



1985

## Sexual Ethics in Paul

Chang Ho Maeng

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop\\_etds](https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds)



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Maeng, Chang Ho. (1985). *Sexual Ethics in Paul*. University of the Pacific, Thesis.  
[https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop\\_etds/4077](https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds/4077)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the University Libraries at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in University of the Pacific Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact [mgibney@pacific.edu](mailto:mgibney@pacific.edu).

SEXUAL ETHICS IN PAUL

---

A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Faculty of Graduate School  
University of Pacific

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
Chang Ho Maeng  
December 1985

This thesis, written and submitted by

Chang Ho Maeng

is approved for recommendation to the Committee  
on Graduate Studies, University of the Pacific.

Department Chairman or Dean:

Albert W. Schelle

Thesis Committee:

Arthur H. Woodward Chairman

Robert W. Blaney

Herbert R. Pinnett

Dated October 31, 1985

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the teaching of Paul in the area of sexual ethics. This is a significant issue for Christians in contemporary society.

The method was to study the passages dealing with these things in authentic letters of Paul and to interpret them in the light of contemporary scholarship. This involved but was not limited to understanding the cultural background in Paul's time.

The conclusions of this thesis are:

1) Paul emphasizes that the marriage relationship must be characterized by holiness and honor and must be centered in faithfulness and love, harmony and concordance, because God calls all Christians in peace and love. Paul allows divorce under certain conditions but he recommends everybody remain in peace and love without divorce.

2) Paul condemns homosexual practices but he is not preoccupied with this matter. He only assumes that an individual's fundamental refusal to acknowledge God is sin, and homosexuality is a result of such refusal. He sees it as an expression of lust and as a perversion of the natural order.

3) With respect to women, Paul is committed to the fundamental principle that "there is neither male nor female in Christ."

I believe that if we understand and assess what Paul says about the issues of his own day, how his teachings apply, and how they function within his theological



perspective, they can take new meaning for us in our day. We can conclude that when Paul writes about sexual ethics, he always thinks about God's glorification in faith and love.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
A. PAUL AND HIS BACKGROUND .....	2
B. HIS LETTERS .....	6
II. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE .....	10
A. MARRIAGE .....	11
B. DIVORCE .....	21
C. CONCLUSION .....	27
III. HOMOSEXUALITY .....	29
A. HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE BIBLE .....	29
B. GRECO-ROMAN SOCIETY IN PAUL'S DAY .....	35
C. PAUL'S TEACHING .....	40
1. I CORINTHIANS 6:9-10 .....	41
2. ROMANS 1:26-32 .....	46
D. CONCLUSION .....	52
IV. WOMEN IN THE CHURCH .....	56
A. WOMEN IN PAUL'S MINISTRY .....	57
1. PHOEBE .....	58
2. PRISCA .....	59
3. CHLOE .....	61
4. EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE .....	62
5. OTHER WOMEN .....	63
B. TRADITIONAL VIEW IN PAUL'S WRITINGS .....	63
C. FEMINIST VIEW IN PAUL'S WRITINGS .....	65
1. GALATIANS 3:27-28 .....	65
2. I CORINTHIANS 11:2-16 .....	68
D. CONCLUSION .....	75
V. CONCLUSION .....	78
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	82

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

In Paul's thought, religion and ethics go together; morality is never divorced from his individual letters. This was true for him as a Jew since morality in Judaism was grounded in the will of a living, personal, holy God. On the other hand, it was also true for him as a Christian, for the "norm" of his ethics was always found in the will of a personal God. This was sometimes referred to as "the law of God." Furthermore, the ethical goal of his letters was always the same: that Christ may be formed within the self. In his letters, he invokes the loftiest theological conceptions to support and commend Christian conduct. He thought that Christian living was always the result of true Christian thinking; ethical fruits had theological roots.

It is difficult to single out and summarize a specific "sexual ethic" in Paul's writings, because the indicative and imperative aspects of Paul's teachings are so interrelated. I will present a descriptive and systematic analysis and discussion of Paul's sexual ethics. Specifically, I will deal with the practical problems of marriage and divorce, homosexuality, and the role of women in the church. Paul's views on sexual ethics are still important even if they were written more than 1900 years ago.

The Encyclopedia of Theology defines sexual morality

as follows:

Sexual morality is to be regarded as part of Christian ethics' moral theology: It attempts to explain the purpose and task of human sexuality as well as the moral significance of interpersonal relations, insofar as they affect man in his sexual nature and are of an erotic and sexual character. <sup>1</sup>

Brightman defines ethics as follows: "the normative science of morals, which means it is an attempt to discover and justify reasonable standards of conduct."<sup>2</sup>

In the first chapter, I will discuss Paul, his background and his letters. In chapter II, I will deal with Paul's teachings regarding marriage and divorce. In chapter III, the theme will be Paul's teaching on homosexuality and the background of homosexuality in the Bible and his society. Chapter IV will deal with women related to Paul's ministry including a traditional and feminist interpretation. Chapter V will present a conclusion relating Paul's sexual ethics to our own society's sexual ethics. All Biblical quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

#### Paul and His Background

Paul of Tarsus was a Jew who lived from about two A.D. until approximately 65 A.D. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible describes him as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup>Johannes Grundel, "Sex," Encyclopedia of Theology, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 1571.

<sup>2</sup>Brightman as quoted by Robert W. Blaney Biomedical Ethics Syllabus, 1983. p. 3.

3

A Jew of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil. 3:15), Saul, "who is also called Paul" (Acts 13:5), was given the name of that tribe's most illustrious member - Israel's first king. His Hebrew name Saul means "asked for," while his Roman cognomen Paulus means "little." <sup>3</sup>

We have only a few sources for the life of Paul. Probably Paul's home was fairly well-to-do, for if he were born a Roman citizen, his family must have possessed some wealth and standing.

Jewish law prescribed that a boy begin the study of the Scriptures at five years of age and the study of the legal traditions at ten. Undoubtedly Paul was immersed as a boy in such a curriculum as well as being taught in the synagogue school and at home. Paul was also initiated into the skills of tent making (Lake and Cadbury argue that the word at this time commonly meant a leather worker) because Jewish sentiment asserted the nobility of manual labor and because he also needed a vocation. Like other Jewish boys, Paul was a bar mitzvah (son of the commandment) at thirteen. At the same time, he took upon himself the full obligation of the law. The more promising young men were directed into rabbinic schools under able teachers. At the age of 13, or shortly thereafter, Paul came to Jerusalem to further his training, perhaps living with the married sister spoken of in Acts 23:16. Macgregor suggested that Acts 22:3 may more appropriately be translated as follows: "brought up in this city, educated strictly at the feet of Gamaliel, being zealous for the ancestral law of God."<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Merrill C. Tenney, ed. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1975), p. 625.

<sup>4</sup>G. H. C. Macgregor, "Acts Exegesis" George Arthur Buttrick, ed. The Interpreter's Bible, (New York, Arbingdon Press, 1953), p. 290.

This passage associates his coming to Jerusalem with his rabbinic instruction. It is some indication of Paul's youthful ability that not only was he selected for further rabbinical study, but that he came to Jerusalem to study under one of the greatest rabbis of the first century. Gamaliel was a member of the Sanhedrin, the high council of Jews in Jerusalem. James Ashbrook and Paul Walaskay point out that:

Paul was a Jew, but more than that, Paul was a Diaspora Jew, that is a Jew of the Dispersion living in the world of Greek culture away from Palestine. It would be nice to know with certainty what life was like, especially for the Jewish community in Tarsus of Asia Minor; that would give us considerable insight into the life and thought of Paul. 5

We do not have written records about Tarsus, Paul's hometown, but we can guess about the cultural, philosophical and religious exchange that must have made an impact on Paul. The Cilician port city, known as "the Athens of Asia Minor," was located in the heartland of high Hellenic culture. Therefore, the worldwide traffic that flowed in and out of Tarsus brought, along with its goods, a steady stream of cultural peculiarities, philosophical thoughts, and religious and mystery cults of all kinds.<sup>6</sup>

Paul was influenced by the Jewish community of Tarsus, both religiously and philosophically, especially by Hellenistic

---

<sup>5</sup>James B. Ashbrook and Paul W. Walaskay, Jr., Christianity for Pious Skeptics (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. pp. 34-35.

Judaism as practiced in the synagogues of the Diaspora. Tarsus was a Greek university city, but it is commonly agreed that Paul did not have formal university training. He probably left for his Jerusalem education at too early an age to be involved with higher education in Tarsus.

Furthermore, Paul took full advantage of the education offered him. He not only developed the rudimentary literary skills, but learned his philosophical, exegetical and rhetorical lessons well. Paul was proud of his Roman citizenship and used it on several occasions. In Philippians 3:4-5, he says:

"If any other man thinks that he can be proud of his existence, I have reason for even more pride; I was circumcized on the eighth day, born of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews." <sup>7</sup>

This passage suggests that he was more zealous than most in identifying true religion with close obedience to the Law of Moses. Extremely intense and inordinately proud, he drove himself unstintingly in whatever he took to be his duty. By obeying every minute point of the law, he tried to find what moderns call "peace of mind."

Paul often harrassed the followers of Jesus because his insecurity drove him to angry defense of his position. According to Acts 9:1, under Sanhedrin auspices, he tried to stamp out the budding Christian movement by threats, imprisonment and murder.

---

<sup>7</sup>Phil. 3:4-5

As we can read in Acts 9:1-19; 22:5-16; 26:11-20, Paul's conversion to Christianity occurred while he was on the way to Damascus to arrest some Christians and take them back to Jerusalem for judgment. He wrote of this experience later stating;

He who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles. <sup>8</sup>

Paul preached in the Gentile world, going first to the synagogues of the Diaspora, where he often found Gentiles as well as Jews.

#### His Letters

Twenty-one books of the New Testament are called "epistles" or "letters." Norman Perrin makes a distinction between "letters" and "epistles."

. . . In the ancient world, a "letter" was a personal communication between individuals, or groups, or individuals and groups, it was a deliberate surrogate for personal conversation and was intended to be direct, personal, and geared to a specific occasion or concern. An "epistle," however, was a deliberate literary creation intended for wide dissemination. Its form as a letter was merely a literary convention; in the ancient world it served the purpose that today would be served by an essay or article, an open letter, a short treatise, or a communication to a journal or newspaper. <sup>9</sup>

Therefore, we can say the letters of the apostle Paul are most emphatically letters, not epistles.

Paul wrote his letters to meet the immediate needs of

---

<sup>8</sup>Gal. 1:15-16.

<sup>9</sup>Norman Perrin, The New Testament; An Introduction (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), pp. 96-97.



a congregation that was in a particular place and a particular situation. With the exception of Philemon, they were not letters to individuals, but to congregations. Even after his death, letters remained the most common and the most typical means of communication in the early church.

Traditionally, fourteen New Testament letters were ascribed to Paul: Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, First Timothy, Second Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews. However, Pauline authorship of several letters has been disputed from the beginning of the Christian era by most scholars. The majority of scholars regard Ephesians to be non-genuine because of its differences in language and style and the relationship of Ephesians to Colossians. First and Second Timothy and Titus have strong arguments against Pauline authorship. Various modern New Testament scholars regard those three letters as non-genuine because of the style of writing, the vocabulary and the church organization. The scholars think those three letters are the work of a follower of the apostle written 20 years after his death. Hebrews was not regarded as a Pauline letter until after the first century and it is not credited to him by modern scholars. Only nine letters can be credited to him according to most scholars.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, I will deal with these nine letters in my thesis.

---

<sup>10</sup>Paul Feine, Johannes Behn, Werner G. Kummel, Introduction to the New Testament, trans. A. J. Mattill Jr. 14th revised ed. (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1966) , p. 177.

Specifically, Paul wrote most of his sexual ethics to the people in Corinth and Rome. Corinth was one of the most important cities of ancient Greece with a population of 200,000 citizens and 500,000 slaves. The city, located on an isthmus between northern and southern Greece, served as a bridge for trade between the two countries. Through Corinth passed a great part of east-west Mediterranean trade and it had a cosmopolitan and varied citizenry.<sup>11</sup> The same factors that made Corinth into such a cosmopolitan center also contributed to its effect on the city's moral and religious life. The city was the center of a number of pagan cults whose temples had a thousand priestesses. Tremmel described the city of Corinth in this way:

Corinth had a colorfully mixed population where religious syncretism flourished and, perhaps, an abundance of sexual looseness. Not only were there a number of brothels in the city to service sailors, but there was a temple to the goddess of love, Aphrodite/Venus, which as a part of the religious practices, made "sacred" prostitutes available.<sup>12</sup>

The worship of Aphrodite never reached the proportions it had assumed in the old Corinth; yet in its own way the new city earned a similar reputation and most of the old glory and shame. As a seat of the Roman provincial government, Corinth was a characteristic mixture of Greek and Roman society, but many other peoples found their way to the city.

