

## **Document on Women in Worship and Ministry**

We believe the Bible and we desire to read it in context, always asking whether a statement is descriptive, normative, or authoritative. While there are two statements by Paul that limit public participation in worship and ministry by women, we believe that they were meant to address specific concerns in a specific location and were not meant to apply to all women in every place throughout the centuries. We believe that a consistent, in context reading of scripture will not allow us to shut women out of public roles.

For example, in First Timothy 2:11,12, we find Paul saying that a woman is not permitted to teach a man and she is to remain quiet. However, that same chapter tells us that men are to pray with holy hands raised and that women are not to have elaborate hairstyles or jewelry. Most churches will tell you that those latter statements were not meant to limit how we pray or dress today. If so, then we must also believe that Paul's statement on women teaching is also limited to the situation he was trying to address at the time. We know some of what was going on where Timothy served as evangelist and details can be found in the supplemental reading below. Paul felt the need to address the situation in Ephesus with several commands, most of which we do not apply to ourselves or to our congregations.

It is important to also note that the same word – “silent” – that occurs in verse 12 and applied to women is used in verse 2 for all of us, male and female. It is a word typically denoting attitude, not volume.

Examining the word “silent” shows that it is translated in a variety of ways and almost never means what we commonly think the word “silent” means (a few examples can be found at 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles 4:40; 22:9; Proverbs 11:12; Isaiah 66:2; Ezekiel 38:11; Acts 22:2; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 3:12) These passages usually translate the word as “peaceful,” “calmed down,” or “at peace.”

Several statements made in scripture are generally considered to be for other people, not for us today. In other words, it is important to remember that the Bible was written FOR us but not TO us. We need to keep in mind who wrote each statement and to whom it was addressed as well as its cultural context. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11, men are told to pray with their heads uncovered and women are to pray with their heads covered. Very few churches believe this is a law for us today. Consider, for example, the statements of Peter regarding slaves. Most scholars agree that he was addressing a particular cultural situation and not trying to authoritatively tell slaves throughout all time that they should be content and not look for freedom (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:18). It must be admitted, however, that many churches, both Protestant and Catholic, misused these passages as a way to defend slavery for many years. Other churches did not consider those verses authoritative for the situation they were facing – the African slave trade – and were vilified as liberals and God-deniers for doing so.

In this same chapter (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 2), Paul says that women are saved through childbearing. Most of us would not teach that a woman who hasn't had a child due to biology or choice is sinful and lost. We realize that Paul must have had a certain situation in mind, one that we are not privy to and, therefore, his statement was not meant to cover us (theories abound as to what Paul was addressing but certainty is hard to come by in this matter).

Note also that Paul says that *he* does not permit women to teach or assume authority over a man. He does not say that is God's law. There are other passages where Paul says that he, not the Lord, says this or that (see 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 7:12 for one example). This should serve as a clue that God is not giving us, in 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 2, a law for all people in all cultures and in all times. Rather, Paul is addressing a specific time and place with his statement.

Here would be a good place to note that the phrase "over a man" in verse 12 also means "over her husband." It is the translators' choice on how to bring that Greek phrase into English. This is an example of them making a choice that causes dissonance and conflict with other verses for Paul frequently speaks of women holding high positions in the church. We know that Priscilla and not her husband Aquilla, was noted as an active and effective teacher in the early church. We know

that Paul spoke of women praying and prophesying (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11 and 14) and said that Junia – a female name – was “chief among the apostles.” He addresses women by name and treats them as fellow workers and fellow laborers with him in Romans 16. Something was going on in Ephesus and Corinth that required Paul to tell certain women that they were not to lord it over their husbands. Distance from that culture and situation and some translator choices have made it difficult for us to know what, specifically, he was referring to but it could not have been an attempt to silence the very women he honors as ministers and fellow laborers with him (Romans 16 for one example).

We know that Philip had four daughters who preached alongside him (Acts 21:9). Jesus went out of his way to include women in his work and life. His highest compliments went to women. When the new covenant came into force we were told that everything changed (2 Cor. 5:16). There was no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile, free or slave, or male and female (Galatians 3:28). In Ephesians 5 we are told that submission is for both males and females, not for females alone. To take one passage in Timothy and one in Corinthians and negate all these others is as grievous a mistake as to take one passage that says “believe on the Lord and you will be saved” and negate all passages on baptism and living faithfully.

