

BIBLICAL FEMINISM AND THE NEW TESTAMENT: A REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

by Jerry R. Flora

"The woman question" surfaced among evangelical Christians in the U.S. during the 1970s. Prompted to some extent by the women's liberation movement, some leaders in the conservative wing of Protestantism took a new look at biblical teaching on the roles of men and women in home, church, and society. Questions of singleness, marriage, divorce, remarriage, headship, submission, and ordination would not be silenced. As usual, the situation tended to polarize, this time between the traditionalists and the feminists.

Traditionalists tend to emphasize the differences between male and female in creation, in the church, and at home, with the female assuming a place of submission marked chiefly by motherhood at home, missionary service, music, and children in the church, and with male leadership in both places. Feminists, on the other hand, are by definition those who support "woman's claims to be given rights, opportunities, and treatment equal to those of men" (*Oxford American Dictionary*). In the church some have divided the latter group into Christian feminists and biblical feminists. The former are those having any allegiance to the Christian faith that influences their thinking (e.g., Mary Daly, Rosemary Ruether, Dorothee Soelle), while biblical feminists are those who consider the Christian Scriptures to be the divinely inspired Word of God having final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

During the 1970s biblical feminists published three nationally noted books advancing their views: *All We're Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women's Liberation*, by Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty (Word Books, 1974, 255 pp.); *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View*, by Paul K. Jewett (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975, 200 pp.); and *Women, Men, and the Bible*, by Virginia Ramey Mollenkott (Abingdon Press, 1977, 142 pp.).

Several other volumes were published during the 1970s which interacted directly or indirectly with the biblical feminists. The purpose of this article is to offer a review of four exegetically informed works together with some methodological considerations.

GEORGE W. KNIGHT III (1977)

The New Testament Teaching on the Role Relationship of Men and Women (Baker Book House, 1977, 76 pp.) is a brief, tightly

written exegetical treatment growing out of several items composed between 1972 and 1977. The author, George W. Knight III, professor of New Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary, holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Westminster Theological Seminary and earned the doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam. His work shows the careful, detailed approach for which Reformed scholarship is justly famous.

Sandwiched between introductory and concluding chapters are the book's two central sections: "Submission and Headship in Marriage" (10 pages) and "Submission and Headship in the Church" (24 pages). In both cases the discussion follows the same pattern: an exposition of the biblical evidence, then answers to objections. "This book focuses on the question of admitting women to the teaching and ruling offices and functions of the church. This is the issue most debated and discussed" (pp. 10-11). Knight's work was written in large measure as an answer to the previously published books by Scanzoni and Hardesty (1974) and Jewett (1975), and the heart of his interaction with them comes in the second half of each major chapter, "Objections Answered."

Knight begins his discussion of submission and headship in marriage by treating briefly (in two pages) the biblical evidence: both Paul and Peter join together equality as image-bearers and difference (masculinity-femininity) "as equally the result of God's creative activity and order . . ." (p. 20). This leads immediately to the question of whether submission of wives to husbands does not also sanction slavery and require government by kings. Knight responds that Scripture regulates the practice of slavery but does not mandate it. Paul's approach to it was similar to Jesus' view of divorce: both may exist because of the effects of sin, but neither is the express will of God. Nor does Scripture demand government by monarchs; rather, Christians are to submit to duly constituted human authorities so long as their directives do not contravene the divine will. Similarly, husbands are to be the heads of their marriages and wives are to submit to this authority because it is the creation ordinance of God.

Knight prefaces his discussion of submission and headship in the church by noting that attention must be concentrated on explicit, didactic passages in order to prevent erroneous conclusions being inferred from incidental references. He treats in order "I Timothy 2:11-15, which most clearly gives both the apostle Paul's verdict and his reason for that verdict; I Corinthians 11:1-16, which explains the significance of this reason; and I Corinthians 14:33b-38, which presents the apostle's command and his reason for it in more general terms" (p. 29).

Knight concludes from his survey of these passages that Paul laid down "a universally normative regulation which prohibits

women from ruling and teaching men in the church," although all other avenues of ministry and service are open to them. This judgment is analogous to the creation order with its correlatives of headship and subjection. "To dismiss the role relationship in the church's teaching-ruling function as simply cultural would carry with it the dismissal of the analogous role relationship in marriage as also cultural, because they are based on the same principle. . . . Likewise, if one preserves the role relationship in marriage because of the creation order, one also must preserve the role relationship in the church's teaching-ruling function, because it is based on that same creation order" (p. 39).

