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*The Whole Image of God:  
A Theological and Anthropological  
Understanding of Male-Female Relationship*

THE BIBLICAL CREATION ACCOUNT clearly states that both women and men are created in the image of God (Gn. 1:27), so the complete image must include both female and male. And just as clearly, there is a divine purpose for this arrangement. The image, an Old Testament metaphor for steward or representative, is divided into male and female so that men and women may work in supportive relationship to fulfill the purpose for which they have been created. The mandate to culture the earth and create human cultures in the way God intended requires both male and female participation. Without that reciprocal relationship, the image is ineffective and incomplete.

Samuel Terrien notes that the Bible provides a magnificent but demanding theology of male-female relationship. It guides men and women toward an exhilarating and radiant maturity of relationship between the sexes until, as in Terrien's book title, the heart sings. It culminates, he writes, in the celebration of intelligent love on earth, both human and divine (Terrien 1985:ix). This love is the foundation for covenant community, the first example of which is the covenant between the man and the woman found in Gn. 2:24 and quoted by Jesus in Mt. 19:5.

According to Elaine Storkey, three features characterize a biblical theology of manhood and womanhood: equality, diversity, and unity. Man and woman are created equal, sharing together a distinctiveness from the animals and sharing together in the image of God. Their difference consists in complementing each other's sexuality with different reproductive functions. They are made to be together, united as one flesh, and together as two halves of humankind, providing companionship for each other (Storkey 1985:154).

IN THE BEGINNING

In the first chapters of Genesis, all that God created is pronounced "good" except for one thing.

"Let there be light"

. . . and God saw that the light was good.

God separated water and dry land

. . . and God saw that it was good.

God made the vegetable life and the small seeds that pattern giant oaks

. . . and that was good.

God made the sun, moon and stars

. . . and God saw that it was good.

God created animals for the great world zoo

. . . and that was good too.

Then God made the human—just one, not two

. . . and that was not good.

But God soon fixed that:

. . . God separated the human into male and female.

He recognized his own and she owned his recognition

. . . and what was not good became good.

God gave them equal responsibility for the earth

. . . and that was good.

God turned them face to face for accountability

. . . and that was good sensibility.

It was good, it was good, it was very good.

God's purpose for creation is always good.

(Hiebert 1988:8)

The only time the creation is described as "not good" is when Adam (the human) was alone. Nothing in creation, including the animals which God paraded by him, was able to assuage the man's terrible loneliness.

But then God created the woman, and the man recognized his equal. Bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, the woman had the same strengths and weaknesses as the man. In other words, they each shared the full spectrum of human characteristics (Terrien 1985:13). But because either of them alone would have been "not good," they were made to be mutually interdependent. They were "for" each other—"for" in the sense of being in support of, not in the sense of being used by. That is the Genesis author's theological foundation for the relationship between women and men.

God's gift of cohumanity brought forth the first shout of human ecstasy. After the disappointing parade of animals, Adam may have fallen asleep thinking that even God had failed to find a companion for him. But when he awoke, and God brought the woman to him, he exclaimed "This one!" As the animals went by him, it had always been, "not this, not this, not this." Now it was, "At last, this one! She shall be called woman because she is just like me—only wonderfully different." Or, as Ray Anderson often paraphrases in his class lectures, "At last, there is someone in my bed!" God, the Helper ('ezer, Ex. 18:4), provided a helper ('ezer, Gn. 2:18) to deliver the man from the void of aloneness and alienation.

The Song of Songs presents a commentary on Gn. 1 and 2 (Trible 1987:146). Like a painting in rich color that is based on an earlier pencil sketch, it shows the joyous revelry in relationship that was made possible by God's gift of the woman to the man.

When everything still was good in God's creation, the man and the woman, thrilled by the discovery of their mutual humanity, were fully equal. They both mirrored the image of God; they both were honored by God with the gift of responsibility for the earth. With singing hearts, they lived in harmony with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation.

