible and the God Who is represented in its pages. One line of reasoning used in their efforts is to demand that the Bible presents a sexist picture of men and women, in which God and the Bible writers place more value on men, and view women as inferior and of less inherent worth. This accusation falls apart, however, when the entirety of the text is considered. Careful study reveals that Bible writers personified and illustrated such invaluable attributes as wisdom in the form of a woman. God himself compares traits that He possesses to similar traits found in women. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with narratives lauding the actions of faithful, powerful women. The apostle Paul, who is often accused of misogyny, makes one of the boldest statements of gender equality ever recorded in religious literature. And the misguided attempt to discredit Paul by claiming that different gender roles in his epistles prove he valued women less cannot honestly or reasonably be sustained. In truth, the Bible presents the clearest picture of gender equity, value, and inherent worth ever recorded in either ancient or modern literature. The status of women in the Holy Scriptures, not only is not a challenge to its divine inspiration, but the biblical treatment of women actually provides another piece of evidence for the Bible’s perfection and inspiration.

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