---

<sup>11</sup>William Barclay, "Corinth" The Encyclopedia Americana, VOL. 8, (Encyclopedia Americana Corp., 1980), p. 794.

<sup>12</sup>William Calloley Tremmel, The Twenty Seven Books That Changed The World (CBS College Publishing, 1981), p. 84.

Rome had become the largest Mediterranean city in Paul's time with a population of more than 750,000. Most Romans lived in fragile, high-rise wooden structures.<sup>13</sup> But the city's leaders fought to enhance the city's general appearance with the revenues that came from conquest; they restored the splendid temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and enlarged the Senate house to accommodate the increased number of senators. They also built the first stone theater. Caesar constructed his own forum; a basilica to commemorate his family, the Basilica Julia; and a temple to his supposed ancestress, Venus.<sup>14</sup> The Romans also reflected the ruinous competition that destroyed the Republic. We have no direct information about the introduction of Christianity to Rome and we learn little about the Roman church from the epistle itself. The epistle to the Romans has no particular reference to the internal conditions of the church, unlike other epistles, and Paul had no direct acquaintance with them. Probably, Christianity had been introduced into the city by A.D. 49, because, under the Emperor Claudius, there were riots in the Jewish quarter which led to an edict banishing all Jews from the capital. All that we can infer is that, like most churches outside Palestine, it was of mixed Jewish and Gentile membership and as large and important as any of the churches Paul addressed.

---

<sup>13</sup>Erich S. Gruen, "Rome" The Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 23, p. 717.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

## Chapter II

## MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Paul was deeply concerned about the churches and visited many of them. When he could not visit, he sent letters. It is not surprising that most of what he wrote was directed to specific questions and problems in particular congregations: "now concerning the matters about which you wrote".<sup>15</sup>

This fact must be kept in mind when we analyze his letters. Among the most difficult and misunderstood passages in the Pauline letters are those which have to do with women and with their roles in marriage and in the church. Paul made his principle comments about marriage and divorce and sexual behavior in I Corinthians 7.

A lot of Corinthians were reading the ethical implications in quite a different way. Since they did not think that their special experience of salvation permitted them to give free rein to physical, worldly impulses and desires, they thought that these must be denied; repressed and kept in constant check. In matters of sexual ethics they were not libertines but ascetics.<sup>16</sup> Paul wrote to the Corinthians to correct the ascetic errors about marriage and divorce.

---

<sup>15</sup>I Corinthians 7:1

<sup>16</sup>Victor P. Furnish, Moral Teaching of Paul (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), p. 32.

## Marriage

There are two questions that the Apostle brings up in verse one. First, in the case of married people, ought sexual relations to be abandoned? Second, in the case of those who are not married, must they lead a celibate lifestyle and not marry at all? No doubt scruples of diverse kinds prompted these questions. In Paul's time, some people, under the influence of some religious ideas (Gnostic beliefs) believed that the body and its functions were in themselves inherently evil. Similarly, there were others who felt that intercourse in marriage might hinder their spiritual progress. Paul's statement that a man should not "touch" a woman is undoubtedly a slogan of the Corinthian ascetics, probably quoted to Paul in the letter he received from Corinth. Alternately, the Apostle does not think of sexual immorality here, but of the marriage relation. He exalts celibacy above the married state, but at the same time recognizes that not all can exercise such self control.

Paul's reply begins with a recommendation to husbands and wives that they should not abstain from intercourse except for seasons of prayer. The advice is a permission or concession and in an imperative form. Therefore, the intention is not a universal proposal that every person should marry a spouse. Paul seems to be insisting that the continuation of intercourse in marriage is not a free option but rather it is an obligation of both partners that cannot be cancelled by religious or ascetic scruples. Paul thinks the sex experience has its rightful

place in marriage and it could be put to the side for a time for spiritual reasons. The obligation to the husband and the wife is enforced by an enunciation of mutual jurisdiction on the part of husbands and wives.

It is precisely the same balance of rights and the assertion of an absolute equality between marriage partners as stated in verse 3. It involves the surrender in marriage of one's right to control one's own body. Paul declares that each partner has a mutual and equal right to the other person's body. Each one is to meet the needs of the other. <sup>17</sup>

What Paul wants to make clear is that sex is permissible within marriage; it is something due to each partner; and, each partner is obligated to the other. This comes from Paul's idea that God does not give all people the gift of ability to be celibate. Paul offends the Corinthian ascetics, who were denying the propriety of sex for Christians under any condition.

Dr. Furnish emphasizes this point in two ways. First, he says that sex is meaningful only within marriage. And, second, the partner should not peremptorily thrust himself or herself upon the spouse in a way that would exploit the other person sexually.<sup>18</sup> The statement about not ruling over one's own body in verse 4 means that sex must be a shared relationship (cf. v. 5) between two persons of equal standing, it must be mutual.

Paul emphasized sexual abstinence within marriage, but only under three conditions: that it be temporary, that it be by mutual agreement, and that it be for prayer. Paul seems to recognize that there might be occasions in which one or both

---

<sup>17</sup>William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, The Anchor Bible: I Corinthians (Doubleday and Co., Inc. New York: 1976) p. 108

<sup>18</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 35.

parties would concentrate for a limited period upon prayer to the exclusion of normal life concerns. He never mentions that the time must be terminated by the resumption of an ordinary relationship. However, like the more extreme case of celibate marriages, one may be tempted to seek the fulfillment of one's sexual desires elsewhere, and, according to Paul, that would be immoral. Paul understands the normal exercise of the conjugal relationship to be the means whereby the married couple may escape temptation of infidelity either by respecting the marriage bed or by devoting oneself in prayer. Some scholars, such as Orr and Walther,<sup>19</sup> have taken verse six as a reference to marriage itself. Most scholars, such as Craig<sup>20</sup> and Furnish<sup>21</sup> think that the "concession" is the allowance for temporary sexual abstinence within the marriage. I agree with Craig and Furnish because Paul wrote that each man should have his own wife (verse two), and he did not mean that marriage was obligatory.

In verse seven, Paul expresses his wish that all were single as he is himself. The "unmarried" probably includes those who have never been married as well as those separated. Widows probably include widowers. Some have held that Acts 26:10 implies that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin and therefore must have been a married man. At the time of this writing, he certainly had no living wife, and from chapter seven, it is highly

---

<sup>19</sup>Orr and Walther, op., p. 209.

<sup>20</sup>Clarence Tucker Craig, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Exegesis," George Arthur Buttrick ed. The Interpreter's Bible, (New York: Abington Press, 1953), p. 77.

<sup>21</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 36



unlikely that he ever had been married. Barrett is probably correct in his reading of verse seven where he asserts:

What he (Paul) wishes cannot be mere celibacy in itself, but only that all might possess the capacity for resistance to sensual allurements, such as he indicates that he enjoyed for himself, and made it possible for him to live without marriage. 22

That the single state is Paul's own preference is clear. He regards his celibacy as a "gift", and realizes that this gift is not shared by all. Even if he regards his status as a gift, he is not proud of his celibacy as proof of some superior religious or moral attainment. This conjecture would have played into the hands of the ascetics whose opposition to all sexual relationships he was anxious to correct. In one instance, one can express obedience to God within marriage because God wants persons to be married, and another can express the same obedience to God by remaining unmarried because God wants him/her to be single. Paul teaches that a celibate life requires a special gift from God as does marriage. Yet he points out that some have the gift of celibacy and others lack this gift. Thus, they should be advised to marry. In the Corinthian proposition, Paul gives qualified approval: "it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman." If men or women can express their obedience in such complete self-control and abstinence, this is good; but marriage is no sin. In Paul's point of view, to be single is better for the individual relationship with God because the time is too short.

---

<sup>22</sup> Charles K. Barrett, Commentary on The 1st Epistle to The Corinthians (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 158.



In verses 25 to 35, Paul goes on to explain in more details his reasons for thinking it preferable to remain unmarried. According to Paul's reasoning, if one is still single, it is better not to embark on married life for two reasons. First, marriage is permissible but inadvisable because "the form of this world is passing away." It is true that this sense of standing on the border between the old age and the new inhibits, if not precludes, a concern for the nature and quality of marriage as an ongoing social institution. Paul believes what the time demanded, above all else, was singleminded devotion to "the obedience of the Lord," to the preaching of the gospel of Christ and the building up of his body into a community of faith.<sup>23</sup> Paul knows that marriage imposes special cares and responsibilities upon each partner's daily troubles. Paul's sense of living at the close of the Old Age and at the dawning of the New Age also helps to explain the otherwise curious remark in verse 29 that "those who have wives live as though they had none." By this, he cannot possibly mean that Christians should eliminate sex from their marriages. Paul cannot mean that Christians should abandon the responsibilities normally associated with the married state. Rather, Paul means that no ultimate value is to be placed on worldly institutions or relationships. Paul especially emphasizes the view of the shortness of times (v. 29-31). Not only should those with wives "live as though they had none," but also,

---

<sup>23</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 37.

. . . Those who mourn should live as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice live as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy live as though they had no goods and those who deal with the world live as though they had no dealing with it. <sup>24</sup>

In these cases, Paul does not mean that the Christian should opt out of his or her worldly responsibilities. The key point of Paul's opinion is that Christians do not have time to devote to change of marital status and that they need to control their existing status due to the imminence of the end of this world. In this passage, Paul gives his own advice because he has found nothing applicable in the traditions available to him. Paul authenticates his opinion by asserting that his trustworthiness is divinely given. Orr and Walther think that it is hard to see why special difficulty is attached to married people more than to a single person in a prospective eschatological era unless some suffering of women and children is in the apostle's mind.<sup>25</sup> Paul emphasizes that people should live in their life condition as if they did not live in it. In verse 31, first, Paul offers as substantiation for his opinions his conviction that the form of this world is passing away. By this, Paul means that the life situation of the Christian community is transient since the community is existant in the final season of the last age. In other words, Paul is not denying the importance of the responsibilities of worldly existence, but he is denying their ultimacy. Second, marriage is a potential distraction from devotion to the Lord.

---

<sup>24</sup>I Corinthians 7:29-31.

<sup>25</sup>Orr and Walther, op. cit., p. 221.

According to Paul's way of thinking, a married person is more preoccupied with worldly things, such as the material things for his or her family, and is less at liberty to care for the Lord. It seems unlikely that Paul meant this as a simple generalization, because unmarried persons would seem to become as perplexed about the affairs of the world as married people. He is referring to the dedication of the whole life in a career which is appropriate for a Christian. Paul does not mean that unmarried persons should be free from all anxieties. Rather, the Christian should be free from all other anxiety except how to please the Lord. Paul may have had in mind that there was no need of having children, in view of the idea that it was the last generation. He might think that if the world was coming to an end, having children was futile. Paul maintained that an unmarried person could concentrate all his or her leisure time on special service to God, whereas married persons must concentrate a good part of their time upon family needs. Significantly, Paul does not criticize married persons for having anxieties and worldly cares, but accepts the fact that these cares and anxieties are part of marriage. Although men and women have a right to marry in the face of the eschatological, Paul is convinced that his advice is for the particular benefit of the addressees. In Paul's idea, the Christian does not finally belong to this world, but exists within it, always under a higher claim.

Paul writes of two questions about marriage in his letter. One of these questions is concerned with the Christian who once

had a spouse, but who has one no longer. Widows are mentioned specifically (verse eight to nine and 39 to 40). He reiterates what he has introduced in the verse, and he recommends his own martial status. This has been understood to be evidence that Paul was indeed a widower. This resolves the problem which would be raised if Paul should be understood to recommend the unmarried state to those who were married. But there is not enough evidence to prove that he was a widower. Raymond Bryan Brown is not sure Paul was a widower:

In fact, it is not clear that Paul is a bachelor. He may be a widower. Most rabbis were married, and marriage was considered an obligation for the Jewish male when he reached his eighteenth birthday. The argument that members of the Sanhedrin had to be married, however, is not decisive for proving Paul was a widower. 26

Therefore, we cannot establish definitely whether he was a bachelor or a widower. Paul probably recognized the particular problem of widows and widowers; that because they had been abruptly deprived of the enjoyment of the physical relationships of marriage they encountered serious emotional distress, according to verse nine. He affirms that remarriage is preferable to the consuming passion that they may experience if they are unable to exercise such self-control. In verses 39 to 40, Paul simply applies the principle of the indissolubility of Christian marriage. Wife and husband are bound to one another so long as both are alive. There ought to be no question of divorce between Christian partners. Paul feels it is better, if the spouse died, for them to remain

---

<sup>26</sup>Raymond Bryan Brown, The Broadman Bible Commentary, (Nashville, 1970), vol. 10, p. 329.

unmarried even if they are free. However, Paul felt it permissible that the other is free to marry a believer if the spouse dies. Paul believes that if the husband dies, the woman should have freedom that the man enjoyed in the event of his wife's prior death. While Paul speaks a word in verse 40 for the value of the unmarried state, he guards the regularity of marriage and implies that the woman should be an equal partner in its arrangement. However, his tendency in favor for celibacy leads to the conclusion that a widow is happier if she remains as she is. Paul offers this recommendation as his opinion and he suggests that his opinion is valid because he has the spirit of God.