We submit that it is impossible to take two brief statements by Paul out of their historical context, and use them as blanket laws for women in every country, every situation, and every time period. For one, he told women to be silent in the churches (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14) but we are also told that women are part of the church. If they are always in the church and part of the church, would we then believe Paul is telling them to never speak? Of course not. We use our common sense alongside scholarship to see that Paul was not making a law but addressing a local situation. For those who might counter that “in the church” means “in the assembly” they then must explain why women are allowed to sing when singing’s purpose is to teach and admonish those who hear. Besides, we sing many songs that were written by women and read books by women – as we should.

Many of us had godly mothers and grandmothers who taught us about Jesus and our faith. We thank God for spiritual women.

Those who know the historical background of Paul's letters tell us that women in Corinth had a bad reputation for being disorderly and disrupting public meetings. The Jews who worshipped in Corinth, and who were among the first to accept Jesus as the Messiah, were uncomfortable with the noise and confusion that some women brought into the assembly. Paul merely asked the women to place limits on their behavior and consider where they are before speaking and praying (and limits were also placed on men in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14. Everyone was told to tone it down, take turns, and make sure you needed to speak before you did). In Ephesus, we know through the work of historians that there was a proto-Gnosticism (for lack of a better term) spreading there that upended the creation story, made Eve and all women the pristine creations of a female deity while teaching that men were lesser beings created by a lesser god. Paul's statements in Timothy were correctives to those stories, not commands for all churches at all times in all areas.

God has distributed gifts to every believer (see Romans 12 and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12), male and female. One of the hallmarks of the new work Jesus came to do was, according to the prophet Joel as quoted by Peter on the Day of Pentecost, that "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy" (Acts 2:17,18). It is true that He gave men the burden of leadership but that does not mean that women can play no role in His Kingdom. At the Fourth Avenue Church, when a woman sings, or reads scripture, or passes a communion tray, or shares a story, she is not usurping authority but obeying it, for she has been asked to do this by the leadership team.

It may surprise some to hear this, but this is not new in the Restoration Movement. Churches of Christ had women serving in worship and ministry from its beginnings until around the year 1900. You can read more about them and how they were eventually silenced by a new generation by reading "Distant Voices," a book by Church of Christ scholar, Leonard Allen.

Interested in further reading? Try these:

Junia: the first apostle by Eldon Epp

The Lost Apostle by Rena Pederson

I Permit Not a Woman...to remain shackled by Robert Rowland \*

Women in the Church: reclaiming the ideal by Carroll Osburn\*

Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity, vols.1&2 by Carroll Osburn\*

Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis by William Webb

Distant Voices by Leonard Allen\*

\* = member of the churches of Christ

### ***Resources on Women in Worship, Ministry, and Christian History***

It is very tempting to assume that churches – such as ours – who welcome the voices of women have not read or paid attention to scripture. The fact is, none of us have made this decision because of cultural pressure or because we don't believe the scripture; we made it because a sincere, deep, and scholarly investigation of scripture and context have driven us to this place.

We know that many others have not made that same journey and they may be where a lot of us (including myself) were not long ago. To help them see that this was done openly and with great respect for God, scripture, and the Kingdom we've received permission from many in and out of the churches of Christ to post their material here.

<http://www.michaelhanegan.com/equality>

The above site is a clearinghouse with a great amount of material – books, articles, and videos – all showing the scholarship behind our decision and that of sister congregations. You can easily spend weeks there with the materials kindly made available to all.

**Michael Hanegan's** website above includes a link to **John Mark Hicks'** material on women in worship and ministry. In case you want to go directly to his treatment of First Corinthians 14, please click here: <http://johnmarkhicks.com/2009/02/20/women-in-the-assembly-1-corinthians-1434-35/>

Another Church of Christ scholar and writer is **Bobby Valentine**. He knows how to examine the language, history, and context of passages and then relay that information in terms non-scholars can understand. Here is a link to some of his material:

<http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2013/02/20/first-timothy-2-8-15-the-silencing-of-women-in-worship/>

<http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2006/07/18/what-did-god-say-gen-2-1b-mans-helper/>

<http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2006/06/27/huldah-who-the-forgotten-ministry-of-a-lady-prophet/>

<http://stonedcampbelldisciple.com/2007/08/21/women-on-the-family-tree-what-does-the-bible-say-women-did/>

Bobby has written two online responses to those who have accused Fourth Avenue of not taking scripture seriously when, in fact, we are deeply in the Word on this and every other matter.

