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Women and the Church

A considerable section of this month's issue is devoted to the rôle of women in the Church.

This should surprise no one since women who, like the poor, have always been and will always be with us have in recent times become News in a very big way. They form, in our day, a topic of such actuality that a journal like ours can hardly afford to ignore them.

Figuring prominently among the new demands being made by enlightened women of our time is the demand for meaningful participation in the life of the Church. Churchwomen are becoming increasingly restive and this restiveness is basically caused by the realisation that, in spite of their numerical superiority, they have in the past been fobbed off with the shortest end of the stick: the rôle of women in the Church has been just as circumscribed and limited as in secular society.

Males and especially male clergy have up to the present dominated not only the life but in fact the

very thinking of the Church. Men have been granted the freedom to be other than sexual beings whereas women have been identified by their sexuality in the first place.

This bisexual view of humanity which has held sway in the Church for so long is now being determinedly challenged and it is already becoming obvious that this challenge will ultimately entail a radical reorientation of Christian thought and practice. A whole new range of neglected human values is being discovered, as it were for the first time, and the impact of this discovery upon the very life of the Church could well prove to be nothing less than revolutionary.

We have invited a number of women to contribute their thoughts on this subject to this issue. For we, too, believe that the time has come for the Church to pay more than lip service to the Biblical statement of principle that for us who are the children of God by faith in Christ there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

Nog eens: Godsdienst en Politiek

BY ETLIKE GELEENTHEDE is dit ons reeds verwyt dat ons in ons artikels en redaksionele kommentaar te veel klem laat val op die politiek, en vermoedelik dan te min op die stigtelik godsdienstige.

Ons redaksionele beleid is egter nog deurgaans gevestig op die oortuiging dat juis die ware godsdienst ons dwing om kennis te neem van die politiek: dat die navolging van Christus ook, en dikwels by uitstek, 'n ernstige en onontwykbare politieke verantwoordelikheid behels.

By nadere ondersoek blyk dit gewoonlik dat diegene wat so bedag is daarop om tog die godsdienst ten alle koste te vrywaar teen die „besmetting” van die politiek, òf heeltemal onbybels te werk gaan in hul wêreldvreemde benadering tot die godsdienst òf 'n

heimlike vrees koester dat hul eie politieke beskouing nie die toets van 'n werklik deeglike ondersoek in die lig van die bybelse moraliteit sal deurstaan nie.

Godsdienst is, volgens die opdrag van Christus self, ook naastedienst, en die ware politiek gaan wesenlik om naastedienst. Dáárom durf geen Christen hom die luukse veroorloof om hom met skoongewaste Pilatushande te distansieer van die politiek nie. Dáárom ook bied ons geen verskoning aan vir die plasing van prof. A.M. Hugo se kwellende dog uiters stimulerende artikel oor die Christelike geloof en die politiek in hierdie uitgawe nie. Dit verdien om deur elke, veral stemgeregtigde, Christen in hierdie land met ernstige aandag gelees en oorpeins te word.

Black Theology

After centuries of subservience to the white (technically superior) man, the black man has experienced psychological, spiritual, economic and cultural deprivation. He experiences himself as inferior and his dignity - discovered over-against the white man (he is a non-white) - is impaired.

The Movement of Black Power, originated in the U.S.A. is a move by blacks to discover themselves. Separatism is seen as a temporary necessity to develop a power equal to the whites - economic power, cultural power, spiritual power - so that the hand of

friendship may be received and extended from a position of parity.

Black Theology is seen as the theological area of liberation (from oppression, and to dignity) that has its counterpart in the cultural, economic and political areas.

In our Letters column specific reference is made to this subject in a way that will make many of our readers pause for thought. We ourselves shall undoubtedly have to return to this subject again and again in future issues.

JESUS WAS A FEMINIST

Leonard Swidler

Definition of terms; By *Jesus* is meant the historical person who lived in Palestine two thousand years ago, whom Christians traditionally acknowledge as Lord and Saviour, and whom they should "imitate" as much as possible. By a *feminist* is meant a person who is in favour of, and who promotes the equality of women with men, a person who advocates and practices treating women primarily as human persons (as men are so treated) and willingly contravenes social customs in so acting.