The other question concerns the marriage of virgins (verses 36 to 38). It is possible that there was a strongly ascetic element in the Christian community that took the form of criticism and avoidance of the intimate sex relationship in married life. It seems to have looked askance on marriage itself. One custom, which may seem curious to us, was that in which a young man and woman agreed to live together under vows of celibacy. Paul realizes that some who acted in this manner were better able to bear the strain than others. Hence his advice was either to marry or to maintain celibacy as the case may be. In neither set of circumstances is there any sin. These passages bristle with some difficulties. Orr and Walther write Lietzmann's opinion:

. . . if any one reads without prejudice v. 36 to 37, there will be no doubt that Paul is writing about a young man with a fiancée, but that if one reads v.

38 without reading the foregoing verses and again without prejudice, there will be doubt that the subject is the father of a virgin unmarried daughter. 27

There are severe difficulties about the subject of these clauses in spite of the problems regarding the meaning of words. It is not clear who is the subject of "if (he) be of strong passion (or "of mature age")" nor of "let (him) proceed to do what (he) wishes". Four combinations of "he" and "she" are possible, and there is really nothing in the verse itself to indicate which alternative is correct. There are two different translations of these verses. The King James version interprets the whole section in terms of this assumption that the man is a father and his virgin is his daughter because the meaning of the Greek verb ραμίσω in verse 38 is "giveth . . . in marriage." However, the Revised Standard Version may be understood that Paul has in mind nothing more than any engaged couple who might at first have decided to accept Paul's advice and refrain from marriage, and then have found that decision increasingly difficult to maintain.<sup>28</sup>

Despite all that was said about the advantages of remaining single, we are not to suppose that there is anything wrong in marriage. Even if a man had taken a vow of celibacy, it was still permissible for him to marry, should he find that he was unfit for the celibate life. The situation pictured here is apparently that of a man and a woman who have decided

---

<sup>27</sup>Orr and Walther Lietzmann as cited by op. cit., p. 223.

<sup>28</sup>Clarence Tucker Craig, *The First Epistle to The Corinthians, Exegesis*, George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York. Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 87.



to live together in marriage without sexual intercourse. The motive behind this somewhat impractical arrangement may perhaps have been an attempt to anticipate here on earth the future resurrection existence in which marriage, as such, would be no more. Paul approves of the idea in principle, but he realizes the difficulties in practice, and is careful to reassure the man and woman concerned that it is no sin for them to marry if they find the situation too much for them.

One must remember that he regards celibacy as a gift. Considering the urgency of the present times, he regards it as the more practical gift, but not as a superior one because the anxieties of marriage distract one from total commitment to God's will. In other words, Paul is not disparaging of marriage but tries to cope with the realities of the present time as he understands the Corinthians and their society.

#### Divorce

In verses 10 and 11 of Corinthians, chapter 7, Paul directs his attention to marriages in which both husbands and wives are Christians. Paul's opinion is that Christians who are married to each other must not dissolve their marriage. He advocates no embracing of asceticism. In this case, he cites the words of Jesus and considers them a charge from the Lord. He must take Jesus' instruction (Matt. 5:31-32 and Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18) as absolutely binding on the church.<sup>29</sup> Paul makes no interpretative expansion of the words

---

<sup>29</sup>Orr and Walther, op. cit., p. 212.

of Jesus. However, Paul asserts that neither the woman nor the man ought to initiate separation or divorce. It is difficult to know how much difference there is between separation and divorce in Paul's thought. According to the Jewish tradition, only the husband had the right to divorce. Paul, however, uses both separation and divorce in reference to the woman. Paul emphasizes that if separation occurs between Christian spouses, they should remain unmarried, or be reconciled to each other.

It is significant that Paul says his authority for this teaching is "the Lord". This is one of the very few instances in his letters where Paul appeals directly to Jesus' teachings. We know that these teachings had been kept alive in the traditions of the church not only through their oral repetition and interpretations, but also through their practical application. Most commentators have argued that the Gospel of Mark and Q. (Luke 15:18) have provided us the earlier form of Jesus' teaching on divorce, and that in the Gospel of Matthew one sees how the church softened that teaching in the concrete application. Craig writes in his arguments:

Paul enters into no discussion concerning who is guilty of adultery in the case of remarriage, but he does insist that in the case of those already separated, they should remain single. Paul knows nothing of any exception, such as is recognized in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9, "except on the ground of unchastity". This was obviously an addition modifying the unqualified word of Jesus. That a wife should not separate from her husband stands close to Mark 10:12, where the right of a wife to divorce her husband is rejected. 30

---

<sup>30</sup> Craig, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-79.



Even if Paul insists that this is a command of the Lord, he does not refer to any collection of words of Jesus in his letter. Therefore, we do not know whether such collections were in circulation or not. However, the more immediate question for us is what Paul understands the requirements to be in this matter.

Paul knew the Greco-Roman world of the first century; the world in which Christianity emerged. In that time, marriages were just as easily dissolved as they were made. In Roman society, no religious sanctions or ideals significantly influenced either the making or breaking of marriages. Roman law allowed either husband or wife to divorce. In contrast, within Judaism, the marriage bond was regarded as profoundly important. Jews believed the bond of male and female was an essential ordinance of God and an integral part of God's creation. They allowed divorce only at the husband's initiative.<sup>31</sup>

Paul's admonition in verses 10 and 11 contradicts the main point and the parenthetical remark. On the one hand, he cites the Lord's command "that the wife should not separate from her husband and that the husband should not divorce his wife." On the other hand, Paul presumes that separation will occur, and provides that when it does occur, there should be no remarriage. Woman should remain single if no reconciliation is possible. Here, Paul might think that it is better to be free to give one's undivided devotion to the Lord.

In Paul's thought, prohibition of divorce might be

---

<sup>31</sup>Furnish, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

directed to the same problem of asceticism in Corinth that had been his concern in the first part of chapter seven. There, Paul had urged that conversion to Christianity did not require a husband and wife to abstain from sexual union. He never condoned celibate marriages and never required divorce, but he did advise against mixed marriages later (II Corinthians 6:14). It is important to note that Paul was not asked to provide instruction for Christian couples whose marriages were in danger because of a lack of communication, mutual respect or common purpose and values.<sup>32</sup> Paul thinks that one can have new standards of life in Christian faith. Therefore, "a heathen partner should not be compelled to continue under the new circumstances unless he or she is entirely willing to do so."<sup>33</sup> Still, he did not call for the dissolution of such a marriage. In Paul's thought, an unbelieving partner can be holy and clean by their contact with their Christian partner. "The unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife."<sup>34</sup> Here, Paul is thinking of "a very primitive and material view of holiness,"<sup>35</sup> not thinking of the moral influence of the person. This meant that "the physical quality of holiness"<sup>36</sup> was passed from the Christian to the non-Christian partner, and the consecration was effected. Paul says that the result of this is the holiness of their children. Paul reinforces this

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>33</sup>Craig, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>34</sup>The New Oxford Annotated Bible, Herbert G. May & Bruce M. Metzger, ed., (New York), I Corinthians 7:14.

<sup>35</sup>Craig, op. cit., p. 79.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 80.

statement with a further startling argument. If one of the marriage partners was unholy, the children of their union would be unclean. However, the children were clean because they were the children of a sanctified partnership; both parents were holy by the faith of one partner and all the family was united in holy kinship. Holiness of the children meant that they lived in an atmosphere of godliness, created by their Christian parent, which was beneficial to their spiritual growth.

The Christian partner married to a non-Christian was under no obligation to maintain the marriage if the non-Christian partner initiated separation. However, Paul emphasizes that the Christian should make every effort to keep up the marriage without breakage, by creating harmony, love, and endurance because all Christians were called in the peace of God. Still, Paul does not indicate whether the Christian is free to marry again when a divorce occurs.

Verse 16, translated as a question, may assume that Paul discourages the Christian partner from expressing and maintaining interest in converting the disobedient marriage to the Christian faith partner.<sup>37</sup> One might ask, "if a believer is divorced by the unbelieving partner, what then?" Paul's wish might be that he stay unmarried, yet, that is not an obligation. However, Paul's best wish is that the Christian partner would help lead the non-Christian partner to the Christian faith.

---

<sup>37</sup>Brown, op. cit., p. 331.

Paul also brings to human relationships the concept of freedom in Christ. His most extensive treatment of this is in Galatians, where he argues that while one is free, one is also a slave of Christ, and that new life in the spirit will lead to moral and ethical living.

Here, Paul's teaching of marriage and divorce is based on Jesus' great law of love. Paul must know that love is more important than any other law or regulation as he wrote in I Corinthians chapter 13 about love. Paul must have known that the love which God gives us through Jesus Christ crowns and completes all the relationships of our lives. Therefore, Paul prefers one to hold marriage rather than divorce. He knows that true love can solve the problem in our families.

#### Conclusion

In this letter, Paul turns from the problem of sexual immorality to problems connected with marriage and divorce. Paul's attitude toward marriage and sexuality is conservative. He approves the view that most people need marriage and sexual expression within it. It is important to remember that his response to questions the Corinthians raised in regard to marriage is based in part on the moral situation at Corinth; a city notorious for its immorality. He favors a life without overt sexual expression for those who are single and counsels normal sexual relations for those who are married. Furthermore, Paul's eschatological thought leads him to counsel others not to enter into marriage if they possess the gift of

continence which he has been given.

Paul does not say that the only value of marriage is the control of sexual license. He does believe that it is one value of marriage because it allows the divinely approved expression of sexual desire that is a part of the gift of creation. Paul's attitude is permissive, not mandatory, as to the choice between celibacy and marriage. Paul thinks celibacy is of high value in light of the immorality at Corinth and the eschatological hope.

One must ask whether the instructions about marriage and divorce in I Corinthians 7 still have meaning for modern Christians. In some major respects, the situation Paul understood in the first century is different from the situation we face in the twentieth. Paul had an eschatological world view. Corinthian Christianity suffered from its ecstatic experiences, its arrogant spirituality, its wavering between libertinism and asceticism. Modern Christianity is significantly different from the conditions Paul saw in Roman Corinth. Therefore, one should not expect all of our twentieth century problems and question to be solved, but if one understands these differences and keeps them in mind, Paul's instructions can still provide guidance in our day.<sup>38</sup>

Paul regards the husband and wife as equals to share decisions and responsibilities and to respect and care for each other. He emphasizes the importance of mutuality in connection with in two areas where conflicts between persons

---

<sup>38</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 331.

are most apt to arise; religion and sex. He also emphasizes that the marriage relationship must be characterized by holiness and honor for those in Christ. This means that each partner must affirm and support the existence and the personhood of the other. There has to be faithfulness and love, harmony and concord, freedom and obedience within human relationships because God calls all of his people to live in peace.

Paul's teaching gives much flexibility from case to case. For example, he advised some to remain single and others to marry. However, Paul never allows options for some cases. He insists on monogamy and reserves sexual action for marital relationships.

## Chapter III

## HOMOSEXUALITY

The current religious or theological debates about homosexuality revolve around the pronouncements in the New Testament. For those who view the Christian Bible as the only book to be relied upon, it becomes absolutely essential to understand the importance of the relevant New Testament passages and, as will be repeatedly emphasized in this chapter, to look at what is being said.

The scriptural texts that are most directly relevant to homosexuality are found in Paul's letters. His writings about homosexuality deserve careful consideration because they have been so often invoked and so variously interpreted in the debates about the church and homosexuality.

In this chapter, I will discuss what Paul actually said about homosexuality in his letters. Before discussing this, however, homosexuality in the Bible and Greco-Roman society in Paul's day must be examined.

## Homosexuality in the Bible

The earliest ethical codes of the Hebrews do not mention homosexual behavior.<sup>39</sup> The Ten Commandments do not mention homosexuality, either. Even Jesus does not say

---

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 53.



anything on the subject. Nowhere does the Bible say anything about homosexuality as a sexual orientation.<sup>40</sup> The texts that are discussed in this connection are few and far between, and all of them are not really pertinent to each other to relate their theme with "homosexuality". However, in order to keep our sense of proportion, we have to investigate, first of all, the definition of homosexuality. Masters, Johnson and Kolodny define homosexuality as follows:

The word "homosexual" comes from the Greek root "homo," meaning "same," although the word itself was not coined until the late nineteenth century (Karlen, 1971). It can be used either as an adjective (as in: a homosexual act, a homosexual bar) or as a noun that describes men or women who have a preferential sexual attraction to people of their same sex over a significant period of time. 41

However, there were no words in Hebrew or in ancient Greek with equal meaning to our English words "homosexual" and "homosexuality." Even the English terms and the concepts behind them are of modern origin. Furnish writes about the appearance of these words in the Modern Bible:

In fact, the first usage of the term "homosexuals" in an English Bible did not come until 1946, with the publication of the Revised Standard Version of the New Testament. In that translation it represents two Greek words included in a list of "vices" in I Cor. 5:9. However, in the second edition of the R.S.V. Common Bible (1973), it is dropped in favor of the phrase "sexual perverts." Some modern versions continue to employ it in this passage, either as the noun "homosexuals" (for example, The Living Bible and The New American Standard Version), or as adjective

---

<sup>40</sup>James B. Nelson, Embodiment (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), p. 182.