### **“Phoebe and Bobby V**

They say I just want to be popular. They say that I do not believe in the inspiration and authority of the Bible. They say I am "liberal," "progressive," or "apostate." I do not take these charges lightly and in fact they cause me a great deal of pain. Why are these charges hurled? Because I do not believe in the Virgin Birth? No. I Do! Because I do not believe that God created the world? No. I Do! Because I do not believe Jesus walked on water, fed the 5000, or raised Lazarus? No. I Do! Because i do not believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead? No. I stake my life on it! Because I deny the atoning work of Jesus or his supreme Lordship over all? No. I Do! So why? What makes me a "Bible denying liberal

apostate?" Because I believe that women - females - are allowed to read Scripture, to pray, to wait on the Lord's Table, to do announcements ... to teach, to be a "deacon"!! I did not come to this conclusion over night but it is the position I have held for many years and have not shied away from that position nor the biblical reasons that demand I take that position.

My journey began many years ago with Phoebe of Cenchreae. I had stumbled across Alexander Campbell's 1826 translation of the New Testament called The Living Oracles. I read it cover to cover. I recall never paying attention to Romans 16.1-2, until that day. "I recommend to you Phebe [sic], our sister who is a DEACONESS of the congregation at Cenchrea" (my emphasis). I was stopped dead in my tracks. The words "sister" and "deaconess" simply did not go together in my experience. Since then I have learned I was completely ignorant of a realm of exegesis and church history. It created such cognitive dissonance in me. How could this be? I suppose this is why some preachers do not read church history because then they are safe from cognitive dissonance. You see in MY experience growing up it was indeed common to label everyone that disagreed with our particular version of "sound doctrine" as non-believers, Bible deniers, apostates, and liberals. But I knew that Campbell was not "liberal." I did not know that much about him to be honest but when his name was mentioned it was always GOOD. So here was a non-liberal calling a woman a female deacon! Alexander Campbell! I could not call him a feminist with any sense of integrity. I could not say he was selling out to culture. I could just dismiss him and forget about it. But my cognitive dissonance did not allow that. I had to know WHY this patriarch of returning to New Testament Christianity called a woman a deacon! If you know me I have had several of these experiences and like a bull dog I will turn over every rock to find an answer.

The answer: Alexander Campbell translated Romans 16.1 as he did because that is what it said. I never knew that. I had always been told that a deacon had to be the husband of one wife and therefore women could not be one. So my doctrinal belief eliminated even the possibility of any such thing. But then, there is Romans 16.1. I never knew it used the same word in Phil 1.1. But Campbell refused to let prejudice determine his translation and so he rendered it as above.

The Greek text calls Phoebe a diakonos of the church in Cenchreae. I never knew this. So now more cognitive dissonance thanks to Campbell.

Some technical stuff. Diakonon is the predicate accusative in "simple apposition" to Phoebe. This is made emphatic by the feminine participle ousan in Romans 16.1. Diakonon also functions as the head noun of verbal quality in construct with the genitive phrase tas ekklesias and its modifying clause "in Cenchreae." For those that want to do some digging I recommend looking at Daniel Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the NT for the predicate accusative (pp. 190-91) on the Genitive of origin/source (pp. 109f; 116-124). What all this tech stuff means is that it seems really difficult to deny that Phoebe was an actual agent of and for the church in an official capacity. She held an "office" of some sort. This is why Campbell did what he did in 1826.

Over the years I have learned that those who understood Phoebe to be an actual "officer" of the church are among some of the most luminous names in Christian history. I was surprised when I learned that John Calvin understood Phoebe to be a deacon. In my research I discovered that Campbell and Calvin were not alone. Origen, the Fathers, various documents showing that women were actually deacons and then I learned the Catholic Church destroyed the office in the medieval period. I learned that the father of the doctrine of inerrancy,, B. B. Warfield, read Paul as did Calvin and Campbell. Soon Walter Scott, Robert Richardson, Moses Lard, Daniel Sommer, Robert Milligan, H. T. Anderson and B. W. Johnson. Then came my discovery of C. R. Nichol's book, God's Woman. I learned that one of the earliest references to the church outside the NT, Pliny's letter to Trajan, refers to two women that were called deaconesses.