To prove the thesis it must be demonstrated that, so far as we can tell, Jesus neither said nor did anything which would indicate that he advocated treating women as intrinsically inferior to men, but that on the contrary he said and did things which indicated that he thought of women as the equals of men, and that in the process he willingly violated pertinent social mores.

The negative portion of the argument can be documented quite simply by reading through the four gospels. Nowhere does Jesus treat women as "inferior beings". In fact, Jesus clearly felt especially sent to the typical classes of "inferior beings", such as the poor, the lame, the sinner - and women - to call them all to the freedom and equality of the Kingdom of God. But there are two factors which raise this negative result exponentially in its significance: the status of women in Palestine at the time of Jesus, and the nature of the gospels. Both need to be recalled here in some detail, particularly the former.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN PALESTINE

The status of women in Palestine during the time of Jesus was very decidedly that of an inferior. Despite the fact that there were several heroines recorded in the Scriptures, according to most rabbinic customs of Jesus' time - and long after - women were not allowed to study the Scriptures (Torah). One first-century rabbi, Eliezer, put the point sharply: "Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman ... Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her lasciviousness".

In the vitally religious area of prayer women were so little thought of as not to be given obligations of the same seriousness as men. For example, women, along with children and slaves, were not obliged to recite the *Schema*, the morning prayer, nor prayers at meals. In fact, the Talmud states: "Let a curse come upon the man who (must needs have) his wife or children say grace for him". Moreover, in the daily prayers of Jews there was a threefold thanksgiving:

"Praised be God that he has not created me a gentile; praised be God that he has not created me a woman; praised be God that he has not created me an ignorant man". (It was obviously a version of this rabbinic prayer that Paul controverted in his letter to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus").

Besides the disabilities women suffered in the areas of prayer and worship there were many others in the private and public forums of society. As one Scripture scholar, Peter Ketter, noted: "A rabbi regarded it as beneath his dignity, as indeed positively disreputable, to speak to a woman in public. The 'Proverbs of the Fathers' contain the injunction: 'Speak not much with a woman'. Since a man's own wife is meant here, how much more does not this apply to the wife of another? The wise men say: 'Who speaks much with a woman draws down misfortune on himself, neglects the words of the law, and finally earns hell ...' If it were merely the too free intercourse of the sexes which was being warned against, this would signify nothing derogatory to woman. But since the rabbi may not speak even to his own wife, daughter or sister in the street, then only male arrogance can be the motive. Intercourse with low or uneducated company is warned against in exactly the same terms. One is not so much as to greet a woman". In addition, save in the rarest instances, women were not allowed to bear witness in a court of law. Some Jewish thinkers, as for example, Philo, a contemporary of Jesus, thought women ought not to leave their households except to go to the synagogue (and that only at a time when most of the other people would be at home); girls ought even not cross the threshold that separated the male and female apartments of the household.

In general, the attitude toward women was epitomized in the institutions and customs surrounding marriage. For the most part the function of women was thought rather exclusively in terms of child-bearing and rearing; women were almost always under the tutelage of a man, either the father or husband, or if a widow, the dead husband's brother. Polygamy - in the sense of having several wives, but *not* in the sense of having several husbands - was legal among Jews at the time of Jesus, although probably not heavily practiced. Moreover, divorce of

a wife was very easily obtained by the husband - he merely had to give her a writ of divorce. Women in Palestine, on the other hand, were not allowed to divorce their husbands.

Rabbinic sayings about women also provide an insight into the attitude toward women: "It is well for those whose children are male, but ill for those whose children are female ... At the birth of a boy all are joyful, but at the birth of a girl all are sad ... When a boy comes into the world, peace comes into the world; when a girl comes, nothing comes ... Even the most virtuous of women is a witch ... Our teachers have said: "Four qualities are evident in women: They are greedy at their food, eager to gossip, lazy and jealous".

The condition of women in Palestinian Judaism was bleak.