<sup>41</sup>William H. Masters, Virginia E. Johnson, and Robert c. Kolodny, Human Sexuality (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1985), P. 408.



("homosexual perversion" in the New English Bible and "homosexual perverts" in Today's English Version). 42

Other recent translations such as the Jerusalem Bible and the New American Bible use the noun "sodomite" to refer to a male who engages in homosexuality. The King James Version also uses "sodomite" in Deuteronomy 23:17, I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46 and II Kings 23:7.<sup>43</sup> The word, sodomite, or sodomy has a much longer history of usage in the English language than "homosexual" and has become a technical term for a specific type of sexual activity. Sodomy is defined as unnatural sexual relations, such as those between persons of the same sex or with beasts. Originally, "sodomy" meant the kind of wickedness practiced by the people of the city of Sodom.<sup>44</sup>

One thing is clear, and that is that Jesus made no public pronouncements on homosexuality. Robin Scroggs discusses the issue of homosexuality in the Four Gospels.

Sodom is mentioned a few times, but never in connection with homosexuality. In Matt. 10:15 (Luke 10:12, Q.), Sodom symbolizes attitudes toward hospitality. In Matt. 11:23-24, it is used as a foil to talk about repentance. In Luke 17:29, the destruction of Sodom symbolizes the suddenness with which the eschaton will occur.<sup>45</sup>

In Rev. 11:8, Sodom is one of the names given to Jerusalem as a term of opprobrium. Two other words, both in vice lists, have on occasion been taken to point to homosexuals.

---

<sup>42</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>George A. Barton, Encyclopedia of Religion And Ethics, ed., James Hastings, vol. 11, (New York, 1921), p. 672.

<sup>45</sup>Robin Scroggs, The New Testament And Homosexuality (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p. 100.

However, the terms are so general that it is impossible to know whether they hint at the practice or not.

Two other closely related passages have often been interpreted as referring to God's judgments on homosexual practices: Jude 6:13 and II Peter 2:4-18. These writings are attacking Christians whom the authors believe to be guilty of unethical conduct as well as theological heresy. The misconduct seems to be sexual in character, but any certain judgments are impossible because the language used is so elusive. Other possibilities of speaking of adulterous lust in II Peter seem to give the whole attack a heterosexual direction.<sup>46</sup> In Jude 7, it is precisely the unnaturalness of the lust practiced at Sodom that is stressed as the cause of divine wrath.

However, all the New Testament and Old Testament stories tell about the totality of the destruction of Sodom and not the particular nature of its crime for which we remember it. Therefore, we can say that Sodom is a symbol for the reality of God's judgment, not a symbol for homosexuality. For example, Paul mentions Sodom in his letter Rom. 9:29 in which he quotes from Isaiah 1:9 "If the Lord of hosts had not left us children, we would have fared like Sodom and been made like Gomorrah."<sup>47</sup> Paul used the scriptural text in order to assure his readers that God has cause to direct his wrath at those who are against him.

With this in mind, more serious challenges to the apparent meaning of the laws against homosexuality in Leviticus

---

<sup>46</sup> Scroggs, p. 100.

<sup>47</sup> Romans 9:29

are levelled. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 appear in connection with cultic purification and thus belong to the "shadows" of the ceremonial law. Thus, it would be inconsistent to apply Leviticus' prohibitions of homosexuality to their society. These verses are clear in pointing out that God does indeed regard the specific manner of one's sexual gratification to be morally important. Leviticus 18:22 says that you shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.<sup>48</sup> Here in Leviticus, God's word on homosexuality seems to be clear. God's law is a precise interpretation of God's natural sexual order of creation for fallen man, rendering again God's intention and direction for sexual relations.

There are a variety of contemporary theological points of view regarding homosexuality and Christianity as relating to God and creation. According to James Nelson, there are four views about creation and homosexuality. The first view is a "rejecting-punitive orientation" and those who support this position "unconditionally reject" homosexuality as legitimate Christianity. They hold a punitive attitude toward gay persons. This view was very strong in the history of Christianity but "today no major contemporary theologian" and most church groups "in their formal meetings do not hold this view."<sup>49</sup> The second view is the "rejecting-nonpunitive" position. Those who hold this position believe that one must relate to persons of the opposite sex for fullness of life and that homosexuality

---

<sup>48</sup> Leviticus 18:22

<sup>49</sup> Nelson, op. cit., pp. 188-189.

is idolatry and physical, psychological and social sickness. They see homosexuality as unnatural and a violation of the command of the Creator. Karl Barth is a representation of this view.<sup>50</sup> The third view is "qualified acceptance". Like the rejecting-nonpunitive position, this view sees homosexuality as a perversion. But, this view also supports the conclusion that constitutional homosexuality at any rate is largely unsusceptible to medical or psychotherapeutic treatment. A number of church leaders and several recent denominational statements support this view.<sup>51</sup> The fourth view is "full acceptance". Those who affirm this position believe that the homosexual orientation is not a free choice but more of a given. This position views homosexual actions as an expression and a vehicle of "God's humanizing intentions." An increasing number of scholars including Norman Pittenger and James Nelson advocate this view.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, Neale A. Secor presents his theological approach; "all human sexual identifications and behavior patterns, irrespective of desired gender object, are morally neutral."<sup>53</sup> Those scholars believe that the homosexuals were created in that way and therefore that homosexuals can express themselves and love only within homosexuality.

---

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-192.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 196-197.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 197-198.

<sup>53</sup>Neale A. Secor, "A Brief for a New Homosexual Ethic" ed. Edward Batehelor, Jr. op. cit., p. 164.

I prefer the rejecting-nonpunitive view because I believe that homosexuality is unnatural and a violation of God's command. I also agree with Barth who said that "homosexuality must be condemned, but in light of grace the homosexual person must not."<sup>54</sup>

Paul refers to homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27 and I Corinthians 6:9-10. I Timothy 1:9-10 also speaks of it but I Timothy has been identified by scholars as having been composed later than Paul, although in his name. These writings are expressed in the Greco-Roman or Hellenistic Jewish cultures. Because the passages are addressed to churches located in the Greco-Roman world, we must look at the social and religious conditions of Paul's day.

#### Greco-Roman society in Paul's Day

We must understand something about the place of homosexuality in Greco-Roman society before we evaluate Paul's remarks about homosexual practice or determine his intentions in the two relevant passages. In order to be able to deal sensitively with the original meaning of the Pauline texts, and with their significance for modern Christians, we must have some acquaintance with the phenomenon of homosexuality as Paul's world observed and analyzed it.

It was in the beginning of the sixth century B.C. that homosexual love had a relatively prominent place in Greek social life. According to several historians, homosexuality had developed with a commercial economy based on business transactions. We know reasonably well the practices and

---

<sup>54</sup>Nelson, op. cit., p. 190.

attitudes of upper-class males toward homosexuality, but we do not know about such practices and attitudes of women and the lower-classes since most texts were written by upper-class males about subjects which were of interest to them. We also consider the vast cultural differentiation within Greco-Roman society because there were Greeks and Romans, Egyptians and Jews, even if the term "greek" covered a number of cultural distinctions.

The class we know about, practiced a very specific form of homosexuality named pederasty; the love of boys.<sup>55</sup> In almost all instances a pederastic friendship was the relationship between a male adult or older youth, and a boy or younger youth. One partner, almost always the younger, assumed the role of the passive partner; the other, almost always the older, that of the active. We can find some evidence of this behavior in their educational system. According to Athenian law, the dancing teacher was to be over forty years old "in order that he may have reached the most temperate time of life before he came into contact with their children." The Paidagogos, the slave companion of the youths, was to guard the youth from sexual action on the way to and from school.<sup>56</sup>

Also crucial to understanding the background of pederasty is the emphasis which Greeks placed upon the ideal of beauty. Beauty for the Greek was primarily physical comeliness and this may have stemmed from the need to produce powerful

---

<sup>55</sup> Scroggs, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 19-20.

soldiers. By later times, the beautiful boy-form had become an end in itself and the classical expression of physical beauty. The Greek adjective 'kalos' means beautiful, handsome, pretty, attractive or lovely when applied to a human being, animal, object or to place.<sup>57</sup> The Greeks did not call a person 'beautiful' by virtue of person's morals, intelligence, ability or temperament, but solely by virtue of shape, color, texture and movement. Therefore, 'kalos' was used to describe a youth by his adult admirer and referred to physical properties.

Women had come to be valued only for their part in helping to ensure the continuation of the race in that time. Many boys of the island of Grete thought it was shameful for a boy not to have a male-lover because this customary relationship was derived from ancient puberty rites,<sup>58</sup> even Plato described pederasty as the noblest of all human relationships. Horner wrote about their fervor for homosexuality in his book:

Other Greek men, whose tastes did not run to females, cultic or otherwise, no doubt saw little difference in stopping off at one of the houses of the male prostitutes, perhaps along the way up to Acrocorinth, or elsewhere in this major port city of ancient Greece. . . Greek men had for centuries practiced both the serious and the casual kinds of homosexuality. 59

In their society, it was not the mark of shame for a man to have sex quite casually with a male prostitute or with any other members of his own sex. They understood homosexuality as noble type of love, as an honor and as a virtue.

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> Furnish, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> Tom Horner, Jonathan Loved David Homosexuality in Biblical Times (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), p. 91.



The Jewish law condemned male homosexual practices, and punished them with death by stoning according to the Mishnah and the Talmud. It may be said that Jewish Halakah exonerates from the penalty of the law against male-homosexual practices, only the passive minor and the active minor if the passive partner was under the age of nine. All others committing male homosexual acts actively or passively incur the sentence of death as imposed by Lev. 20:13, which was to be carried out by stoning.<sup>60</sup>

Greco-Roman homosexual culture had a background and a set of patterns completely different from those of our own day. The practices of pederasty emerged out of the dominant social matrix of the day. In some quarters pederastic relations were extolled and in almost all quarters condoned. It is important to keep in mind that Greco-Roman pederasty was practiced by a large number of people in part because it was socially acceptable, and actually idealized by many people as a normal course in the process of maturation.

When we come to the Roman period, the situation of the first century A.D. is significantly different. Among the upper-classes, homosexuality was still openly practiced and its merits were discussed in the philosophical literature. However, the moral philosophers of the day questioned its worth, especially when compared to a heterosexual relationship in marriage.<sup>61</sup> Paul may have known about several examples from

---

<sup>60</sup>Berrick Sherwin Bailey, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition (Connecticut: Hamden, 1975), pp. 59-63.

<sup>61</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 60.

literature and may have seen some cases in that time so that these help us to picture what Paul must have had in mind when he spoke of homosexual practices. Furnish illustrates many examples of homosexuality in the Roman world. Here is one which Dio Chrysostom, a first century writer, noted about homosexuality in his days.

. . . who, though there are women in abundance, through wantonness and lawlessness wish to have females produced for them from males, and so they take boys and emasculate them. . . In A.D. 67, after the death of his second wife, Poppaea Sabina, Nero had his male lover, Sporus, mutilated. Sporus was then renamed "Sabina", and publicly married to the Emperor. 62

Dio saw homosexuality as being essentially exploitive and lust as the violation of the natural order closely related to the cause and the result of homosexual behavior.

In contrast to the Greco-Roman world as a whole, homosexual behavior was not common among the Jews. The later rabbis usually regarded homosexual behavior as a typical Gentile vice, and this idea was widespread among the Jews. They detested homosexual behavior and recognized such behavior as a contravention of the law of nature resulting from unbridled lust.

In the first century A.D., the critics of homosexual behavior associated it with insatiable lust and avarice. By Paul's day, the Old Platonic ideal of the pure, disinterested love between a man and a boy was coming to ruin in the stark realities of Roman decadence. The writers of this period who wrote about homosexual behavior seemed convinced that it necessarily involved one person's exploitation of another.

---

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

In particular, Stoicism maintained that one's life must be conducted with the immutable law of nature in ways relating to the created order. Since the result of this popular philosophical movement was widespread, we might see their movement in the teachings of Paul. Not only the terms, but also the concepts "homosexual" and "homosexuality" were not known very well in Paul's day. But these terms are now understood only with the advent of modern psychological and sociological analysis.