#### THE BROKEN IMAGE

Genesis 1 and 2 present a sublime picture of what the relationship of women and men was meant by God to be. But the disobedience of the first couple changed everything. The image of God was splintered, and the relationship between women and men shattered. The following verses by Ray Anderson poignantly interpret the consequences of the fall.

"Let it be good"—

He breathed, as he kneaded the swirling dust  
into every hope and hue of his own image.

And then, stepping back a bit

From his still-new creation

separating its fresh consecration from his older glory,

He whispered again, to no one in particular—

"It is good!"

But even then, as the green world groaned  
and stirred to life—

making minor miracles seem common enough,

The image lost its footing

And set the whole plan ajar—

the simplicity of good splintered into a thousand possibilities  
of greed, lust, violence, vengeance  
and worst of all, unawareness.

And yet, there was a sliver of hope  
Prestressed into the likelihood of ungood,  
A scalpel-edge of faith slicing through  
the senseless flesh to the bone of consecrated spirit.  
The creature, still bearing resemblance to the Creator,  
Embraces every hope and hue with remembrance  
In the prayer of consecration—  
"Let it be good."

(Anderson 1975:132)

The world is still reeling from that terrible, cosmic disaster. The alienation and unawareness that imprison individuals within themselves have shaped the tragic course of human history from that time on. People want to be accountable to no one and work only for themselves instead of being co-stewards in the work of God. The image has suffered the fate of Humpty-Dumpty—without God it cannot be put together again.

The Genesis account leaves no doubt that alienation between God and "man" and between "man" and "man" are consequences of the fall; Adam and Eve were alienated first of all from God; but also from each other. What has not been recognized sufficiently is that the alienation between "man" and "man" also, and especially, must be understood in terms of male and female. In the Genesis story, the human actors were a man and a woman, not two men.

Anthropologists recognize hostility between women and men to be a universal characteristic of human culture. They usually try to explain this in terms of culture and socialization. What they are not likely to recognize, or may refuse to admit, is that there is an inescapably religious and theological dimension to the problem. The consequences of the fall are more important than the processes of socialization or enculturation (van Leeuwen 1987:21).

Throughout church history, however, there have been those who recognize the theological implications of the Adamic fall and have offered various interpretations of its effect on male-female relationships. These include the misogynist and sexual-relations-as-sin views.

But theological *interpretations* are influenced by the culture in which they are formed. Arguing from how things are in a broken world, with its broken image of God, some interpreters mistakenly exposit that the broken relationship between women and men is the way God meant it to be. This is strange because they do not believe that the broken God-human relationship is good or inevitable.

Looking through the lens of the New Testament which focuses on the need for reconciliation, a different, more biblically faithful analysis of the fall appears. The first couple's act of disobeying God resulted in a fall out of love and made conflict rather than cooperation a permanent feature of male-female relationships.

Mildred Enns Toews writes that the "war between the sexes" was initiated by the serpent over the question of whether the image of God was a likeness in character through obedience, or a likeness in power by knowledge. Adam and Eve decided for power, and the die was cast (Toews n.d.). They rejected the rule of God and power struggles became the universal and dominant characteristic of human relationships—including, first and foremost, those between women and men.

Even when culture and society oppress women into submission, women will try to gain their own ground in the war using their own kind of weapons. Men may dominate, but women will manipulate.

#### THE IMAGE PUT TOGETHER AGAIN

The first sin disrupted male-female relationships not only in marriage, but between men as a class and women as a class. It is important to realize, however, that this is the consequence of sin and not what God first intended for humanity.

Genesis 1 and 2 portray the two sexes in harmonious relationship with God, with each other, and with the rest of creation. But with disobedience came distortion. The theme of Gn. 3 is the theme of spoiled relationships (Storkey 1985:154). According to Helmut Thielicke, the way things are after the fall is the *disorder*, not the *order*, of creation. "The rule of man over woman is the element of *disorder* that disturbs the original peace" (Thielicke 1964:8).