THE NATURE OF THE GOSPELS

The gospels, of course, are not the straight factual reports of eye-witnesses of the events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth as one might find in the columns of the *New York Times* or the pages of a critical biography. Rather, they are four different faith statements reflecting at least four primitive Christian communities who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Lord, and Saviour of the world. They were composed from a variety of sources, written and oral, over a period of time and in response to certain needs felt in the communities and individuals at the time; consequently they are many-layered. Since the gospel writer-editors were not twentieth-century critical historians they were not particularly intent on recording *ipsissima verba Christi*, nor were they concerned to winnow out all of their own cultural biases and assumptions; indeed, it is doubtful they were particularly conscious of them.

This modern critical understanding of the gospels, of course, does not impugn the historical character of the gospels; it merely describes the type of historical documents they are so their historical significance can more accurately be evaluated. Its religious value lies in the fact that modern Christians are thereby helped to know much more precisely what Jesus meant by certain statements and actions as they are reported by the first Christian communities in the gospels. With this new knowledge of the nature of the gospels it is easier to make the vital distinction between the religious truth that is to be handed on and the time-conditioned categories and customs involved in expressing it.

When the fact that no negative attitudes by Jesus toward women are portrayed in the gospels is set side by side with the recently discerned "communal faith-statement" understanding of the nature of the gospels, the importance of the former is vastly enhanced. For whatever Jesus said or did comes to us only through lens of the first Christians. If there were no

very special religious significance in a particular concept or custom we would expect that current concept or custom to be reflected by Jesus. The fact that the overwhelmingly negative attitude toward women in Palestine did not come through the primitive Christian communal lens by itself underscores the clearly great religious importance Jesus attached to his positive attitude - his feminist attitude - toward women: feminism, that is, personalism extended to women, is a constitutive part of the Gospel, the Good News, of Jesus.

WOMEN DISCIPLES OF JESUS

One of the first things noticed in the gospels about Jesus' attitude toward women is that he taught them the Gospel, the meaning of the Scriptures, and religious truths in general. When it is recalled that in Judaism it was considered improper, and even "obscene" to teach women the Scriptures, this action of Jesus was an extraordinary, deliberate decision to break with a custom invidious to women. Moreover, women became disciples of Jesus not only in the sense of learning from him, but also in the sense of following him in his travels and ministering to him. A number of women, married and unmarried, were regular followers of Jesus. In Luke 8:1 ff. several are mentioned by name in the same sentence with the Twelve: "He made his way through towns and villages preaching and proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom of God. With him went the Twelve, as well as certain women ... who provided for them out of their own resources". (Cf. Mk. 15:40f. The Greek word translated here as "provided for" and in Mark as "ministered to" is *diekonoun*, the same basic word as "deacon"; indeed, apparently the tasks of the deacons in early Christianity were much the same as these women undertook). The significance of this phenomenon of women following Jesus about, learning from and ministering to him, can be properly appreciated when it is recalled that not only were women not to read or study the Scriptures, but in the more observant settings they were not even to leave their household, whether as a daughter, a sole wife, or a member of a harem.

WOMEN AS SEX OBJECTS

There are of course numerous occasions recorded in the gospels where women are treated by various men as second-class citizens. There are also situations where women were treated by others not at all as persons but as sex objects, and it was expected that Jesus would do the same. The expectations were disappointed. One such occasion occurred when Jesus was invited to dinner at the house of a sceptical Pharisee (Lk. 7:36 ff.) and a woman of ill repute entered and washed Jesus' feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair and anointed them. The Pharisee saw her solely as an evil sexual

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GELOOFSOORTUIGING EN POLITIEKE BESKOUIING

ANDRÉ HUGO

PROF. A.M. HUGO is hoogleraar van die Klassieke Talle aan die Universiteit Kaapstad. Hierdie artikel bestaan uit uittreksels uit 'n stuk wat oorspronklik vrygestel is in 'n ongereëde publikasie bekend as SEWENTIG, uitgegee deur 'n groepie jong studente van die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Die gedagtes hier na vore gebring het voortgevloei uit 'n vraag aan prof. Hugo i.v.m. sy politieke beskouing en hoe hy dit met sy Christelike geloofsoortuiging versoen.