That Paul would have actually known people who participated in such relationships is hardly likely. What he knows probably originated rather from Jewish suspicions about Gentile activities. Because rumors are sometimes larger than the reality, what Paul knew about stories and rumors may have been more sensational than true.<sup>63</sup> Thus, it is possible that Paul's basic attitude toward pederasty might have been seriously influenced by passing a few coiffured and perfumed male prostitutes in the market place. It is clear that most forms of pederasty had at least the potential to create concrete relations that would be destructive and dehumanizing to the participants. Given this potential and its frequent actualization, it is not surprising that early Christians should repudiate all forms of pederasty.

#### Paul's Teaching

Paul perceived and criticized homosexual behavior twice

---

<sup>63</sup> Scroggs, op. cit., p. 43.

in his letters: I Cor. 6:9-10 and Rom. 1:26-27 if we except I Tim. 1:9-10. When we turn now to Paul's remarks about such conduct, it becomes apparent that he perceived it in essentially the same way as other Jews. Paul kept this in mind as he condemned such behavior, but his ethical teachings are integrally related to his fundamental theological convictions. It is better to start with I Cor. because it is briefer, more problematic and overall less informative than Rom. 1:26-27.

#### I Corinthians 6:9-10

From Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 of I Corinthians, Paul discusses various problems of sexual immorality. He is responding to some troubling news received by means of an oral report, perhaps from the bearer of the letter. He has heard that a member of the Corinthian congregation has taken up living with his step-mother who has become a widow. Paul urges that this man should be put out of the church because of his aberrant behavior. Because of this kind of sexual immorality in Corinth, Paul warned the Corinthians not to associate with persons guilty of such actions.

This passage is the first in Christian literature to refer to homosexuality.

Do you now know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. 64

Several recent English versions translate the word "homosexual" differently. Furnish compared the words used:

---

<sup>64</sup>I Corinthians 6:9-10

Thus, the first edition of the R.S.V. lists "homosexuals" among those excluded from God's kingdom and so does the Living Bible. The New English Bible uses "homosexual perverts," and the New American Bible has "sodomites." The second edition of the R.S.V. New Testament (incorporated into the R.S.V. Common Bible) broadens the concept with a reference to "sexual perverts," with which one may compare the rendering of the New International Bible, "the sexually immoral." 65

However, Horner<sup>66</sup> thinks the King James most likely represented accurately enough what Paul was trying to say. This table, derived from Deissmann, compares the King James renderings (column I), Paul's precise wording in the above two verses (column II), and the equivalent word or words on the Latin counters (column III);

I	II	III
1. "fornicators"	poenoi	impudes (should be impudens)
2. "idolters"	eisololatria	(not on the counters)
3. "adulterers"	moichoi	moice, moese
4. "soft" "gentile"	malakoi	patice
5. "one who lies with a male"	arsenokoitai	cinaidus, cinaedus
6. "thieves"	kleptai	fur
7. "covetous"	pleonektai	(not on the counters)
8. "drunkards"	metusoi	obiose and vinose
9. "revilers"	liodoroi	(trico?)
10. "extortioners"	harpapes	arpax <sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>66</sup>Horner, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>67</sup>Adolf Deissmann, Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of Greco-Roman (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), p. 315.

Most versions combine numbers 4 and 5 above. However, the amazing thing here is that Paul, in turning out this list of things, he considered to be "vices," certainly seems to be reciting from the list of those things that were commonly considered to be vices, or at least "naughty" things. We can only know that Paul, influenced both by his own Jewish background and practices among the Greeks, either composed the list with great care and forethought or dashed it off in a hurry but in any case including those things that would be relevant to the situation in Corinth.

Two Greek words, 'malakoi' and 'arsenokoitai', are most crucial in these two verses. Horner defines 'malakoi' in his book;

. . . Malakoi is the plural of Malakos, which literally meant 'soft' as in Matthew 11:8 (twice) and Luke 7:25. But by extension it also indicated effeminate persons, 'catamites' or 'effeminate man and boy who indulged in homosexuality'. 68

On the other hand, arsenokoites, the singular forms of arsenokoitai, meant "a male homosexual, pederast, sodomite." It is made up of two words; arsen=male, and koite=bed, then marriage-bed, then sexual intercourse in general. The first word of the compound can be taken as the object of the second part. If this fits our words here, then the second part can be translated as a participle and connected to the first by a preposition; "lying a male" or "one who lies with

---

<sup>68</sup>Horner, op. cit., p. 48.

a male."<sup>69</sup> Whereas the malakoi were the passive partners in male homosexual relations, the arsenokoitai were the active partner in male homosexual intercourse. The Moffatt's version and the Jerusalem Bible render the two words simply "catamites", which refers to the male homosexual who plays the female role in intercourse and "sodomites," which refers to the active partner in such a relationship.<sup>70</sup> John Boswell questioned the adequacy of the evidence on which this translation is based. He "has argued that the first word in compound (arsenokotes) is the subject rather than the object." Therefore, the definition thus would "be derived from the sense, 'a male lying', that is, a male having intercourse."<sup>71</sup> His arguments are not persuasive to everyone because the word arsenokoites originated in Hellenistic-Jewish circles as an attempt to translate the rabbinic quasi-legal term into understandable Greek with the deliberate intention of avoiding contact with the usual Greek terminology as object.<sup>72</sup> If the malakos points to the effeminate call-boy, then the arsenokotes in this text must be the active partner who keeps the malakos as a 'mistress' or who hires him on occasion to satisfy his sexual desires. A very specific dimension of pederasty is being denounced with these two terms and the list shares the disapproval of this form of pederasty in agreement with the entire conditions

---

<sup>69</sup> Scroggs, op. cit., p. 65.

<sup>70</sup> Furnish, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>71</sup> Scroggs, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 108.



of the Greco-Roman world.

The word unrighteousness in v. 9 does not refer directly to the unrighteousness in v. 1 but refers to the ten kinds of immoral persons mentioned in vv. 9-10 who constitute a solemn role call of the disinherited.<sup>73</sup> Paul names persons who pursue the kind of life described and who possess no desire for moral elevation from their degradation. He is not suggesting that such persons cannot repent and receive God's forgiveness. He warns that such persons will not inherit the kingdom of God because such a life is not the mark of redeemed men. Paul, like Jesus, uses the expression "inherit the kingdom of God" in his letter. Paul regards inheriting the kingdom as eschatological in the world to come.

The words Paul uses in v. 9 for homosexual behavior suggests that the picture in his mind is that the one partner has violated the male role that by nature is his and, by taking advantage of this, the other partner has also violated his proper role. Paul regards such conduct as one of the forms of unrighteousness by which 'unbelievers' are distinguished from "saints". Paul thinks of sin not only as a power that drives a wedge between God and his people but also as the condition of alienation from God that results. Even if he lists the various kinds of vices and wickedness here and elsewhere, these are not the roots and the essence of sin but symptoms of it.

---

<sup>73</sup>Brown, op. cit., p. 323.

It is not indicated that Paul is singling out any one item, let alone those which occur only once in the full form in I Corinthians 6:9-10. The words, malokos and arsenokoites, point to a very specific form of pederasty, one that verses 9 and 10 agree is evil. Female homosexuality is not included under these terms and in the generic model of pederasty, it is not mentioned, either.

Finally, Paul says in verse 11 that some of the Corinthians were the kind of persons mentioned in verses 9-10 before their conversions. But now they possess a new orientation to God, rather than the old orientation to sin. They have been washed, sanctified and justified. Therefore, Paul urges that those who possess Christ in the Spirit of God do not commit sex sins, property sins, sins that destroy the efficient functioning of the mind or sins against human beings.

#### Romans 1:26-32

When we read Romans 1:26-32, it might seem that this passage is the work of some almost hysterical moralist who was exaggerating the contemporary situation and painting it in colors of rhetorical hyperbole. It describes a situation of a degeneracy of morals almost without parallel in human history.

As noted above, one cannot be absolutely certain that the two key words in I Cor. 6:9-10 are meant as references to male homosexual behavior. The present passage is more

informative than the catalog of vices in I Corinthians. Here, for the first and only time in the whole Bible, one encounters the condemnation of female homosexuality as well as of male. The reference is as follows:

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. <sup>74</sup>

Actually, the entire context of this reference is not so much to teach Christians what things they should or should not do, but to tell them of the kinds of things that have taken place at Rome and elsewhere and to serve as a warning that such persons receive "in their own persons the due penalty in their error."

Most scholars believe that vv. 18-32 refer only to the fall of the Gentiles, while the sin of the Jews is not mentioned until Romans Chapter 2. In this passage, Paul is clearly dealing with idolatry and its punishment. He writes as a prophet, and he finds quite enough in his society to awaken the most anxious concern. Paul sees the prevalence of homosexuality as a manifestation not only of sin, but also of its punishment. Through the passage, he emphasizes that the pursuit of false objects has led to the acceptance of false values.

Paul supposes that as the individual exchanged God for false gods, God gave them up to homosexuality. In Greek, as in

---

<sup>74</sup>Romans 1:26-27

English, the verbs 'exchanged' and 'gave up' imply a conscious decision to act in one way rather than another. Paul regards "consumed with passion" as a violation of the created order; the "natural." In the New Testament, the "natural" pertains to the created world and its present general order as ordained by God, from ordinary living things to the fundamental, original condition of things. God has clearly stipulated the "Natural" of heterosexual match in His creation work: the normal, and normative, pattern of male and female becoming one flesh. In other words, God's creation ordinance between male and female intended for heterosexual relations to be "natural". In the Biblical perspective, there is no such thing as "natural homosexuality."<sup>75</sup> Horner believes that Paul finds it convenient to make use of one of the classical world's more spiritual philosophies, Stoicism, when he speaks of that which is in accordance with natural use and "that which is against nature." Horner also urges that Paul seems to be using language borrowed from the Stoic philosophers or at least shared with them. Here, Paul is using the list of unnatural vices to illustrate God's judgment upon all worshipers of false gods.<sup>76</sup>

Paul is not primarily concerned here to attack specific vices, but he uses the illustrations to point out his main theological argument. In v. 26, it is not certain

---

<sup>75</sup>Greg L. Bahnse, Homosexuality: A Biblical View (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1978), pp. 56-57.

<sup>76</sup>Horner, op. cit., p. 105.

that this clause referred to female homosexuality at all. Some pious Jews have suspected it could refer to various positions of heterosexual intercourse.<sup>77</sup> Since the verse is, without question, an attack on male homosexuality and since the two verses (26-27) are so closely linked in the Greek, it is inferred, consequently, that Paul and the tradition upon which he is dependent, contained female homosexuality in mind, too.

In verse 27, Paul describes male homosexuality in more detailed and explicit terms. As in Leviticus, Paul uses the Jewish form of expression male with male, in verse 27. It does not mean that he would have anything in mind other than pederasty. Paul also argued about nature in verse 27 because males leave the natural intercourse with females out of lust for other males. Thus, this works shame, a typical and negative Greek judgment on pederasty. Finally, Paul warns those persons of the "penalty for their error." There have been two interpretations: either Paul is hinting at some physical disease which homosexual intercourse could cause, or he counts the distortion of homosexuality itself as the punishment. Most scholars believe that the latter seems more reasonable.<sup>78</sup>

From these two verses about Paul's reflection on homosexuality, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, Paul's primary purpose in this entire section is to describe the fall of humanity into the false reality

---

<sup>77</sup>Scroggs, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 116.

in which it now lives. He wishes to show that this false reality involves a person in a false self, which is surely existing in humanity, and that leads to facing God's eschatological judgment by refusal to acknowledge God and to be disobedient to the true God. Furnish also emphasizes this point:

The verses with which we are concerned here stand in a long discussion that begins Romans 1:18 and continues through Romans 3:20. The best summary of this section of the letter is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 79

Paul briefly stressed the need of all people for the saving grace of God in Romans 1:18 to 3:20. Thus, what Paul probably has in mind is the basic sin of the refusal to acknowledge God as God. This is the root of sin and thus is the root of the life that is displeasing to God.

Secondly, Paul's attacking homosexuality depends on Hellenistic Jewish propaganda against Gentiles because he is still under the influence of the traditions of Hellenistic Jewish attack on Paganism and he expands it as a generalization of the whole world, Jew as well as Gentiles. Therefore, what Paul actually emphasizes is the truth that applies to every urbanian of the contemporary cities.<sup>80</sup>

Finally, Paul is dependent for his judgment that homosexuality is against nature ultimately on Greek, rather than Jewish, sources because in the Greco-Roman world, homosexuality

---

<sup>79</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>80</sup>John Knox, *The Epistle to the Romans, Exegesis*, George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible* p. 401.

is against nature and no one argues about that.<sup>81</sup>

The word "sin" does not happen to occur in Romans 1:18-32, nevertheless the major root of sin is being described. It is regarded as one of the consequences of denying God as the true source of life or of refusing to accept the presence of the One who has existed before human history started. Therefore, at the root of sin is the failure to acknowledge the grace and the claim under which one's whole life stands.