The New Testament, however, is about reconciliation and restoration. This theme is the thread that ties together the Hebrew and Christian portions of Scripture. The Hebrew Scripture, in the third chapter of Genesis, describes (not prescribes) the effects of sin on the man-woman relationship; but it also proclaims the beginning of salvation history. In 3:15, God promises the fallen couple that the seed of the woman will overcome the effects of the fall.

The Christian Testament, in Col. 1:15-20, recognizes the fulfillment of that promise in Christ Jesus. Reconciliation is the heart of the gospel. The broken body and shed blood of Jesus restores the broken image to wholeness; what was lost in Eden is recovered by his life, death, and resurrection. Because of Jesus, it is possible for humans to be reconciled to God and to each other, male and female, and to live in the awareness of what God means by good through the strength of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Although women were segregated and subjugated by the Jewish and Hellenistic cultures of their time, there is firm biblical evidence that both Jesus and Paul lived and worked in the reality of restored relationships between women and men. In the new era inaugurated by Jesus, men and women, rather than being at war for the dominant position, are restored to the position of equality that constituted their life before the fall.

#### *Individualistic equality*

But equality in the original image is not the individualistic equality derived from the Enlightenment that is based on what Robert Bellah in his study of North American culture calls "ontological individualism" (Bellah et al. 1985:276). Ontological individualism makes the individual "the only firm reality," which still leaves the self as the highest good and hardly helps to end alienation or promote mutually responsible relationships.

What has happened in the U.S., writes Bellah, is that modernity has produced a culture of separation characterized by the fragmentation of life. What has failed at every point is integration; people have been occupied with their own private interests and have neglected the common good. He concludes that individuals need to rejoin the human race (Bellah et al. 1985:296). Bellah is writing about separation between people in general, but it certainly applies to the situation between women and men. One of the most critical points at which the human race needs to be "re-joined" is at the rupture between the sexes.

Some modern feminists believe that giving women equality with men on the basis of ontological individualism will solve the problem. If, however, that paradigm fails to bring about integration of humanity in general, it surely will fail to bridge the gulf between the sexes.

#### *Biblical equality*

A biblical concept of equality is needed for real integration. Equality as it was in the beginning, and exemplified by Jesus as a characteristic of the new era of God's kingdom, means that men and women are free again to be "equal to" so that they can be "for" each other as God originally intended. Jesus used the image of the servant, in contrast to the ruler who lords it over others, to demonstrate this attitude (Mt. 20:25-28). The Apostle Paul spoke of mutual submission and responsibility (Eph. 5:21).

Jesus' treatment of women was a sign of this restored equality and reciprocal relationship between women and men. Not only did he talk with women—strict taboo for a rabbi—he also allowed women disciples to follow him, and in direct contradiction to Jewish law he taught them from the Scriptures. In the parable of the lost coin, Jesus used a woman to represent God. The Samaritan woman was accorded the honor of being the only person to whom Jesus directly disclosed his messianic identity and the

became the first woman evangelist. Jesus appeared first to a woman after his resurrection, and women were sent to tell the male disciples.

John Bristow points out that Jesus' example became the norm within the early church:

The apostles soon began to speak of the "women of our company" (Luke 24:22). When the apostles engaged in prayer, they did so "together with the women" (Acts 5:14). After the Day of Pentecost, "multitudes, both of men and women" were welcomed into the fellowship of believers (Acts 5:14), and both men and women were baptized (Acts 8:12). (Bristow 1989:54)

The four daughters of Philip, together with Paul and seven other men, are identified as prophets in the book of Acts.

The importance of the place of women in the church is indicated by the fact that Saul (Paul, after his conversion) made no distinction between the sexes in his efforts to oppose Christianity. In the eyes of its enemies, women in the heretical sect were as dangerous as the men. Therefore, Saul persecuted and arrested them both, a fact that he later acknowledged in his defense before the Jerusalem tribunal (Acts 22:4-5; Bristow 1989:55).