Ek wil dit vooraf beklemtoon dat iemand wat die Christus bely, aan die partypolitiek moet deelneem asof hy nie daaraan deelneem nie. Hy moet dit doen onder die voortdurende besef dat hy "burger van twee ryke" is; dat sy *eintlike* burgerskap nie hier is nie, maar *daarginds*, en dat sy eerste lojaliteit aan sy Heer en Meester toekom, en nie aan 'n politieke party nie - selfs nie aan die volk en land waarin hy gebore is nie. Patriotisme, nasionalisme, politieke beginsels - dit is almal dinge wat *betreklik* word wanneer hulle gesien word *sub specie aeternitatis*, in die ewigheidsperspektief van die Koninkryk van God. Ons moet wêet dat ons hier geen blywende stad het nie.

Maar dan leef ons tog nog altyd hier in die aardse Babilon, die *civitas terrena* waarvan Augustinus met liefdevolle weemoed gepraat het; en meer bepaald in hierdie land Suid-Afrika wat ons as ons eie mag liefhê, en om Christus-wil moet liefhê; en word ons geroep om mede ook deur middel van ons politiek hierdie land, hierdie maatskappy, steeds meer en meer - al is dit ook *hoe* min - te *transformeer* na die gestalte van die Koninkryk van God. „Politiek is die kuns van die moontlike”, word gesê. Dit is waar; maar die politiek wat geen rekening hou met die goddelike eise van waarheid, liefde, geregtigheid en barmhartigheid nie, is 'n goddelose politiek. Dit is die profetiese roeping van kerk en teologie om die kieser, die politikus, die amptenaar en die minister steeds weer van hierdie grondliggende waarheid bewus te maak. Waar hierdie aksent in ons godsdienst ontbreek, het ons Christendom inderdaad, soos Prof. Verkuyl tydens sy onlangse besoek opgemerk het, 'n opium vir die volk geword. En wanneer ons teologie nie meer 'n teologie van *transformasie*, óók vir die maatskaplike en politieke lewe, is nie, dan is dit 'n sout wat laf geword het

Ons sien in Suid-Afrika 'n geweldige verskil tussen die bevoorregtes en die nie-bevoorregtes, tussen die besittende klasse en die onterfdes, tussen die kleine minderheid wat burgerskap, stemreg en status besit, en die groot meerderheid wat geen van hierdie kosbare dinge besit nie. Dit is die soort maatskappy waarteen 'n Jesaja en 'n Amos hul waarskuwende stemme laat hoor het. Flagrade ongeregthede soos

diskriminasie en eksploitasie is ingebou in die struktuur van ons maatskappy, en word stewig verskans in die wette van ons Parlement. Hier moet *radikaal* opgeruim word. Sulke dinge *kan nie* getolereer word nie Daarom ag ek dit reg en noodsaaklik dat daar gesê moet word: *geen* diskriminasie op grond van kleur, taal of geloof nie! Nie asof dit *maklik* sal wees om so 'n beginsel ten uitvoer te bring nie! Maar die pad van die geregtigheid is selde die maklikste pad; en God roep ons nie om die weg van minste weerstand te volg nie. Ons het ins ons Wetboek reeds 'n hele omvangryke corpus van wette wat heeltemal onverbloemd is in hul penalisering van mense op grond van kleur, en van kleur alléén. Werkgeleentheid, lone, pensioene, opvoeding, woonbuurte, strande, openbare fasiliteite, vermaaklikheid - daar is vrywel geen enkele faset van die lewe wat nie vir die nie-blanke wetlik gereguleer, en *diskriminerend* gereguleer is nie. Diskriminasie beteken altyd ergens *onreg*; en onreg; soos 'n kind reeds weet en ervaar, is iets wat baie diep seermaak. Dit skep wrok en haat en verbittering. Watter heil kan hieruit gebore word?