Knight answers several objections against this line of interpretation, especially questions of whether Paul's exegesis of Gen. 2:18-25 may not be incorrect, whether this exegesis does not contradict I Cor. 11:5 on women praying and prophesying in the church, and whether this approach does not have the effect of excluding women's gifts and service from the people of God. To all of these questions Knight answers no, then turns to brief considerations of Phoebe (Rom. 16:1-2) and Prisca (Priscilla). Both of these women served the church in helping capacities, but neither exercised a public ministry of teaching or ruling.

Following the concluding chapter the book reprints in an appendix a statement on "Office in the New Testament (and the Ministry of Women)" from the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, a paper presented in 1972 by the Advisory Committee of which Dr. Knight was Reporter. The work includes two indices that are detailed for so brief a book.

Knight's work is admirable for its attempt to be objective in speaking to the issues, and at no point does he engage in criticism of those who adopt a different interpretation from his. It also is to be admired for attempting to let Scripture be the deciding forum, not contemporary sociology, psychology, or political theory. And it is to be admired for attempting to give full weight to what appear to be the most explicit scriptural passages on the subjects at hand.

But therein lies the problem with his book. It seems to operate in a vacuum almost entirely Pauline in nature. No attention is given at any point to the world of the first century and how the Pauline directives would impact on its citizens. No attention is given to whether Jesus ever did or said anything that would alter that world's situation, however indirectly. The assumption seems to be that Jesus came to reaffirm the creation orders and that Paul explicates that. As to whether the end might be better than the beginning, nothing is said. And the fact that Luke, Paul's longtime companion, presents a rather different picture of women in his Gospel and the Acts seems to escape notice.

DON WILLIAMS (1977)

Educated at Princeton University and Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, and Columbia University (Ph.D), Dr. Williams is on the faculty of Claremont (California) Men's College. Prior to that he served for eleven years on the staff of Hollywood Presbyterian Church. He produced *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church* (Regal Books, G/L Publications, 1977, 157 pp.) after writing *The Bond That Breaks: Will Homosexuality Split the Church?*

Williams' book is constructed in three parts: "A Survey of Contemporary Views," "The Pauline Epistles," and "Conclusion." He states as presuppositions his belief that the letters of Paul are inspired Scripture addressed to concrete historical situations and that, even in their problematic passages, they are consistent.

In Part I he quickly surveys several present-day approaches: *Fascinating Womanhood* (Helen Andelin), *The Total Woman* (Marabel Morgan), *The Christian Family* (Larry Christenson), *The Feminine Mystique* (Betty Friedan), *All We're Meant to Be* (Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty), and *Man as Male and Female* (Paul Jewett).

Part II is the heart of Williams' work, constituting two-thirds of the book. He describes the method to be followed: "Each of Paul's letters will be studied in its historical context with care given to all references to women whether they emerge from the Old Testament, or early church practice, Paul's personal relationships, or his theological treatments" (p. 30). This gives to his work a mass of information not usually found in such studies because there are far more allusions to women in Paul's epistles than many at first imagine. Williams' procedure is to move through the Pauline corpus in canonical order from Romans to Philemon, and he finds some reference to the feminine in every document except 2 Thessalonians.

For example, in discussing Phoebe of Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1-2) Williams notes that she is termed *diakonos*, a term Paul used also of himself and Apollos (I Cor. 3:5), of Tychicus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7), of Timothy (I Tim. 4:6), and of Jesus (Rom. 15:8). Williams infers that Phoebe undoubtedly performed ministerial functions which were shared by Paul and his male associates, and that divine favor attended her ministry for she was "a helper of many."

Again, Christian marriage is to be a partnership between equals as implied in I Cor. 7:1-5 where, especially in verse 2, the apostle employs full symmetry of grammar and content regarding husbands and wives. This makes it possible for mutual love and self-giving to be expressed in marital sexuality. Further than that, "we must assume that this primal equality will manifest itself throughout the marriage relationship. Marriage here is indeed a partnership" (p. 55).