Paul's encounter with Jesus converted him to the new relationships prevailing in the apostolic community, and he probably took this radical application of the gospel a few steps further. He preached to women and baptized them without discrimination. Paul recognized women as well as men as leaders in the church and co-workers with him in the gospel. Their mention by name in his letters indicates their importance in the life of the church (1 Cor. 16:19, Rom. 16:1-16, Phil. 4:2-3). Paul describes Junia, one of the nine women he greets in Rom. 16, as one of his kindred and a noteworthy apostle (Bristow 1989:57).

In the last half of the second century, the former pagan Tertullian, who after his conversion retained a rather pagan view of the nature of women, marveled at the mutually equal and responsible relationships among men and women in the church. He wrote that they "perform their fasts, mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally are they both found in the church of God; equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other" (Bristow 1989:112).

#### POST-RESURRECTION CRACKS IN THE IMAGE

What has happened, then, since the time of Jesus and the apostolic church, to bring modern Christianity to the place where inequality—and therefore disharmony and alienation—again characterizes the situation between women and men in many sectors of the church?

A careful reading of church history makes it clear that the wonderful ideal of restored, equal relationships between women and men exemplified by Jesus and his apostles, including Paul, did not last much past the fourth century. And, according to John Bristow, "it all began in Athens." Here lies the source of the Western world's formalized conviction that women are inferior to men (Bristow 1989:3).

#### *The abuse of Pauline theology*

From the beginning, the Apostle Paul's grand scheme of equality for Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female in one family of God met bitter resistance. Deprecation of women was deeply rooted in Greek culture, and Paul's teaching was in constant conflict with the teachings of Greek philosophers and Jewish rabbis of the time. Also, the ideal itself was an easy prey to criticism and fantasizing by a skeptical society in which women and religion were associated with orgiastic rites (Bristow 1989:110).

The mortal blow to sexual equality within the church came when Christianity became fashionable, writes Bristow:

In the middle of the fourth century, the Emperor Constantine gave his favor to the faith of Christians, and those who would court imperial favor began to join the church . . . —indeed, they may not have cared much at all for the teachings of Christ. As the Church became more and more transformed by society, its life took on more of the characteristics of Hellenized Roman society. . . . Slowly the teachings of Greek philosophy interbred with Christian theology, producing a brood of beliefs that were often pagan in their assumptions. (Bristow 1989:113)

Perhaps with good reason, the inauguration of Christendom is known in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology as "the Second Fall."

But the final conqueror of Paul's ideal of sexual equality, continues Bristow, was Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas, a highly effective Christian apologist and a brilliant and prodigious scholar, used the writings of Aristotle to defend Catholic beliefs. Along with his interest in integrating Greek philosophical method with Christian faith, however—and perhaps partly because of that—he also affirmed the class system of medieval society, the paternal family system, and the authority of church leaders and the nobility.

Aquinas agreed with Aristotle's statement that woman is a defective and misbegotten male, and therefore he could not conceive of woman being equal to man either before or after the fall (Bristow 1989:115). Bristow sees Aquinas as more responsible than anyone else for a misinterpretation of the Pauline writings:

With Aquinas, the deprecation of womanhood was completely infused into Christian theology, based upon the authority of Aristotle and Augustine and

Aquinas's interpretation of the words of the Apostle Paul. Thus those who have benefited from the superb scholarship of Thomas Aquinas . . . have also inherited his Grecian conviction of the inferiority of females. (Bristow 1989:117)

From that time on, Paul has been misused to support a position exactly opposed to what he intended. Greek attitudes, brought into the church especially by the church fathers, gradually, and probably unconsciously, prevailed over apostolic idealism. Paul's own words were quoted in defense of practices he opposed; they were used as authority to prohibit what he actually advocated. And according to Bristow, Paul "the Slandered Apostle" is still being slandered today (1989:114).