I have a hard time calling these heroes liberals, apostates, and non-believers. Even if in my CofC prejudice I cast out Origen, Calvin and Warfield, I still have to deal with how those epitaphs apply to Campbell and company. More cognitive dissonance! Were all these men just non-believers? One day it hit me ... Bobby it is your ASSUMPTIONS THAT ARE WRONG!! If I dropped my ASSUMPTION then Romans 16.1 is actually in complete harmony with 1 Timothy 3.11 because 1 Tim 3.11 is talking about FEMALE DEACONS!!! And that is exactly how the early church read it. This position is held across all traditional divides: Brenden Byrne

(Romans, pp. 447-48); C. E. B. Cranfield (Romans vol 2, p.781f); James Dunn (ROMans 9-16, pp. 886-87); Andreas Kostenberger (various places) Doug Moo (Romans, p. 916); Thomas Schriener (Romans, pp 786-88); N. T. Wright (NIB: Romans, pp. 761-62). Kostenberger, Schriener and Moo are all "Complementarians" and not "Egalitarians." My assumptions were wrong.

For years I did not even know that the most important thing Paul said about Phoebe was not even that she was a Deacon but that she was a "prostatis," a "patron." It is Roman historians, not NT scholars, that have forced us to look at Phoebe afresh because in the past the patronage of Phoebe was simply and utterly ignored. That is for a future post but it tells us a great deal about who Phoebe was and what it meant for her to be a Deacon too. But to those gainsayers out there ... I say this with as much love as I can muster ... you are wrong. I was wrong. Phoebe was in fact a leader in the port of Corinth. She was a deacon in the absolute official sense of the word and that does not mean such condescending things as she did nice things for people.

I claim the biblical heritage of Campbell, Warfield, Calvin, and C. R. Nichol. They were not liberals. They were not apostates. They were not deniers of biblical authority or inspiration. They were driven to their position BECAUSE OF THE BIBLE. Why is it that they can be regarded as "faithful" but we who have come to the same position are sell outs! I have my thoughts on that and will keep them to myself. To quote Luther ... Here I Stand ... and that is the tale of Phoebe and Bobby V."

### **Bobby Valentine responds to those attacking Fourth Avenue Church of Christ and other churches who might welcome the voices of women.**

An Open Letter to my more traditional (whatever that may mean) brothers in Christ. Yesterday a good friend of mine posted a link to "An Open Letter to 4th Avenue Church" in which he lamented that they had hired a FEMALE preaching intern. The letter stressed repeatedly the word "female." Fourth Avenue USED to be a faithful church but clearly because they have a FEMALE intern they have apostatized. Many have praised this Open Letter. I am compelled to

respond.

- 1) The author was highly critical of the preacher of 4th Avenue because he testifies that he is not a Pauline scholar but that he listens to Jesus. My reply. This does not DENY what Paul said in either 1 Cor 14.34-35 or 1 Timothy 2.8-15. In fact I not only believe those two texts I but affirm them. I affirm what they MEAN, not what I want them to mean. I affirm what they mean without isolating them from Paul's own ministry and the context in which both passages appear. It is beyond easy to misunderstand a passage because we play hop scotch with the Bible (that is snatch a verse up as if it is not integral with the surrounding material in which it is found). So, texts MUST be interpreted in their context. The author of the Open Letter says that Paul's words are "plain." Yet in the same context of 1 Timothy we read, "I desire, then, that in every place that MALES should pray, lifting up holy hands in prayer" (2.8). This is rather "plain." I am willing to bet my fortune that the author does not follow this command to males. I also would bet that if MALES in his church began doing it that folks would complain mightily. In the same context we read, "women should dress ... NOT with braided hair, or with gold, pearls or expensive clothing" (2.9). This is rather "plain." I would love to see the author's Sunday morning assembly to see how obedient they are. In the same context we read "women will be saved through childbearing." That is "plain" and quite so. The author of that Open Letter would say, I am sure, that we need to understand (i.e. INTERPRET) these things in context (historical context). In light of his latching on to verses 11-12 about "silence" but IGNORING the surrounding verses sounds a bit like special pleading. The ease with which many simply brush these texts aside as irrelevant indicates that something other than simple fidelity to the "plain" meaning of the text is going on.
- 2) I affirm every word of 1 Tim 2.11-12. Just like I do 2.8, 9 and 15 but I, unlike the author and his fan club, do not arbitrarily decide that THOSE verses require understanding in historical context, but vv 11-12 do not. Paul's words in 1 Timothy are directed to the OCCASION and problem that the Ephesian church is experiencing. To me this is "plainly" evident when we take into