In I Cor. 11:2-16 Paul upholds the cultural practices of veiling and of long hair as an expression of wives' dependence upon their husbands and their differences from them. Sexual differentiation in the created order ("in the flesh") is maintained alongside equality in redemption ("in the Lord"). But it is the latter which is the final, unalterable reality.

Gal. 3:28 articulates "Paul's radical step beyond the old order. Redemption does not merely restore God's intention in creation. Redemption brings into being a whole new world, a whole new order" (p. 82). The church, even though it may preserve the form of the old order to avoid misunderstanding, is to be obedient to the spirit of the new order. That is, the unity of male and female in Christ is to be both appreciated and demonstrated in the life of the church—a theme which Williams emphasizes at several places in his work (e.g., pp. 59, 66, 139).

A similar outlook is to be seen in Eph. 5:21-33 for, "while Paul maintains the traditional hierarchical structure of the submission of wives to their husbands he modifies it by mutual submission and changes the content. Christ is the standard and model. It is the love of Christ and the body of Christ which are to determine the context and quality of marriage" (p. 92). "Christian marriage is egalitarian and a partnership in that husbands and wives are to live in mutual submission to Christ and to each other. Wives express their submission by surrendering themselves to the love of Christ given them through their husbands. Husbands express their submission by loving their wives as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for her" (p. 92).

In discussing Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3), Williams observes that Paul uses the strongest possible terms of commendation. The two women had labored side by side with him (or fought beside him) "in the gospel." That is, they had shared a common task, not serving under the apostle nor behind or below him, but alongside him. In fact, it was their very position in ministry with the apostle that made them capable of destroying the unity of the Philippians. Further, Paul identified them not only with himself but also with another male, Clement, and "the rest of my fellow workers." Co-worker was a term used of Prisca in Rom. 16:3, as well as of Euodia and Syntyche here. Paul elsewhere applies the term to male associates such as Aquila, Urbanus, Timothy, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, and Epaphroditus.

Williams understands the obscure reference in I Tim. 2:15 to point to the birth of the Messiah through woman, erasing the priority of Eve in being deceived (I Tim. 2:13-14). "Thus as the Savior comes from a woman, she and all women are united corporately to Eve in redemption. Thus all women participate in bearing the Messiah" (p. 113). From this passage Williams infers that, once the

abuses addressed in the pastoral epistles had been corrected, the time would come for women to engage in the teaching task of the church. "Can she who bears the Messiah be prohibited from teaching His gospel?" (p. 114).

Part III of the book embraces the following sections: "Women's Place in God's Work," "Women's Identity" (to be found, as for men, in Christ), "Paul's Use of Women's Identity," "Women in God's Hierarchy," and "Women in Partnership" (or, better, "familyhood," both theological, marital, and ministerial). The work concludes with an eloquent plea for the church to divest itself of male presumption which discriminates against women in ministerial functions.

The strength of Williams' treatment lies in its semi-popular nature which keeps documentation to a scant minimum but nevertheless shows evidence of research in the standard exegetical literature. The study of all references to women in all the Pauline corpus must also be listed as a strength of his work. The allusions prove to be more numerous than some might suppose, certain of the more incidental ones proving to be quite important (e.g., Rom. 16:1-2; I Cor. 7:1-5; Phil. 4:2-3, as described above).

The author's decision to continue using the term "hierarchy" may prove to be a weakness in light of his strong egalitarian emphasis. The Pauline hierarchical teaching as Williams interprets it is soteriological (salvation, servanthood, mutual submission) rather than ontological. Recognition of Christ's headship and lordship are not in the created structure of things but are the result of his triumph in saving activity. Thus human obedience in submission, while appearing to retain traditional forms, actually is infused with a radically new content, the life-quality of self-giving love. All this is at times difficult to follow in the author's discussion but, as he aptly observes, "Redemption does not merely restore God's intention in creation. Redemption brings into being a whole new world, a whole new order" (p. 82). Williams is to be commended for insisting that, if this is truly the church's experience, then it must model and demonstrate this in its structures, functions, and ministries.