#### *Inadequate doctrines of creation and incarnation*

In addition to the misinterpretation of Paul, inadequate or flawed doctrines of creation and incarnation both contribute to an errant theology of male-female relationship. Arthur Glasser, dean emeritus of Fuller's School of World Mission, says that evangelicals may have a flawed doctrine of creation because they make the mistake of beginning their theology only after the fall. They take little account of the fact that there was life before the fall and that in that life God's original purpose for humanity is revealed. Unless this is understood, the full scope of redemption will not be perceived.

According to James Torrance, dependence on Gustav Warneck's flawed understanding of natural law, which is based on a faulty doctrine of creation, as well as an inadequate doctrine of incarnation allow for theologies that support many different kinds of human oppression. Some Christians try to justify unequal and oppressive relationships, including apartheid and the rule of men over women, on the basis of these theologies. But in order to do this they must unbiblically divorce the vertical (God-human) relationship from horizontal (person-to-person) relationships.

An adequate doctrine of creation, on the other hand, takes account of the original purpose of God in which both vertical and horizontal relationships partake of the same kind of harmony. Love for God and love for neighbor are equal parts of the Great Commandment. It is quite impossible to have one without the other.

A biblically faithful doctrine of the incarnation teaches that because of Jesus, right relationships of both kinds are possible again. Jesus partakes fully of ruined humanity and returns it to God without spot or wrinkle. In return, God restores to humanity its full potential (Torrance 1989). This understanding of the scope of redemption is stated by the Apostle Paul in Gal. 3:28. It includes the restoration of equal, harmonious relationships between male and female. Anything less than that would mean that Christ's work on the cross was incomplete because it had failed to recover God's full purpose for humanity.

#### THE SPIRIT IN THE IMAGE

In the new era inaugurated by Jesus Christ, there is a new availability of the Spirit of God. Whereas under the Old Covenant the Spirit spoke occasionally through individual prophets or kings, the Spirit now has been poured out on all the people of God. The image of God is revitalized by the breath of God's Spirit. As long as it does not hold its breath (quench the Spirit), the image again may function as God's representative on earth.

The gift of the Spirit is accompanied by "gifts" for ministry, and true to God's original intention for God's image, male and female, these gifts are comprehensive and inclusive. None of them is labeled "for men only." Ralph Martin notes that the Greek text of the "gift list" in 1 Cor. 12:4-10 does not have the sexist language employed by the English translations. The gifts are bestowed on the church without discrimination as to gender, social station, ethical maturity, or native endowments (Martin 1984:12).

A proper understanding of the Pauline vision, writes John Howard Yoder, would vaporize the current debate over the ordination of women. In Paul's theology, ministry is not for a privileged few; it is for all, because all have been gifted for ministry. By definition, then, "no one would/could be excluded from a function to which otherwise she/he is called on grounds extrinsic to that function." It is a most basic mistake to try "to open the closed ranks of the tiny clerical minority only to admit the ordination of a few clergy of the other sex" (Yoder 1987:52).

Sadly enough, even in the age of the Spirit, some gifts of the Spirit have lain unopened, collecting dust in the church storehouse. When the gifts to the laity in general or the gifts to women as a class are denied, the image is holding its breath.

History shows, in fact, that whenever God's Spirit is moving freely within the church, men and women begin to relate more as equals. This was true in the apostolic church and was emphasized by Peter's quotation of Joel in his pentecost sermon.

It was true of the Anabaptist women and men in the sixteenth century. Like the women accused of heresy by Saul of Tarsus, Anabaptist women were considered so dangerous to the established churches that they were hunted down, tortured, and killed just like their brothers. *Martyr's Mirror*, a record of Anabaptist martyrdom, comments in several cases on the "valiant manliness" with which a woman went to her death (van Braght 1951:437, 441). The record also shows that some women carried out their apostolic mission to the very end by trying to convert their captors. Poignant letters to children from mothers awaiting their martyrdom in prison, in which they urge the children to remain constant in their faith, demonstrate the women's remarkable theological reflection and insights.