Één ding móet nou eenvoudig aanvaar word, dat Suid-Afrika 'n veelrassige land is, en dit ook altyd sal wees. Suid-Afrika is *nie* 'n witmansland nie, net so min as wat dit 'n swartmansland is. Dit is 'n land waarin alle rasse en groepe 'n *gemeenskaplike* tuiste moet vind, en waarin hulle dus ook *met mekaar sal moet klaarkom*. Wie die aandag hiervan probeer aflei deur van „afsonderlike tuislande” te praat, mislei homself en die wat hom hoor. Die paar tuislande wat geskep kan word, sal maar 'n fraksie van die bevolking kan huisves. Dit is 'n *nietigheid*. Ons het almal saam net één Tuisland, en dit is die Republiek van Suid-Afrika Die blanke kiesers van Suid-Afrika moet volhardend opgeroep word om hul nie-blanke medemense in hierdie land as hul mede-burgers te sien en te aanvaar, en aan hulle die regte te gun waarop hulle aanspraak het as gebore kinders van Suid-Afrika. Ook *dit* is stellig geen eenvoudige saak nie; maar as Christen bely ek 'n godsdienst wat *geen onderskeid* tussen mense erken nie, maar veeleer spreek van *eenheid* en *solidariteit*. Ons weet almal dat daar ook so iets soos *verskeidenheid* bestaan; maar dit is nie wat in the Bybel beklemtoon word nie.

Die Bybelse aksent val seer beslis op die *eenheid* waarin ons almal as skepsels van God en as sondaars voor Sy aangesig deel; en daarom glo ek dat ons géén reg het om in ons politiek die teenoorgestelde aksent te hanteer nie - altans nie solank ons onself as Christene wil uitgee nie. En 'n teologie wat aanhoudend hierdie om-Bybelse aksent hanteer ten einde daarmee 'n bepaalde beleid te regverdig, vergryp hom aan die duidelike boodskap van die Skrif.

Dus: universele stemreg vir almal, sonder aansien des persoons? Nee, want nie almal is bevoegd om 'n verstandige stem uit te bring nie. Universele stemreg moet daar wees, sodat elkeen, ook die eenvoudigste dagloner, kan weet en voel dat hy *deel* het aan die regering wat wette oor hom maak; maar dit sou verregaand onverantwoordelik wees om aan die onkundige dieselfde seggenskap in die politieke bestel van die land te gee as aan diegene wat wel enige (sy dit ook geringe) kennis van sake het. Die stemreg *moet* gekwalifiseer wees; maar dan nie op grond van *kleur*, soos tans die geval is nie, maar op grond van *beskawing*. Arbitrêre toetse? Ongetwyfeld; maar dit is beter as géén toetse nie. 'n Oplossing

wat die moontlikheid van ernstige spanninge in 'n veelrassige Parlement inhou? Ongetwyfeld; maar dit is beter as om spanninge te laat oplaai waarvoor géén sodanige uitlaatklep voorsien word nie. 'n Groot politieke waagstuk? Ongetwyfeld; maar vergeet nie, ons is reeds in elk geval met 'n groot waagstuk besig! Die verskil is slegs dat die waagstuk van die apartheid-beleid géén antwoord bied op die kardinale vrae i.v.m. die stedelike Bantoe en die Kleurling-bevolking nie, terwyl hiérdie waagstuk juis hiermee rekening wil hou en op die logika van ons werklike situasie gegrond is. Die vraag is nie of ons moet waag nie. Die vraag is slegs: wát sal ons waag? Watter keuse bied, menslikerwys gesproke, die beste kans op sukses?

Ek weet nie of die finale oplossing vir ons groot vraagstuk hierin geleë is nie. Wellig is daar geen finale oplossing nie, en sal ons moet leer om stapsgewys ons pad te voel. Maar één ding weet ek, en dit is dat die 'n uitgangspunt soos hierdie die enig juiste is vir 'n land soos hierdie ... Miskien kom daar eersdaags iemand na vore wat 'n beter oplossing het. Maar die kans lyk my nie groot nie.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Shirley Moore Sheila Morton

Women's liberation is 'catching on' fairly fast in South Africa - but not nearly fast enough. It is a widespread movement throughout the United States and other parts of the world, where women on the whole tend to be very much more aware of their oppression.

WOMEN IN THE HOME

One big reason for the lack of awareness in white South African women is, surely, the availability of 'cheap', unskilled labour in the domestic set-up, which will be dealt with at a later stage.