EVELYN AND FRANK STAGG (1978)

Dr. Frank Stagg, Senior Professor of New Testament at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary together with his wife Evelyn researched and wrote *Woman in the World of Jesus* (Westminster Press, 1978, 292 pp.). Evelyn Stagg completed three years' training in Greek and, with the exception of Hebrew, finished all course work for the Th.M. degree. Frank Stagg holds the doctorate

from Southern Baptist Seminary, has done post-doctoral study at the universities of Edinburgh, Basel, and Tübingen, and is the author of *New Testament Theology* (1962), *Polarities of Man's Existence in Biblical Perspective* (1973), and commentaries on Acts (1955) and Philipians (1971).

The book the Staggs produced is divided into three nearly equal parts: "The World into Which Jesus Came," "Jesus and Woman," and "The Early Church and Woman." Part I examines the Jewish, Greek, and Roman environments, devoting a major chapter to each. The authors are careful to show that the Jewish literary world included not only the Old Testament but also the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the writings of Philo and Josephus, and the Mishnah—all of them reflecting the roles of women.

In discussing women in the Greek world the authors describe the literature from the ninth to the fifth centuries B.C., then the Greek drama, and they conclude by surveying Greek writers from the fifth to the third centuries, especially Plato and Aristotle. Their description of the Roman world begins with the playwrights Plautus and Terence, continues through Cicero, Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, and concludes with Virgil and Ovid.

Only after devoting nearly one hundred pages to this environmental survey are the Staggs ready to turn to Part II, "Jesus and Woman." Here, contrary to the expectations of some, they do not at first examine passages that may contain Jesus' teachings about male-female relationships. Instead, the authors wisely devote a chapter to "The Manner of Jesus" in which they amass considerable material reflecting the attitude Jesus demonstrated toward women as it can be reconstructed from the Gospel narratives. "The 'criterion of discontinuity,' his striking dissimilarity to both Jewish and early Christian piety, encourages this confidence" (p. 102).

Against this detailed backdrop they are then ready to portray "The Teaching of Jesus," which they see as not directed so much at women's liberation as toward human liberation. "Personhood and faith/obedience to God are primary and sufficient" (p. 139). As a function of this, Jesus' approach to women was remarkably open, and there is no indication that he ever denigrated woman as woman. In this he was radically different from the world into which he came.

The Staggs devote a chapter to "The Risen Christ and Woman," asserting, "The most significant affirmation of woman in the New Testament may well be found in the tradition made prominent in all four Gospels that women were the ones to find the tomb of Jesus empty; that according to Mark and Luke the announcement of Jesus' resurrection was first made to women; and according to Matthew and John, Jesus actually appeared first to women (in

John to Mary Magdalene alone); and that according to all four Gospels women were commissioned to inform Peter and the other apostles as to the most fundamental tenet of the Christian faith, that Jesus is not dead but risen!" (p. 144). They observe that, while the church's public tradition as exemplified in the *kerygma* did not utilize this material, "the empty tomb tradition lives on because it was so early, so deeply embedded, and so widely known that it could not be ignored by the Gospels . . ." (p. 159).

Part III, "The Early Church and Woman," contains four chapters, the first of which concerns "Paul and Woman." Noting that the apostle was a follower of Jesus and, like all followers, fell short of the one being followed, the authors at the outset ask for Paul to be judged by the direction in which he was moving, not solely by the point of his progress. They consider in turn Paul's vision as set out in Gal. 3:28; his implementation of that vision in I Thes., I Cor., Rom., and Phil.; and his treatment of ordination and ministry, the basic criterion for which is possessing the requisite spiritual gifts.

Paul apparently was at the center of the early church's struggle between freedom and order, legalism and license. At times he "did not have the luxury of setting forth an ideal; he was hard pressed to bring some order out of near chaos" (pp. 168f.). To meet this need the church developed the *Haustafeln*, the tables of household duties reflected in the epistles beginning about A.D. 60. The Staggs turn to this subject in their chapter "The Domestic Code and Woman." Here they examine Col. 3:18-4:1; Eph. 5:22-6:9; I Pet. 2:13-3:7; Tit. 2:1-10; and I Tim. in light of the threat of moral permissiveness and the danger to structures within and outside the church.