Paul criticizes homosexuality under the theological description of a false world with a false self, defining it as "unnatural." The false self finds homosexuality pleasing and sees nothing wrong in what is for the Apostle, a reflection of desire from opposite sex to same sex. Thus, from Paul's viewpoint, passions directed toward people of the same sex are illustrative of the falsehood. Paul might think of pederasty and perhaps the more degraded forms of it when he is attacking homosexuality. Maybe he was impressed by the lack of mutuality, the physical and emotional humiliation suffered by youths who were forced into slavery or who accepted the degradation of the prostitute. Paul has not chosen to tell us those particular conditions he had heard of that made him consider homosexuality unnatural, rather he gives an overarching abstract theological conviction.

In Romans 2:1-3:20, he argues that Jews also are sinners before God, because they presume that they are justified by doing what the law requires, but they, too,

---

<sup>81</sup>Scroggs, op. cit., pp. 115-117



are guilty of trying to live on the basis of their own vices. Therefore, he concludes that all human beings "both Jew and Greeks, are under the power of sin" according to Romans 3:9. This is the reason why God sent Christ to them for reconciliation. This is the basic gospel which Paul wanted to tell. The redemptive grace of God in Christ is the one great subject throughout his letters and fundamental theological basis of all his ethical teachings.<sup>82</sup>

### Conclusion

As many words and ideas of Paul were appropriated from Hellenism, they took surprising overtones unintended by Paul, causing serious distortion of his thought in interpreting his letters by Greeks as Greeks in those days were steeped in a dualistic world view. To understand his statements relating to homosexuality, we must be aware of the nature of the medium through which he expressed his thoughts. He believed that in Jesus, the primeval will of God concerning men's relationships with one another and with nature had been restored, and on this basis, he makes his statements about sexuality.<sup>83</sup>

Paul condemned homosexual practices. According to his two texts in I Corinthians 6:9-10 and Romans 1:26-27, he does not seem to have been preoccupied with this matter. And there is no evidence that he ever had to deal with a special

---

<sup>82</sup>Furnish, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>83</sup>Stephen Sapp, Sexuality, the Bible, and Science (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), pp. 59-61.

case of homosexual conduct because his references to it are simple and formulated under the influence of traditional ideas about homosexual causes and characteristics. Even in Romans, the most important text for this subject, Paul does not make any specific comments of ethical teaching.

The New Testament church was not very much concerned about homosexuality as a problem, at least to judge from the evidence of the texts. Both I Corinthians 6:9-10 and Romans 1:26-27 refer to homosexuality directly or indirectly from preformed traditions of Greco-Roman society. The argument from nature was the most common form of attack on pederasty in their society. The phrase "male with male" comes directly from Biblical law. Paul integrates the illustration of homosexuality into his larger theological argument in Romans 1. There is no significant advance over the established linkage in Hellenistic Judaism between idolatry and pagan vices, including pederasty.

Specifically, Paul gives less attention to female homosexuality than male. He only speaks about female homosexuality in Romans 1 with much less emphasis. This is because little was said in the Greco-Roman world about female homosexuality, and because in the Bible no penalties are attached to such female practices.<sup>84</sup> There is a negative judgment made on female as well as male homosexuality only in Romans and it could be considered a general indictment.

---

<sup>84</sup>Scroggs, op. cit., p. 121.

Paul's use of the argument from nature might mean that he would have made the same judgement about any form of homosexuality.

Although Paul did not directly teach people of his churches about the "vice" of homosexual conduct, his writings imply such conduct as "badness" under the condition of the individual's fundamental refusal to acknowledge God.

What Paul tried to impress on homosexuals was probably the wickedness in their adhering to lust and their perversion of the natural order God set up earlier in the beginning of world history. Paul would have regarded such behavior as deliberate-born of a sexual appetite. Certainly, Paul had received some moral legacy such as Gentile vice and the numerous signs of pagan idolatry from Hellenistic Judaism. In Romans I, Paul talks about the Gentiles' misunderstanding of God's intention for creation, and their value as created human beings. He looks down on their sexual behavior as one of the dreadful consequences that destroy natural order.<sup>85</sup>

When Paul referred to homosexual behavior, he was illustrating the miserable human condition where one did not know that his life was God's gift and that his existence stood always under God's wrath. Paul remarks that homosexuality is one of the various vices in the miserable human conditions. For example, in Romans 1:18-32, Paul repeats the standard

---

<sup>85</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 80.

Jewish accusations against the Gentiles to say "they are no better" and to emphasize that they need God's grace. Therefore, one must remember that Paul mentioned homosexual behavior as one of various vices that are symptomatic of sin. Throughout Romans 1:18-30, Paul pinpoints the good news about the reality of God's grace for us even if we are wrong, weak and sinners of numerous vices including homosexuality. Therefore, Romans 3:23 may be his best point throughout his teaching of homosexuality since all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup>Romans 3:23

## Chapter IV

## Women in the Church

Paul's letters, the earliest materials preserved in the New Testament, present us with a confusing picture about a woman's place in the church. Most scholars now believe the letters to Timothy, Titus, and the Ephesians were not written by Paul, but were products of a later time. This eliminates from Pauline authorship some of the more offensive passages about women in the New Testament. No one is more controversial than Paul in the struggle for woman's rightful place in the church.

Our examination of Paul's reference to marriage ( I Cor. 7 ) showed that he regards the man and woman as fully equal partners and mutually responsible for the quality of this relationship. In the ethical writings of Paul's contemporaries, it is difficult to find real parallels to this emphasis. The Biblical feminists' view is that the Bible is properly interpreted as supporting the central tenets of feminism. Yet, there is the traditionalists' view that New Testament instructions about the submission of first century wives and church women are forever the will of God and that women are to remain in a subordinate role in marriage and in the church.<sup>87</sup> In this chapter, discussion

---

<sup>87</sup>Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Women, Men and Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), pp. 90-91.

will be focused on whether Paul holds any different view from the traditionalists' about the equality of men and women within the life and ministry of the church.

With respect to his thought and attitude toward women, Paul adopted the basic view of his Judaic tradition; man's superiority to woman. Paul's argumentation favoring anti-sexualism is to be counteracted with the vilification piled up upon him for his anti-feminism as he was hesitating for a while to combine the idea of equality with his deeply ingrained Judaic upbringing of male superiority. As a matter of fact, Paul's attitude toward the two opposite opinions seems to be perplexing. He once agrees with the feminists' sexuality equality, while he does not deny the traditionalists' viewpoint that man is superior to woman. Consequently, it is not appropriate to place Paul as a feminist or an anti-feminist. Instead, we go on to see how it subdued his tradition under his Christian faith in order to make one goal of equality.

#### Women in Paul's Ministry

It goes without saying that Paul felt very great affection and appreciation for the women of his churches. These women were more active than would be expected given the Jewish and Greek customs of the day. In the personal sections of all Paul's letters, women are among those greeted or referred to warmly, sometimes in higher proportions than any men within the prevailing social patterns.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>88</sup>Sapp, op. cit., p. 73.

Most scholars believe that Paul was never married because he recommended the unmarried and the widows to remain single as he did in I Cor. 7:8. Fortunately, we can get some information about Paul's dealings with women in the church. Through his letters, in which certain women are mentioned, we can know of Paul's relationships with or attitudes toward women.

### Phoebe

Phoebe is mentioned in Romans 16:1-2:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cen'chrae, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well. 89

Whether this chapter was part of Paul's original letter to Rome, or whether it was a separate note sent originally to some other church, perhaps Ephesus, as many believe, does not affect our discussion. This is Paul's letter of recommendation for Phoebe; introducing her and asking that she be received hospitably. Cenchrae was one of the port cities of Corinth, and probably there was a Christian congregation there as well as in Corinth proper. Phoebe was an official of the congregation there. To be quite fair to Paul's Greek, one should call her a "deacon" although the R.S.V. calls her "a deaconess." "Deacon" is often used nontechnically as a reference to "one who serves"

---

<sup>89</sup>Romans 16:1-2.



in Paul's letters. Therefore, the words "servant(s)," or "minister" was translated into "deacon" in the R.S.V. when it refers to Paul and other apostles in I Corinthians 3:5, II Corinthians 3:6, and 6:4.<sup>90</sup> Pape, in her book, introduces Boldreys' idea:

Boldreys points out that this is misleading because the separate office of deaconess was not established until the fourth century, long after Phoebe's death. They claim that in the early church both men and women were deacons, and the grammar of the word does not even distinguish between 'deacon' and 'deaconess'.<sup>91</sup>

The word itself gives us the specific kind of responsibility she may have had as a deacon. The "deacon" carries the idea of "servant," and literally meant "one who leads." Therefore, Phoebe obviously was a woman of means and position and may have acted as Paul's 'patron'. Perhaps, we should think of her as a patroness or benefactress because in Romans 16:2 Paul says that she has served himself as well as others. Therefore, he was asking the church members in Rome to stand by her, to be at her disposal in any way she required, since she had stood forth as a leader or supervisor.

#### Prisca (Priscilla)

In Romans 16, Paul sends greetings to Prisca and Aquilla, who are such a perfect Biblical model of an equal

---

<sup>90</sup>Furnish, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

<sup>91</sup>Dorothy R. Pape, In Search of God's Ideal Woman (Dpwners Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), p. 210.

partner marriage that they alone ought to silence all those who contend that such marriages are unbiblical. We do not know the exact reason, but Acts 18:2 reports that this couple had resided in the capital of the Empire for a while and then moved to Corinth when the Emperor Claudius commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. When this couple is first mentioned in the Bible, the husband's name comes first, but the order is reversed on four later occasions and might indicate Prisca's greater prominence in the work.<sup>92</sup> According to Acts 18:24-26, when Priscilla and Aquila heard that Apollos, a Jewish-Christian, who had come from Alexandria to Ephesus, required help, they took him to themselves and set forth to teach him more accurately the way of God. There is no hint here or elsewhere in Acts that a woman should be subordinate, be silent, and not teach a man. Paul says not only that Prisca and Aquila risked their necks to save his life, but that "all the Gentiles' churches owe them a great debt," indicating their devotional ministry. In I Corinthians 16:19, Paul mentioned the church in their house and indicated Prisca's importance as a leader in the church.<sup>93</sup>

It is not certain in what way they had "risked their necks" for Paul. The most important thing is that Prisca and Aquila are mentioned and included without any hesitation or any distinction as Paul's fellow workers. When we see her name before her husband's, we are confronted with the

---

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>93</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 106.

remarkable picture of a woman and her husband engaged in the theological instruction of that day. Information about her from Paul's own comments and Acts leads us to the fact that women could hold positions of importance and authority in the Pauline churches.

### Chloe

The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible introduces Chloe as: "A woman whose slave or the members of whose household informed Paul - working in Ephesus - that there were partisan divisions among the Corinthian Christians."<sup>94</sup>

Obviously, she is someone known to the Corinthians as well as to Paul. In I Corinthians 1:10-11, Paul plunges with direct intensity into one of the outstanding problems connected with the Corinthian church. Chloe, obviously a convert to Christianity, was probably converted by Paul, and is the first woman to be mentioned in his correspondence. She had business connected with the seaport and through some of her agents heard of the serious divisions that were disrupting the Christian fellowship in Corinth.<sup>95</sup> The New Testament does not say much about Chloe, but she is obviously a Christian in the Corinthian church and Paul knew her well and sometimes connected with her people.

---

<sup>94</sup>George Arthur Buttrick ed., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, vol. 4, (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 562.

<sup>95</sup>John Short, I Corinthians Exposition, The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible p. 20.

### Euodia and Syntyche

Euodia and Syntyche are Christian women in Philippi whom Paul asked to be reconciled to each other in Philippians 4:2-3 :

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And I ask you also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 96

Clearly, both were influential women in the Philippian church, where women were prominent from the beginning. The cause of their disagreement, whether doctrinal or personal is not known, but obviously it had become continual.

Paul's impartial appeal for reconciliation implies that both were responsible for the estrangement. He realized that outside help was needed and asked his "true yokefellow" to assist them. Finally, Paul commended the two women as having "labored side by side in the gospel". Although we do not know anything specific about these two women, the reference to their names being "in the book of life" indicates that they may have been early leaders of the Philippian church. Through Philippians 4:2-13, one might conclude that they were important leaders of the Philippian congregation and Paul himself respected those women like other male church leaders in that time.

---

<sup>96</sup>Phil. op. cit., 4:2-3.