Wesleyan revivalism in the eighteenth century, the American Fundamentalist revivals, and the early twentieth-century Pentecostal movement with

its roots in the Wesleyan holiness tradition also accorded women a place alongside men that was quite extraordinary in Euro-American culture. Charles Finney introduced the controversial measure of allowing women to speak in mixed assemblies that paved the way to the pulpit for scores of turn-of-the-century women (Hassey 1986:8). Frances Willard, founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, shared Dwight L. Moody's pulpit; and Moody's associate, Emma Dryer, inaugurated the intensive Bible study and practical training institute that later became Moody Bible Institute (Hassey 1986:33ff.). Early Pentecostalism was partly founded by women, and was eager to use women as preachers and healers (Hassey 1986:xiv).

It seems that whenever the church is focused on its call to mission, as it was in the examples cited above, the scope of the task causes it to unwrap and use all its gifts. When it becomes obsessed with power and internal structures, however, the Holy Ghost is quenched and the old specters of hierarchy and domination are revived.

But God's Spirit never gives up. Although the Spirit may be quenched in one part of the church, it blows where it will to infuse new breath into another. Dry bones are raised and God's image is put together again.

#### IS THE IMAGE FUNCTIONAL?

Equality and mutual submission between men and women may be God's ideal for humanity. But, some ask, do they work in a world ruled by power-hungry leaders, inequality, and hierarchy? Must not someone have the authority to make the final decisions in a home or church to avoid a deadlock? The social order of the kingdom of God will come when Christ returns as King. Until then, do we not have to live in the world as it is, although we seek to temper the gross evils of its cultural systems?

##### *Family relationships and development*

In a comprehensive analysis of socioeconomic development around the world, Emmanuel Todd (1986), a French population demographer, concludes that equality and mutual respect between the sexes, particularly in marriage, are the most important factors in human cultural advancement. Economists look for economic determinants of growth such as resources, productivity, and capital savings; political scientists seek political determinants such as democracy and free markets. None of these, Todd concludes, has been the cause of development in the world in the last two hundred years. Rather, these are all byproducts of that development. The underlying cause, he argues, is the nature of family relationships between the sexes.

Todd defines human development in much broader terms than economic wealth and its equitable distribution. Development also includes political

progress such as democracy, the valuation of all persons, freedom, and human rights; demographic progress such as health, long life, and stable populations; and cultural progress such as literacy and generation of useful knowledge. All these, he shows, are rooted in fundamental attitudes children learn through relationships in their home during their early years.

Drawing widely on anthropological data, Todd outlines six fundamental types of families found in societies throughout the world. These types are based on differences in two sets of relationships: (1) that between husband and wife (patriarchal, matriarchal, or bilateral), and (2) that between parents and children (guided or laissez-faire).

The author compares family types with the rates of development of nations around the world since the beginning of the nineteenth century, and finds a consistent pattern. Those in which women and men work as equal partners and parents provide guidance for their children (bilateral-guided) show the greatest development. Next are those in which mothers have a strong public role and train their children (matrilineal-guided). Patriarchal families, in which fathers rule the home, rank from medium to weak in terms of cultural development (1986:21).

The reason bilateral and matriarchal families rank high, Todd argues, is that children learn their views of personhood primarily from their mother, with whom they identify in their early years. When they see their mother treated with dignity and acting as an autonomous person, they gain a high view of themselves as persons. This leads them later in life to take control over their own lives and to build institutions and governments in which people are free and empowered to grow.

Equality between the sexes in families is reflected in a number of ways. Girls may be as wanted as boys, children of both sexes may inherit equally, and young couples may live separately, or may choose to live with either set of parents. Todd finds two variables most highly correlated with development. The first has to do with the age at which most women marry, and the age difference between them and their husbands. When women marry after eighteen, they are adults, and they have a greater say in their marriages than those who marry in childhood. Similarly, when the age difference between bride and groom is less than three years, the two are more equal than in marriages where the child-wife is ten or twenty years younger than the husband.