The closing chapters, "Woman in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts" and "Woman in the Johannine Writings," attempt to explore the theology of the Evangelists writing in the period following the struggles of Paul. The authors state, ". . . a major interest for us is the greater freedom accorded woman in the Gospels than in the epistles. The Gospels know nothing of the rules and regulations imposed upon women in I Corinthians and in the letters containing the Domestic Code. If the Gospels were written after the epistles, the pattern calls for explanation" (p. 205). The Staggs are persuaded that the Gospels accurately reflect Jesus' free, open attitude toward women and that the Gospel writers agreed with this. While Acts appears to be more male-oriented than the Gospel according to Luke, there is no denigration of woman in it. They conclude that the Evangelists seem to be comfortable with Jesus' perspective and that either our dating of the N.T. documents is out of order or Acts reveals that the Pauline restrictions were not applied in all the churches outside his mission field. The picture holds true also for

the Johannine corpus, although the male orientation in language continues to be strong there.

This carefully researched work demonstrates the kind of patient, detailed study that must go into any proper resolution of today's issues in light of Scripture. Especially commendable is the determination to present all evidence, secular or scriptural, in what may be its chronological order, thus avoiding the trap of placing favorite texts first or last for emphasis. The Staggs have taken pains to set out the context in which first Jesus and then his early followers worked. Some readers may become impatient with what appears to be overlapping in the book's organization (e.g., some passages are discussed under both "The Manner of Jesus" and "Woman in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts"), but the proper separation between Jesus and the Evangelists remains one of the most delicate questions in N.T. studies. Some readers may demur at the authors' acceptance of the documentary hypothesis of Pentateuchal sources (Gen. 1, 2), but much of their argument could proceed from the text without the theory.

The Staggs also have tried to explain the varying voices heard within the N.T. documents, concluding that the gospel of grace proved to be too much for some persons in certain situations. Some readers, however, may disagree with their description of the diversity, especially when they conclude that Paul, unable to implement the vision of freedom that he inherited from his Lord, chose to impose restrictions in some congregations in order to preserve order. His restrictions, possibly meant to be only temporary and local, came to be the rule in the developing church beyond the N.T., which in turn led to the male-dominated community it has been until today. Although the authors do not interact at all with the biblical feminists (none of whom are cited in the volume), the patient, scholarly research demonstrated here can be a model in future discussions.

SUSAN T. FOH (1979)

Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1979, 270 pp.) comes from the pen of Susan T. Foh, who was educated at Wellesley College (B.A.) and Westminster Theological Seminary (M.A.R.). A housewife and shopkeeper, Foh has published several scholarly articles prior to release of this volume. Her work shows admirable qualities of attempting to build a biblical theology through use of primary and secondary literatures, including employment of the ancient languages.

The book contains ten chapters, several of them more extensive than the remainder. Chapters I and II deal with the nature, au-

thority, and interpretation of Scripture, especially in light of the approach of the biblical feminists. The major discussion is to be found in Chapters III, IV, and VIII, dealing with "What the Old Testament Says about Women," "What the New Testament Says about Women," and "Marriage: Submission and Love." In her extensive discussion of woman in the O.T. Foh concludes that men and women are equally in the image of God by creation (Gen. 1) but that the male's temporal priority in Gen. 2 signals his functional authority over his wife in marriage. The woman is a helper not inferior to the man, but corresponding to him in dignity and status. Thus, throughout the O.T., mothers as well as fathers named their children and both parents were to be obeyed and honored.

When she moves to the N.T., Foh observes at the outset, "There is only one area where most students of the New Testament agree regarding women: Jesus treated women as they should be treated. . . . There is no doubt that Jesus' treatment of women was a radical break with the status quo" (p. 90). She concludes from Jesus' behavior toward women that he desired them to learn from him and expected them to witness to him.

The form this would take was spelled out in the early church by Paul. His specific directions and their theological foundation are the key to understanding the historical descriptions found in the Gospels and the Acts. Foh notes, however, "This key does not eliminate all problems. Almost every passage that directly addresses women has a cryptic reference (such as 'because of the angels' in I Cor. 11:10) or technical ambiguities (such as the referent of women in I Tim. 3:11). Another problem is alleged contradictions among these passages (I Cor. 11:5, 13 versus I Cor. 14:34-35; Gal. 3:28 versus I Tim. 2:11-15)" (p. 98).