account the biblical narrative as a whole and Paul's ministry in particular. Beloved do we know that the word translated "silent" in 2 Timothy 2.12 does not mean what we simply assume by the English word "silent." The exact same word is used by Paul just a few verses up in 2.2, "so we may lead a QUIET and PEACABLE life," Quiet and Peaceable is our word. What a different notion than "silence." The Greek is about attitude and disposition and not about vocal cords. What if the word "have authority" is not the normal word Paul uses for "authority?" In fact the word in 2.12 is the only time this word is used in the entire New Testament. In fact, Paul uses a word so rare that it is akin to finding a use for the "X" or "Z" section of the English dictionary. It is a violent word Paul uses. Unless you believe Paul is simply being a vocabulary show off then it is clearly or "plainly" not concerned with simple "authority" (the normal word which he uses several other times in 1 Timothy btw). In other contexts where this rare, and violent, word occur it has almost the connotation of "murder" (it has this meaning in 3 Maccabees for example). So scholars state that the word means "domination" to the point of denigration. THIS is what Paul says a woman is not permitted to do not simply shut up. The Context of the Ephesian church in the shadow of the Artemis Cult this makes complete and total sense.

- 3) The author of the Open Letter tells the preacher at 4th Avenue that Paul should be listened to (and I agree ... and we just did that). So he cites 2 Timothy 3.16, "all scripture is inspired by God and is useful for doctrine ..." The irony of this should not be lost on anyone but probably is. My question to both the author and his fan club is "do you actually believe this verse?" You see in the previous verse (v.15) the "scriptures" that Timothy has known since "childhood." Well, this excludes 1 Timothy itself does it not? In fact the Scriptures that Timothy knew from childhood are Genesis thru Malachi - the Old Testament. Paul says those, known from childhood scriptures, are good for DOCTRINE. I doubt the author, nor his fans, actually believe this as plainly stated. But for the sake of argument suppose that they do believe the Old Testament is good for DOCTRINE. If that is so then both Timothy and Paul are going to know the DOCTRINE that Miriam was not only a leader but a public

speaker to the house of Israel. Both Timothy and Paul would know that Deborah is a prophet and leads all of Israel. Both Timothy and Paul would know that Huldah was the Prophet and source of Josiah's restoration movement. Both Timothy and Paul would know that Esther was endowed with "full authority" to direct the religious life of all Jews regarding Purim. So if "all scripture" is good for "doctrine" why does the author of the Open Letter and his fans act as if these, and many other examples, DO NOT EXIST? Why do they not form part of the "whole counsel of God" on this matter? Why do we read the Bible so selectively? The answer most give me to these examples is "that was the Old Testament and we are under the Law of Christ." This statement proves that the speaker does not in fact believe the "plain" words of 2 Timothy 3.16 which were given to Timothy (under the law of Christ) about the very Scripture that contains the Doctrine about Miriam, Huldah, Deborah, Esther, etc. The statement proves we do not believe all Scripture is good for doctrine.

- 4) Does Paul himself give us any reason to believe that our standard application of 1 Timothy 2 is grossly wrong? I would suggest not only on the basis of the DOCTRINE of the Scriptures Paul tells Timothy to remain loyal to, but that his own example shows that we have imported our prejudice to the text. On what basis do I say this. Well first from Timothy itself we learn that Paul tells the gals they need to "learn." The purpose of "learning" in other places in Paul is to become a teacher! "what you have heard from me ... entrust to faithful people {people not males!} who will be able to TEACH others" (2 Tim 2.2). There are female deacons in Timothy's church (I know the Open Letter author will deny this but some say we did not land on the Moon too). The only "named" deacon in the entire New Testament is a woman! Her name is Phoebe. Now the critics of 4th Avenue claim they are just selling out to culture. I deny it. It is restoration in process! Alexander Campbell and Moses Lard were no feminists and knew beyond a doubt Romans 16.1-2 bestowed the "title" of deacon on Phoebe (from Cenchrea btw! The same place that received 1 Corinthians!). What do we do with those women prophets in 1 Cor 11? They pray and they prophesy? How does this text fit in our "doctrine" of women's

role? Does it at all? Some, amazingly, deny that 1 Cor 11 has anything to do with the assembly. Totally specious. Paul states point blank that prophesy was for the assembly. "THOSE who prophesy {note Paul does not say, the MEN who prophesy!} build up the assembly" (1 Cor 14.4). The wearing of a head covering is total nonsense if Paul is talking to women about behavior in the privacy of their own home. Even Muslim women do not have to do that in their own home!! C. R. Nichols, as conservative as they come, in his fantastic book way back in 1938 told the truth. It is specious reasoning that 1 Corinthians is not about the public gathering of the believers.