Indoctrination which boxes us quite clearly into male/female roles starts very early in life. From the moment a little girl is born, society begins to mould her, her future is clearly mapped out for her, WIFE, MOTHER, HOUSEKEEPER. She learns to make herself beautiful to catch her man, thereby entering the female competitive rat race. Any extra classes she might take are generally cooking, dress-making, etc. What happens to her in the interim between school and marriage is fundamentally of very little consequence. The capitalistic society which depends on economic incentive provides her with little. Her place in the economy is taken to be temporary, e.g. lower wages for women and little money 'wasted' on education for girls. Of course there are always the few who go against the 'norms'

of society and instead of conforming take on a 'male-type' career. But these are just the few 'oddies' who have managed to creep through the few chinks in the male armoury. These 'chinks' are limited, in the main, to some of the professions.

Moulding of our little boys also begins in early years - DON'T for God's sake, allow him to play with dolls - he's sure to become a homo-sexual. Teasetts and prams are out for boys. He's destined for bigger things - he must be the breadwinner - the professional, the he-man in our competitive capitalistic society.

We in South Africa who are aware of oppression tend to be far more aware of the need for black/white liberation rather than male/female liberation and are hardly aware of the links between. American women have stated quite categorically that until they (the women) become identified with the Blacks there shall be no liberation!!

In South Africa, if white women are becoming aware of a male oppressive society, how much more aware must the Black woman become to bring about her liberation? Far be it from us to speak of the Black woman's plight - it is part of her liberation to speak for herself.

Male domination is clearly evidenced in the marriage scene. The male partner goes out to work in an

8 - 5 job or a profession with different hours, but away from home. The female partner stays at home doing household chores and minding one or several offspring. Most S.A. women who do go out to work to supplement the monthly income still come home to put children to bed, cook dinner and at least once a week do the *family's* weekly wash, whilst hubby sits back and has a quick game of chess or reads the newspaper.

Very often, strangely enough, when the wife is confronted on women's liberation, her retort will be - "Oh, but I love my husband and I enjoy waiting on him; I simply can't bear him to soil his hands in nappy changing and besides he can't bear the smell!" Poor dear! ... who can anyway? He had a share in making that baby, didn't he? And in the case of adoption, he had freedom of choice, didn't he?

As far as waiting on your man is concerned, we simply cannot believe that a woman who has been coping with babies and household chores from early morning can think of nothing more exciting to do than spend her evenings waiting on her male counterpart, who, granted, has worked a full 8-9 hours, and is understandably tired - but here the myth collapses - because both sexes tire, and let's face it, the woman's day starts long before 8 a.m. and does not end at 5 p.m. - unless she has an unliberated Black substitute! If you love your man don't become his doormat!

Helen Robertson in an article entitled "What type of woman are you?" says: "You believe in love and believe it can only live where there is equality and self-respect; where there is no manipulation nor people-just-with-a-function (neither male nor female, slave or free). The unequal, inferior, passive and submissive person cannot love. She is using other people to give her life security and meaning, but has nothing to give in return. Passivity is the mark of the underling, the comical Negro, the well-brought-up child (almost always a girl-child), the charming, vacuous young woman who loses herself in her husband. Somehow we know that it is the civil-rights-demanding Negro who is honestly loving, the child given freedom to develop who is honestly loving; yet we suspect that the woman who will not be repressed is cold and hard and inhuman. However psychological tests of suppressed attitudes bear out the conclusion that women who accept the superiority of their man feel the greatest resentment.

"The liberated woman loves her neighbour as herself and works for the human dignity of man, woman and child. The 'feminine' woman can only serve those whom she believes to be her superiors and extends the hostile attitude she bears towards herself to her equals - her sisters.

"The most dangerous division of labour is into personal and non-personal, domestic and political, female and male. This is a necessary by-product of the industrial revolution. We must take women into

the home if we want whole people. The de-personalization of our society dates from the time when women took over all responsibility for personal relationships to free their men for building the industrial revolution. Half-people are the result - little boys growing up impersonal, like their absentee fathers, and little girls growing up narrow and irresponsible like their domesticated mothers".