She proceeds to study Paul's commands to women, devoting major attention to I Cor. 11:2-16 (17 pages), I Cor. 14:34-35 (5 pages), I Tim. 2:8-15 (7 pages), "Marriage" (i.e., Eph. 5:21-33, 11 pages), and Gal. 3:28 (3 pages). Her conclusion is that three biblical principles are established in Gen. 1-2, undergirded by O.T. legislation, assumed by Jesus, and explained by Paul: (1) Men and women are equally in the image of God (ontological equality). (2) Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands, and women are not to teach or exercise authority over men in the church (economic or functional subordination). These two principles, one of the antinomies of Scripture, are held together and the tension between them eased by a third principle: (3) Husband and wife are one flesh, and believers are one body in Christ. This union in church and home is founded upon agape-love.

In the second half of her book Foh seems to work out some of the unanswered questions that have arisen and develops some implica-

tions of her interpretation. She argues, for example, that God is neither male nor female but God-language is masculine because it points ultimately to Jesus Christ. Also, "It is the husband's headship and the wife's submission that makes it necessary to address God as Father, not Mother" (p. 153). "God created the man first and intended the man to be the head of his wife and men to be rulers of the church; these two facts are coordinated" (p. 171). The functional distinction between husband and wife in marriage may be intended to reflect the relationship that God has with his people, a sacredly intimate union marked by submission on one side and self-giving love on the other (pp. 178f.).

But Foh's understanding of how this works holds a few surprises for those who think she is nothing more than a typical traditionalist. In her third lengthy chapter (VI. "Marriage: Submission and Love," 41 pages) she not only continues her dialogue with the biblical feminists but also reveals her disagreement with certain ideas of such well-known traditionalists as Larry Christenson, Elizabeth Elliott, and Marabel Morgan. Marriage as Foh sees it is neither dictatorship nor democracy but a one-flesh relationship modeled on that between Christ and his church. In this union submission and obedience are not identical; the former is "an attitude, a quiet and gentle spirit" expected of the wife. "If a wife must disobey her husband for Christ's sake, she can do it with submission" (p. 185).

Neither are submission and love identical, for the latter is the functional activity of the husband. Agape-love is commanded and therefore it is an activity subject to the will. A husband is to love his wife not because he is head of the wife but because the two are one flesh. Both partners have equal access to God so that the husband is not his wife's priest. If a man or woman is unwilling to enter such a relationship, says Foh, let him or her remain unmarried, singly devoted to the Lord. This is a special gift. "The single person is not to be pitied but respected. To be single is best. And it is time the church realized this fact in word and deed" (p. 220).

In a final chapter Foh discusses "Women and the Church." The major question, as she sees it, is not whether to ordain women; rather, "What ordination means is a more basic question. The biblical picture is not well-defined" (p. 232). Ordination conveys neither grace nor authority but only recognizes the gifts that God has bestowed for ministry. Foh asserts that there is only one valid reason against women's ordination: Scripture forbids it (I Tim. 2:12). Women in the church are not to teach men or rule over them because this violates the creation order (Gen. 2). The diaconal ministry, in her opinion, does not involve either teaching or ruling and therefore women may be ordained as deacons (contra Knight). Similar reasoning opens to them all kinds of administrative posi-

tions but closes the door to being evangelists. "The church not only wastes the gifts of women; it wastes the gifts of the laity as a whole, and it often misuses the gifts of the clergy" (p. 258).

Foh's work is a commendable piece of exegesis, at times discursive in manner, but always well informed and closely reasoned. The volume might be improved by giving more attention to organization, tightening up the writing style, and including an index (a serious loss in a work of this size and detail). It is indeed "A Response to Biblical Feminism," but it is not a rehash of the traditionalist position. One can get the impression at points that Foh could wish the feminist case to be correct, but Scripture and that alone compels her to the stance she has adopted, within which she finds more freedom than many have allowed.

Her exegesis is valuable, but a work entitled *Women and the Word of God* should give more than passing attention to the mention of women outside of legislative passages. For example, in her treatment of women in the early church, there is very slim discussion of references to women apart from the commands given about their conduct. There is no substantive discussion of Jesus' handling of the divorce question and what that might imply or of Paul's discussion in I Cor. 7—in both of which considerable mutuality lies unexpressed in so many words. Foh falls into the same pit as the feminists with whom she disagrees: "They designate certain passages to be the norm by which other passages are to be judged . . ." (p. 27). Her emphasis on equality before God is to be applauded, but the pervasive subordinationism based on Gen. 2 is in danger of overpowering it. That is, because so much attention is given to certain scriptural passages, the antinomy which she claims to find in Scripture becomes lopsided and is no longer an antinomy.