5) Now what about Jesus? Jesus never commissioned a woman to proclaim the Good News or to be an apostle. I used to think this carried weight until I figured out what Jesus' mission was against the backdrop of the Hebrew Bible. The apostles have a SYMBOLIC function that has nothing to do with maleness per se. It has to do with that fact that there were twelve PATRIARCHS! The Apostles are the counterparts of the patriarchs in restored Israel. This is not a gender issue at all but a history of redemption issue. Jesus chose the apostles in a symbolic move showing his ministry was restoring Israel. This is of huge importance. Second, Jesus clearly broke almost every known taboo regarding women known in the ancient world. Jesus engaged and taught women privately. Jesus had women TRAVEL with him among his disciples. The Samaritan woman did in fact become an evangelist. And perhaps the greatest and most significant moment in history Jesus did in fact commission a woman. In John 20 the first person in history to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus was not the male apostles but Mary Magdalene. The significance was not lost on the early church nor its detractors. Women were not worth the time of day and their testimony was not even allowed in court. Jesus was not winning cultural brownie points but he chose a WOMAN for the proclamation of the resurrection! Jesus did so because new creation had arrived!! Her audience was the apostles themselves! So Jesus did in fact commission a woman to proclaim the Gospel. What do we do with this "doctrine?"

6) Wrapping up. I believe there are plenty of biblical reasons -

plain biblical reasons - to disagree with the Open Letter to 4th Avenue. Those reasons have nothing to do with selling out to culture. In fact I believe just the reverse is the case of the Open Letter. I grew up in the South and I have been sensitized to certain lingo. When the author says "they hired a FEMALE intern. Let me state that again, they hired a FEMALE intern," I hear and see the same intonation as "they hired a BLACK man, let me say that again they hired a BLACK man!" The EMOTIONAL response of many churches in the 1950s and 1960s was, rhetorically, identical! The author is quick to say that he has nothing against females - just as I grew up hearing (after the derogatory statement) "but blacks are some of my best friends!" I opine that the real issues are not biblical interpretation at all! It is not difficult to read the vast numbers of women who are anything but barefoot and pregnant in the Scriptures themselves. It is not hard to find examples of women prophets and leaders (like Philips daughters ... a story that connects back to Acts 2 and then Joel 2!). It is our inherited cultural paradigm that has relegated certain portions of scripture to INVISIBILITY. They simply do not exist when it comes to this matter.

If we begin with the position that women are not in fact created EQUAL to men, that they are inherently mentally inferior to men, that they cannot reason as effectively, that their difference makes them subordinate ... this is the real issue. Such attitudes are never stated because stating them immediately exposes how wrong they are. YET they are in fact just underneath the surface like that iceberg that sunk the Titanic. I argue that those attitudes are unredeemed FALL ATTITUDES. Men and women both are divine image bearers (how is one image of God superior to the other? If that is possible gender wise then it is possible racially wise!) Both men and women are tasked in creation, equally, to rule over God's creation (Gen 1.27-28). It is not men ruling women but women and men as God's image ruling the creation. The Fall fractured this: our relationship with God, our relationship with one another; and our relationship with creation itself.

The Mission of Jesus does not continue the status quo of the Fall but restores and redeems creation and glorifies it. THIS is why there is no

"male or female" in Christ because "in Christ" is where the new creation has begun thru the resurrection of Jesus. This is why the Prophet Joel sees in the Messianic age that both old men and young men, both old women and young women will EQUALLY be prophets and Luke drags up Phillip's daughters to remind us of this. This is why the examples of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Esther, etc matter doctrinally. Each one is a testimony that God has not given up on the restoration and redemption of the world and how they anticipate the glorious reality of new creation in Christ.

So from my point of view the author of the Open Letter and his fans utterly miss the whole point of the Bible. Therefore, I am delighted that 4th Avenue has gone to the Bible and decided that in fact they would be in this fallen world an outpost of new creation in which the restoration, redemption and glorification of creation had taken deep root. This is not a selling out to culture. It is a selling out to biblical theology and more than anything else to the fundamental doctrine that in Christ we are God's New Creation. Why live as if the Old Fall rules our lives."