### Other Women

In Philemon, Paul addressed Apphis, Philemon's wife. She had a church at her house that was the only church at Colossae at that time.<sup>97</sup> According to Acts 16:12-15, Lydia was a business woman from Thyatira residing at Philippi and Paul's first convert there. In Romans 16:7, Paul salutes a woman named Junia as a kinsman and a fellow prisoner and says she is "outstanding among the apostles."

### Traditional View in Paul's Writings

Some scholars believe that Paul regards the man and woman as unequal partners and woman as subordinate partner. This idea is developed in I Corinthians 14:33b-36 :

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husband at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached. 98

In Chapter 11 through 14 of this letter, Paul is instructing the Corinthians to maintain order in their worship. Paul begins with special concern for spiritual gifts in chapter 12, continues in chapter 14 and reaches the conclusion that speaking in tongues is permissible with caution and in order.

Since Judaic traditions overwhelm any part of the society, Paul, also, thinks of woman's speaking and prophecying

---

<sup>97</sup>Pape, op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>98</sup>I Corinthians 14:33-36.

in tongues at the church as "uncommendable." Women are not supposed to give any instruction to men, and if women wish to ask questions, they should wait until they get home, and then make inquiry to their husbands.

There are three reasons some scholars believe that verses 34-35 were not written by Paul. Firstly, the passage about women in the church comes immediately in the middle of discussing the relative merits of prophecy and speaking in tongues. Secondly, the admonition that women should not talk in church and should ask their husbands to explain things at home is similar to the teaching of I Timothy 2:11-12. This admonition is very different from what Paul emphasizes as the equality of husbands and wives in marriage in I Corinthians 7. This view might have originated as the marginal notation of some later scribe, who recalling the instruction of I Timothy 2:11-12 and, finding nothing comparable in I Corinthians, added a similar provision for Christian worship.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, the expression "are not permitted" seems to look backward to a regulation previously formulated and is not Paul's way of emphasizing his ethical teaching. Therefore, many scholars such as Furnish<sup>100</sup> and Bezan<sup>101</sup> believe that v. 33-36 should not be regarded as Paul's teaching.

The third problem with this passage is textual. A number of manuscripts omit these verses. The manuscripts having vs. 34-35 after v. 40 are not as impressive as those

---

<sup>99</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., pp. 91-92.

<sup>101</sup>Craig, op. cit., p. 77.

having the verses after v. 33. But they are not insignificant. There is a great possibility that this passage was entered as a scribal gloss in the margin of an early manuscript and that it was moved into the text at two different places by subsequent scribes. Scholars believe that this could have happened so early that no manuscript survives without the gloss, but its floating nature is reflected in its appearing at two different places. The internal evidence also has many possibilities for questioning this passage as coming from Paul because it poses a number of difficult problems in the face of the Pauline position.<sup>102</sup>

Brown, in the Broadman Bible Commentary, suggests some other possibilities to explain the contradiction between I Corinthians 11:5, 13 and 14:34-35 :

It is possible that Paul changed his mind about permitting women to speak in church sometime between writing chapters 11 and 14. It is unlikely that Paul is referring in 11:5 to small groups and in vv. 34-35 to the church. But it is more likely that 11:5 and 11:13 refers to one thing, while vv. 34-35 to something different.<sup>103</sup>

Some scholars, like Moffatt, believe that these verses are what Paul says exactly to the women of the Corinthian church. It is probably that their initial enthusiasm had run to excess. As a matter of fact, so had many of the problems Paul had been discussing in I Corinthians. Specifically, the female members of the church were not likely to have escaped the impact of the prevailing emotional atmosphere. Moffatt

---

<sup>102</sup>Evelyn and Frank Staggs, Woman in the World of Jesus (Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1978), pp. 178-179.

<sup>103</sup>Brown, op. cit., p. 382.



has suggested that Paul heard about the problem of the Corinthian church later and drew his attention to the disorder contributed by the women members. Paul commanded these women to maintain a discreet silence, and if any questions came to their mind, to ask their husbands when they go home.<sup>104</sup> Some scholars also believe these verses are genuinely Paul's words because any prior statement does not rule out vv. 34-35 as a non-Pauline gloss. I believe vv. 34-35 were written by Paul and I agree with Moffatt's suggestion that Paul's attention was drawn to the women in disorder.

#### Feminist View in Paul's Writings

Many scholars believe that Paul emphasizes the equality of man and woman throughout his letters. They especially raise Galatians 3:27-28 and I Corinthians 11:2-16.

#### Galatians 3:27-28

In Gal. 3:26-27, the apostle shows that the Gentiles obtained the fruit of grace without serving the Law. Paul says that we are not under the law, not under a pedagogue, or not under restraint as we are the sons of God. After he shows how we are sons of God in Christ Jesus, he says in verses 27 and 28:

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew or Greek. There is neither slave nor free, neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ. 105

---

<sup>104</sup>Moffatt cited by Short, p. 212.

<sup>105</sup>Galatians 3:27-28

Here, Paul uses two analogies: baptism into Christ and putting on Christ. MacGorman introduced three ways to understand these concepts:

1) Blunt thinks that the first may be the primitive formula of baptism, signifying its aim. Underlying Paul's use of the second, he sees an analogy to the assumption of the toga virilis, denoting entrance upon manhood.

2) Stamm speaks of the baptismal water as being charged with the celestial substance of Christ's glorified resurrection body. . .

3) Burton describes the first as baptism with reference to Christ and the second as becoming like Christ. 106

These verses say that there is a unity and equality among those who have been baptized into Christ. It is one in which all of the old discriminations are rendered meaningless. Firstly, there is no place for racial prejudice: there is neither Jew nor Greek. Secondly, there is no place for social prejudice: there is neither slave nor free. After ethnic differences have divided men into various groups, class distinctions tend to erect additional barriers. Thirdly, there is no place for discrimination upon the basis of sex: there is neither male nor female.

In this letter, Paul rejects bondage to the Mosaic law in favor of the freedom for which Christ freed us. He scorns any compromises of this hard won freedom. Therefore, the cultic rite of circumcision is not to be imposed upon anyone who knows the liberty of living by faith out of the goodness of God. Our common humanity and oneness in Christ will not be obscured

---

<sup>106</sup>John William MacGorman, "Galatians", The Broadman Bible Commentary, vol. 11, p. 103

by such secondary distinctions as ethnic identity, legal status, or sexuality as Paul said that there is not any Jew nor Greek, nor any slave, nor free, not any male nor female; for all are one in Christ Jesus. Stagg points out:

This text does not deny the reality of sexual difference any more than it denies the reality of distinctions that are ethnic (Jew and Greek) or legal (slave and free persons). There are such distinctions, but "in Christ," these are transcended. 107

Stagg emphasizes that being male or female is not a proper agenda item in Christ although sexual difference is a fact and an important one in human existence.

Paul is probably quoting or alluding to a traditional affirmation in the church's baptismal liturgy. The same formula is reflected in I Corinthians 12:13 when Paul begins to develop his image of the church as the "body of Christ" in 12:12-17. In these verses, Paul teaches us that those who are baptized into Christ are bound together in their dependence on the same God and they all have the same care for one another. It means all the members of Christ's body are of equal value and indispensable to its existence.<sup>108</sup>

#### I Corinthians 11:2-16

In this section, Paul deals with conduct of women during worship as they pray and prophesy. It is linked closely in subject matter with the description of the service of the

---

<sup>107</sup>Stagg, op. cit., p. 163.

<sup>108</sup>Furnish, op. cit., p. 94.

of the word in chapter 14. The conflict between social customs and the Christian morale of equality is stopped as Paul, all of a sudden, picked equality over tradition. And such resolution is, once again, confirmed in Gal. 3:27, which is his conclusive comments from his conviction that in Christ "there is neither male nor female." Now, let us take a better look at the whole passage:

I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head - it is the same as if her head were shaven. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. (For man was not made from woman, but woman from man.) That is why a woman, ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels. (Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.) Judge for yourselves; is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her as a covering. If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God. 109

Paul starts with a general word of praise. He speaks as one who has transmitted the traditions to them. Here, Paul passes on what he has received from the communities before him. Women at Corinth, after having become Christians, are interested in living by the principle of freedom which might give little credence to veiling their heads at worship. In this passage, Paul explains the question "why should they

---

<sup>109</sup>I Corinthians 11:2-16.

have their heads veiled when they pray and prophesy?" Both Hebrew and Greek society had long established customs in regard to woman.

In v. 3, Paul uses the word "head" three times in order to establish an order of basic relationships. The order is God, Christ, man and woman. "Head" may mean either "superior rank", or "source of authority". Brown in the Broadman Bible Commentary states that Paul may mean that God is the ruler of Christ; Christ is the ruler of man; man is the ruler of woman.<sup>110</sup>

In the first century, men of the Jews and Gentiles attended worship with their heads uncovered. It must be kept in mind that Paul is dealing with the conduct of worship. At the same time, women were expected by Jews and Gentiles to cover their heads outside the house, and even their faces were often veiled.<sup>111</sup>

In that time, only slaves or women in mourning cut their hair. In other words, Paul suggests that the searching of women for emancipation and equality with men was, in fact, reduced status since Paul was saying that the head of woman is her husband and cutting of the hair is a violation of the divine order.

In vv. 4-5, Paul teaches that the Christian man who has no veil over his head reflects the glory of the Lord.

---

<sup>110</sup>Brown, op. cit., p. 353.

<sup>111</sup>Craig, op. cit., p. 126.

Paul wants women to be veiled all the time in a worship service. It is not clear whether Paul wants all women to be veiled, or only married women, or only the women who pray and prophesy while they are in the act of doing that. Paul warned that those women who do not wear a veil when they pray or prophesy bring dishonor upon their heads. His main reason for advocating this wearing is given us in his views:

The emphasis throughout is on the superior status of man as God's representative on earth; as such, he is invested with divine authority and dominion over the rest of created things, including woman. 112

In verse 10, Paul is saying that a woman ought to have a veil on her head. There are different interpretations of what Paul means by reference to the angels. One might be that they would be tempted by a woman who did wear the veil that signaled her husband's authority over her. Craig's interpretation states this indicates that woman shares the power of her husband. This means the angels are invoked to defend the order imposed by God in creation.<sup>113</sup>

There are some other possibilities in the interpretation of the veil in verse 10:

"Veil" may be translated literally as "authority," as the R.S.V. margin indicates. Perhaps Paul means that when the woman wears a veil, she shows that she accepts the authority of man. Another view is to translate the verse by using the word "authority" rather than veil and assume that a woman ought to have authority on her head.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>112</sup>John Short, "I Corinthians Exposition" George Arthur Buttrick, ed., The Interpreter's Bible. p. 126.

<sup>113</sup>Craig, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>114</sup>Brown, op. cit., p. 354.

Another possible interpretation is that the "veil" is accepted by the woman as a symbol of the respect that is due her as a woman of good report. It assured the status of the woman: It indicated that she was under the authority and protection of her husband or her father or a guardian, who were responsible for her, and to whom she, in turn, owed respect and submission. Only immodest women whose character and conduct could not bear examination appeared in public with their heads uncovered.

Paul commands that man should not cover his head at worship since he is the image and glory of God. This command is based on Genesis 1:27. From the story of the creation of woman in Genesis 2:22, he infers a priority of man. When applied to man, the word "image" is meant to separate man from the rest of creation and to signify his capacity for fellowship with God. Paul is certainly referring to the story in Genesis 2:18-23, where woman is created out of man to help man after man and animals have been created. Because of this, Paul says that man is both the image and glory of God and woman is the glory of man.

In verses 11-12, Paul might demonstrate that what he argues from the order of creation, that man and woman are interdependent and not independent, is clarified by the order of redemption. Originally, woman was taken from the side of man, but now it is woman who gives birth to men. In Paul's thought, God is the ultimate source of all life because creation is from God.



In verses 13-16, Paul explains reasons for the covering by turning his eyes from the scriptural interpretation to the natural teaching. Nature teaches that a male with long hair degrades himself while the female raises her pride. It is unclear, though, why he writes that the length of the hair is applied differently upon the counter-sex. In those days, many male Greeks, who had been under Stoic influences, liked to have their hair long. And, at the same time, most women had their hair covered even though they wore long hair. Taking this customary trend in mind, it is out of the question that Paul's finding of covering from natural teachings loses its appropriate explanation with what he says in v. 15.<sup>115</sup>

Paul was rationalizing the customs in which he believed, and in the end he admits it. Therefore, one can say that he did not really base his conclusions on a "natural order." He must have understood that women would contest such deductions from scripture and from nature and he came back finally on the assertion of his own authority. It is sometimes difficult to conclude whether Paul supports male and female equality or not in this most revealing and instructive passage.

Through this passage we can find some evidence in which Paul supports male and female equality. Firstly, the covering on a woman's head, which is the main debate in this section, has to be interpreted as one phenomenon inherited by the traditional condition, not as something expressed by the subordination of woman to man. Woman's covering, in those days,

---

<sup>115</sup>Craig, op. cit., p. 129.

was accepted customarily as "natural," and women complied without resistance. In Judaism, it was strictly forbidden that a woman should be in public with an uncovered head.