SOME METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The question of roles and relationships as set out in Scripture is a highly complex one. Simple proof-texting at any point in the spectrum of opinion will no longer suffice; a larger rationale is called for. Susan Foh's use of the categories antinomy and tension is helpful, for it reminds us that here (as in other controverted territories) the exegete is sometimes faced with a both-and rather than an either-or. Radical positions at either extreme insist on a dichotomous approach while the broader vision of those in the middle may recognize the need for a both-and but not be able to articulate that position so clearly. Several elements in the present picture may be briefly delineated.

(1) *Gen. 1 and 2*. The two creation narratives are not in competition with each other but are complementary. It may be that, as

they appear in the text, the first is intended to set out the main theme (equality or mutuality) while the second describes more prosaic details. The heavy use of the latter by Paul in his "letters to young [and troubled] churches" must not obscure the fact that, according to the Gospel accounts, Jesus based his concept of marriage on Gen. 1, adding only the final comment from Gen. 2:24 (Mk. 10:2-12 and parallels). It is easy to see how feminists emphasize Gen. 1 while traditionalists stress Gen. 2.

(2) *Creation and redemption.* A related question is whether the purpose of redemption is to restore the Edenic situation or to offer something beyond. In other words, is Gen. 1-2 meant to be the first word in the story or the final word? It is reported that Jesus said, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Lk. 20:34-36). If Christians are to some extent participating in the age to come even now because of Jesus' triumph in redemption, what does that mean for the standards of their continuing life in this age?

(3) *Jesus and Paul.* The agent of this redemption was Jesus the Galilean Jew who, just because he was a Galilean, was theologically suspect in certain powerful Jerusalem circles. And, as is frequently noted in the literature on the question, Jesus' openness toward members of the opposite sex was without parallel or antecedent in Judaism. As Foh aptly remarks, he knew how to treat a lady. It is no wonder that the feminist position finds in this "layman" its chief advocate and defender. Paul, on the other hand, while affirming women at various points in his correspondence, also laid down strictures on their behavior and function in the first-century *ekklesiai*. Because his instructions were specific it is easy to focus on them, virtually ignoring whatever Jesus may have said or done about the question. While personalities and situations reveal diversity, we must assume that those who formed the N.T. canon saw unity between the apostle and the one whom he called Lord. It will not do to set one against the other or to elevate the servant over his master.

(4) *Direction and indirection.* Part of the apparent difference between Jesus and Paul may be attributed to their respective methods of teaching, as much as they can be reconstructed from the available data. It appears that Jesus taught at times by indirection. He created parables which demanded a response from his hearers. Or he conducted himself in a manner unusual for his time and place, raising questions in the minds of those who observed him; afterward he engaged in verbal instruction, thus employing an approach that was a sophisticated show-and-tell method. Paul,

on the other hand, was primarily a church planter and mission pastor. His manner was often direct, looking for an opening in which to insert his gospel wedge. His correspondence was weighty and persuasive, though at times hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:15-16), but his personal bearing was not always what his readers expected (2 Cor. 10:9-10). It is easy to fasten on his direct statements about the conduct of women in his first-century mission congregations. It is more difficult to infer what Jesus' intentions for women were, although it is, if anything, even more important to try. In the final analysis, Jesus' indirection and Paul's directions ought to come out at the same place if Scripture possesses an underlying unified biblical theology.

(5) *Ontology and economy.* In all of this it is frequently claimed that men and women are ontologically equal but functionally distinct beyond reproduction. Appeal is sometimes made to the analogy with the holy trinity in which there are three who are equal in being and nature but function differently from one another in the economy of redemption. This is especially true of the second person of the godhead who for us and for our salvation became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and was subject both to his earthly parents and to the heavenly Father. How are the mutual dignity, voluntary submission, and self-giving love expected of humans to be related to the persons and working of the divine trinity as revealed in Scripture? None of the works reviewed here addresses this area in sufficient depth, and until this is adequately done the large differences in interpreting the biblical materials will continue. We need a full-scale biblical theology of human personhood as created, redeemed, and related.