The second factor has to do with female literacy. This depends on the age at which women marry and the willingness of parents to free their daughters from household work and to encourage them to study. Todd writes:

A more detailed examination of the correlation coefficients . . . emphasizes women's specific role in the process of cultural development. The coefficient between age of women at marriage and literacy rate of young people around 1970

(+0.83) is, in fact, much higher than that between age of men at marriage and literacy rate. The age at marriage of women is the key variable, rather than the age at marriage of people in general. . . . The woman's cycle of learning appears to be more fundamental than the man's. (Todd 1986:15)

It is primarily women, not men, who teach children to read and respect knowledge in their early years.

The equality of women as reflected in late marriage and literacy correlates highly with political, demographic, and economic development. Literacy—particularly women's literacy—is indeed democracy, for it gives the common people access to information, and therefore to power. It also leads to longer life expectancy, dropping birth rates, and rising income.

Todd does well in defining "human development," but he does not take into account ecological concerns. As Christians we must be concerned not only with the well-being of humans, but also with the earth and its environment. We, women and men, are created in the image of God, and part of that image is to be stewards and caretakers of nature. Walter Brueggemann writes, "[The] image . . . does not have to do with exploitation and abuse. It has to do with securing the well-being of every other creature and bringing the promise of each to full fruition" (1982:32).

With similar concern for human responsibility in the fulfillment of creaturely promise, James Torrance writes:

God has made all creatures for his glory. The lilies of the field in their beauty glorify God with a glory greater than that of Solomon, but they do not know it. The sparrow on the housetop glorifies God in its dumbness, but it doesn't know it. The universe in its vastness and remoteness glorifies God but it doesn't know it. But God made man [*sic*] in His own image to be the Priest of creation, to express for all creatures the praises of God, so that through the lips of man [*sic*] the heavens might declare the glory of God, that we who know we are God's creatures might worship God and in our worship gather up the worship of all creation. Man's [*sic*] chief end is to glorify God, and creation realises its own creaturely glory in glorifying God through the lips of man [*sic*]. (1979:348)

This kind of responsibility is learned in the family. Children learn attitudes of nurturing—whether of other humans, animals, or plants—just as they learn competition and conquest: by observing early in life the ways their parents relate to each other and to their children.

Todd does not ask what leads to a high view of women in the family. His data, however, show a high correlation between the dignity of women and Christianity. Europe, North America, Kerala in South India, Korea, and, to a lesser extent, South America have been influenced by Christian values. There are exceptions, of course—notably Japan, which is not Christian and still has a high regard for women. Significantly, Todd points out that in

rural areas of Japan, "a radically bilateral variant" of the family, in which both male and female lines are important, may be found (cf. Choi 1970).

#### *Family relationships and church planting*

Finally, and most importantly, we need to look at how family relationships affect people's responses to the gospel. Eugene Nida (1978) shows that in Latin America, where the husband is authoritarian, detached from his wife and children, and involved in extramarital relations, children find it hard to think of God with images of "father" and "husband" that have characteristics of love and care. Consequently, Protestant missionaries, particularly evangelicals, often have not been understood or well received there.

In Korea the picture is different. Early Protestant missionaries translated the Bible and printed it in the new, simplified Korean script. Men, by and large, refused to read it because the script did not carry the high regard associated with old Chinese characters. It was a "woman's script." But women used it to learn to read, and they read the Bible to their children. When these children grew up they turned to Christianity in great numbers, igniting the current explosion of the church in Korea.

Equality and mutuality between women and men do lead to better families and societies. This, however, is not the primary reason we as Christians should seek to create such relationships. Rather, it is because these relationships reflect God's created order for humankind and his re-created order for the church. They are a testimony to us that God is in our midst, and to the world that people may be reconciled to God and to each other.

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