Pape writes:

That it was more than mere custom among the Jews, at least at some period between the first century B.C. and the sixth century A.D., is evident from a study of the Talmud. For a Jewish wife to be seen in the street with her head uncovered was grounds for divorce without even the return of the marriage settlement money, a usual provision for women in the case of divorce for less heinous reasons. 116

Paul suggests that woman should veil herself. He, however, does not put strict recommendation on woman's subordinate role.

Second, Paul establishes an order of basic relationship; God, Christ, man and woman in order to indicate the origin or source of authority. Since Paul does not regard man as the Lord of woman in v. 8, Paul means that man is the source and explanation of her being.

The Greek word "head", meaning "one who is in charge", in English may also be used as a metaphor to designate "source" or "point of origin." Paul's comment in verses 8-9 shows that woman was created from and for man as noted in Genesis 2:18-23. The Genesis story itself does not speak of woman's inferiority or subjection to man. On the contrary, it emphasizes her being "like him." In other words, Eve was created from Adam's flesh and bone in order to be his companion, because he was lonely. It is never suggested that she was created because he needed someone over whom to govern.

---

<sup>116</sup>Pape, op. cit., p. 115.

Third, the remarkable passage vv. 11-12 tells that man and woman are equal in the Lord. Paul says that man and woman are not independent of one another. Paul understands that all beings are from God, who initiates and develops the relationship of one to the other for Himself. Man and woman are created by God and owe their relationship with each other to His work, not their own. He thinks that sexuality is a gift of God, not a creation of man. Therefore, man may not be vain with regard to his sexuality and must share equal partnership with woman.

Fourth, this passage indicates that women as well as men participate in the leadership of public worship. In verses 4-5, Paul put a male and a female at an equal level. He does not argue whether a woman may pray or prophecy in public worship, but he argues only whether her head should be covered when she prays or prophecys. If one reads I Corinthians 14:34-40, he will find the contradiction between I Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:34-36. According to Moffatt, when Paul was working on I Corinthians 14:34-36, one of his friends who came from Corinth, must have drawn Paul's attention to the disorder caused by the women church members. As mentioned earlier, authorship is still disputed since the verses do not match with the spirit of the section as a whole.

#### Conclusion

A careful perusal of Paul's epistles leaves no doubt that he felt very great affection and appreciation for the women of his churches. They were more active than would be

expected given the Jewish and Greek custom of the day. And in the "personal" sections of all Paul's letters, women are among those greeted or referred to warmly, often in higher proportions than one would suppose within the prevailing social patterns.

In this section, I looked over both traditional and feministic views. Some scholars such as Mollenkott and Sapp believe that Paul's teachings about women in the church conflict. Mollenkott gives us one example:

Further indications of Paul's inner conflicts about women also exist within the book of I Corinthians. In chapter 11, as we have seen, Paul has no objection to female praying and prophecying as long as the head is covered. But just three chapters later he is saying that women may not speak at all in church services, 'for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church' (14:35). 117

Once we put I Corinthians 14:34-35 aside as non-Pauline verses, as those which have been abstracted mistakenly from different sources, we reach the conclusion of Paul's viewpoint on sexual equality.

First, there are strong affirmations of women in Paul's perspective and attitude. Stagg gives some evidence:

The fact that he can worship in public service with women, recognizing their right to pray and prophecy; his recognizing of woman's equality in conjugal and other rights; and his willingness to address women directly as responsible persons in the church are all factors on the positive side of one moving in the direction of the implementation of a revolutionary vision that 'in Christ' there is 'no male and female'. 118

---

<sup>117</sup>Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, Women, Men and the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), p. 100.

<sup>118</sup>Stagg, op. cit., 179.

Paul had positive cordial relationships with many women who were leaders in the early church. Therefore, we can say Paul does not support female subordination.

Second, in I Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul's teaching on matters pertaining to women is not incompatible with the principle he had affirmed. In this passage, he shows that women can be participants in the leadership of public worship. Here, Paul also reaffirms the feminist view and his theme is the differentiation of one sex from the other not the subordination of one sex to the other.

Third, Paul, in Gal. 3:28, brings out his main point about women in the church. Here, Paul commits himself to the fundamental principle that "there is neither male nor female" in Christ Jesus. Throughout the verse, he affirms and reaffirms his ideas for sexual equality. Woman is not independent of man nor man of woman. All things are from God. Paul expresses his opinion over natural phenomena, also. He thinks that the natural condition and distinctions are not eliminated, that their power is fading away under God's intention. In Paul's religious perspective, he analyzes not the characteristic of sex, but the worth of each individual and his or her own rights, which were granted by God, the Creator, in order to be glorified by the createes. Consequently, Paul concludes that male and female are of equal worth in the church and there is neither male nor female in Christ.

## Chapter V

## CONCLUSION

There are three areas of Paul's thought that are specially pertinent to our effort to determine the New Testament's understanding of human sexuality; marriage and divorce, homosexuality, and women in the church.

Paul's instructions were shaped to meet the situation that confronted him and his congregations in their world, and their relevance to Paul's first readers must be distinguished from their relevance to us.

Even if the realities of Christianity Paul pondered had not been changed up to his moment, marriage and divorce in the first century were different from the realities we face in the twentieth. The instructions on marriage and divorce in I Corinthians 7 still have meaning for modern Christians. Although the characteristics of "Corinthian" Christianity have appeared in one way or another throughout the history of the church, the forms they take in modern Christianity are significantly different from the conditions Paul saw in Roman Corinth. Nevertheless, Paul's instructions here can still provide help in our days if we keep these differences in mind.

In I Corinthians 7, Paul regards the husband and wife as equal partners. They are to share decision and responsibili-

ties and respect and for each other in a faithful partnership. Here, Paul is concerned for the character of the relationship between husband and wife. He emphasizes that the marriage relationship must be characterized by holiness and honor and must be centered in faithfulness and love, harmony and concordance because God calls all his people in peace and love. Paul allows varied patterns of action in chapter seven. He is keenly aware of how circumstances may vary from case to case, and he takes this into account so far as it is possible. He insists that sexual fulfillment is only meaningful when it takes place between married couples who commit themselves exclusively to each other and bind themselves together in their love and respect.

Paul's commentary about homosexuality is in I Corinthians 6:9 and Romans 1:26-27. Paul condemns homosexual practices, but he is not preoccupied with this matter and there is no evidence that he ever had to deal with a specific case of homosexual conduct. Since Paul does not give any direct teachings on the homosexual conduct to his own churches, we cannot find the biblical answers for the possible acceptance of homosexual behavior, which we are facing unavoidably in these days. He only assumes that an individual's fundamental refusal to acknowledge God is sin, and homosexuality is regarded as one of human being's refusals against God's order. He saw it as an expression of lust and as a perversion of the natural order. Therefore, Paul concluded that homosexuality is a symptom of sin as it goes against the sexual role which



God stipulated in the Bible at the beginning of creation.

Paul stated that every life is God's gift and that one's existence stands always under God's claim. Paul said that homosexual practice was one of numerous vices that was symptomatic of sin. In his view, the fundamental sin from which all particular evils derive is idolatry. Finally, Paul insists that all human beings are weak and sinners. Homosexuality is one example of this weakness, so they must be reconciled to God through the blood of Christ's death.

Paul's own view toward women in the church is one of anti-sexuality oriented equality. Paul was committed to the fundamental principle that "there is neither male nor female in Christ." This principle was based on his conviction that the believer's common dependence upon God's grace and their joint incorporation into Christ brought them into a new relationship with one another. There is ample evidence that the principle was affirmed by Paul not only in words but also in practice. Paul associates with many women in his ministry and in his churches. Certainly, on the topic of women in the church, his principle was "there is neither male nor female."

If we try seriously to understand and assess what Paul said about the issues of his own day, how his teaching applied in the situations to which it was addressed, and how it functioned within his theological perspective, it then can take on new meaning for us in our day. It is impossible to use the conclusions just drawn from Paul's writings to solve the current ethical questions concerning homosexuality

because social norms are apt to change from time to time and place to place. Accordingly, Paul's instructions were shaped to meet the situation that confronted him and his congregations in their time and their relevance for Paul's first readers must be distinguished from their relevance for us. Gathering all of Paul's ideas, recommendations and suggestions, we conclude his total writings in one sentence: One must conduct oneself for God's glorification in faith being enacted in love, and one must love seeking to effect its transforming power in the midst of this morally confused age.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

=====

- Ashbrook, James B. and Walaskay, Paul W. Jr., Christianity for Pious Skeptics. Nashville: Abingdon, 1977.
- Bacon, Benjamin Wisner, The Story of St. Paul. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904.
- Bahnsen, Greg L., Homosexuality, a Biblical View. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979.
- Bailey, Berrick Sherwin, Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition, Connecticut: Hamden, 1975.
- Barclay, William. "Corinth" The Encyclopedia Americana. Vol. 7, Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1980.
- Barrett, Charles K., Commentary on the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.
- Barth, Karl. "Church Dogmatics", Homosexuality and Ethics, ed. Edward Batehelor, Jr., New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.
- Bornkamm, Gunther, Paul, Paulus, New York: Harper and Row, 1976.
- Boswell, John Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Bowman, Henry A., A Christian Interpretation of Marriage. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976.
- Brightman as quoted by Robert W. Blaney Biomedical Ethics Syllabus. 1983.
- Brown, Raymond Bryan, The Broadman Bible Commentary. Vol. 10, Tennessee: Nashville, 1970.
- Buttrick, George Arthur, ed., The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible. Vol. 4, New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

- Craig, Clarence Tucker, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Exegesis," George Arthur Buttrick, ed., The Interpreter's Bible. New York: Abingdon Press, 1953.
- Deismann, Adolf, Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of Greco-Roman World. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927.
- Feine, Paul and Kummel, Werner George, Introduction to the New Testament. Abingdon Press, 1966.
- Furnish, Victor Paul, Theology and Ethics in Paul. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968.
- Grundel, Johannes. "Sex", Encyclopedia of Theology, ed. Karl Rahner. New York: The seabury Press, 1975.
- Hastings, James, ed. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. Vol. 11, New York, 1921.
- Horner, Tom, Jonathan loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978.
- Keck, Leander E., Paul and His Letters. Philadelphia Press, 1979.
- Knox, John, "The Epistle to the Romans, Exegesis," George Arthur Buttrick, ed. The Interpreter's Bible. New York: Abingdon Press, 1953.
- May, Herbert G. and Metzger, Bruce M., ed. The New Oxford Annotated Bible. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973.
- Mace, David R., Christian Response to the Sexual Revolution. Tennessee: Nashville, 1970.
- Marxsen Willi, Introduction to the New Testament, Trans. by Geoffrey Buswell. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968.
- McGorman, John William, The Broadman Bible Commentary. Galatians Vol. 11, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1970.

- McNeill, John J., S.J., The Church and the Homosexual.  
Kansas City: Sheed Andrews and McNeill, 1976.
- Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey, Women, Men and the Bible. Nashville:  
Abingdon, 1977.
- Nock, Arther Darby, St. Paul. New York: Harper and Row, 1963.
- Orr, William F. and Walther, James Arthur, The Anchor Bible:  
I Corinthians. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976.
- Pape, Dorthy R., In Search of God's Ideal Woman. Downers Grove,  
Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1976.
- Peabody, Francis Greenwood, The Apostle Paul and the Modern  
World. New York: The MacMillan Company, 1923.
- Perrin, Norman, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus. New York:  
Harper and Row, 1967.
- Perrin, Norman, The New Testament; An Introduction. New York:  
Harcourt Brace Jovaoviah, 1974.
- Sapp, Stephen, Sexuality, the Bible, and Sciences. Philadelphia:  
Fortress Press, 1983.
- Scanzoni, L. and Virginia Mollenkott, Is the Homosexual My  
Neighbor? New York: Harper and Row, 1978.
- Secor, Neale A. "A Brief for a New Homosexual Ethics",  
Homosexuality and Ethics, ed. Edward Batehelor, Jr.,  
New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.
- Scroggs, Robin, The New Testament and Homosexuality. Philadelphia:  
Fortress Press, 1983.
- Stagg, Evelyn and Frank, Woman in the World of Jesus.  
Philadelphia: The Westminster, 1978.

Tenney, Merrill C., ed. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of Bible. Vol. 5, Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1975.

Tremmel, William Calloley, The Twenty Seven Books That Changed the World, New York: C.B.S. College Publishing, 1981.

Wood, Robert W. Christ and the Homosexual as cited by Charles E. Curran. "Homosexuality and Moral Theology: Methodological and Substantive Considerations" Homosexuality and Ethics. ed. Edward Batehelor, Jr., New York: Pilgrim Press, 1980.