It has been most revealing in talking to white women in S.A. to discover how few feel the need to be liberated. When delving a bit deeper one finds that the S.A. woman who is left fairly free to do her 'thing' simply has another woman back home, coping with children and chores, etc. NOT HUSBAND SHARING CHORES AND CHILDREN. The white woman rides the back of her black sister. Surely all the mundane household tasks plus the caring for children can be *shared* by all members of a household, including a black woman if she is being employed at a non-exploitative level and has her set hours for which she is justly paid - not to be at the beck and call of a white household 24 hours a day. All the men in the household will also need to accept this as part of their lot in living together. Sharing household chores should not be seen as doing the women a favour.

There is a raging controversy whether it is morally just or unjust to employ a black women in a domestic capacity. As we see it and in consultation with several black women involved in women's liberation, with so many black women the sole breadwinners of a large family, one can do little else but employ, particularly with the evils of influx control and job reservation. Here again politicisation is important so that all women be made aware of their rights and that a black women in a domestic situation be given complete freedom to opt out of any given situation where exploitation occurs.

* * * * *

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

The Church professes equality between all men - and this may be so - but notably this does not include women. Here one finds unbelievable prejudice against women.

Women must "remain silent in church" - Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians. Very few men "like" hearing a woman preach - if they will condescend to attend her services at all. They must "be in subjection to their husbands" - anti-feminist Paul again. They belong to Women's *Auxiliaries* (subtly excluding them from the "real" work of the Church) and, if allowed on the local Church body at all, must always occupy less important positions.

Although over 50% of churchgoers are women, ALL churches are male-dominated, i.e. have a majority of men in the ruling positions in local church bodies, as well as virtually men only in the controlling national Conference, Assembly, etc.

The so-called 'natural' place for a woman to participate in the life of the church is in the Women's Auxiliary/Fellowship/Association. Presumably this does still fill a need in some women's lives, but by no stretch of the imagination could the normal women's church meeting be called thought-provoking, politically awakening or intellectually stimulating. This is mainly because women themselves have been educated and brought up to believe that they are inferior in so many ways to men, that they themselves often believe it, and so are unable to free themselves of their oppressions.

We must break away from believing that our greatest talents necessarily lie in the directions of housework, cookery and mothercraft. Given the opportunities and education normally reserved for men, we too can make the most of our intellect, personality and ambitions, and take our rightful, active place in the community.

The Church's complete disregard for women's feelings is seen most clearly in those churches (e.g. Methodist) which cling to the system of the itinerant ministry. It is true that the man often does not have much choice in where he will work, but it is totally unheard of for the wife to be consulted in the matter. It is just accepted that she will follow her husband blindly around - remaining, of course, sweet-tempered, agreeable and compliant - fulfilling all that is expected of her in her role of minister's wife.

The fact that she may have developed close and meaningful friendships, which have to be broken each time she moves (resulting in feelings of insecurity

and deep unhappiness), or (understandably less often) a job which she finds fulfilling, is simply not taken into account.

All this is secondary to the great 'God-ordained' job which her husband is doing. It is just presumed that the wife will uncomplainingly give this all up to go where her husband is sent. All this in a church which claims to believe with Paul that in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, SLAVE nor free..."

I know many women believe that they have been "called" to be ministers' wives, but this means being an understudy to your husband for the rest of HIS ministry. Very little of yourself is left after playing out this role for a number of years and having become more and more submerged in his personality and his "thing". Few wives are able to break away from this role definition and become persons in their own right and creative in their own spheres - because of the years of prejudice, and society's and the church's expectations.

But the time is NOW, no-one else can do it for you. It is an exciting experience to discover **YOURSELF**.

* * * *

This article is not just meant as an abstract negativism against all males, but rather a genuine argument for opportunity, equality and recognition of ourselves as persons, in all spheres and no longer women in stereotyped roles.

Charter for Women

The rights enumerated in this Charter might appear to be so fundamental as not to need stating at all. All women should have them, but in South Africa the majority of women do not. In fact, African women do not enjoy any of them, because the whole policy of apartheid, which entrenches discrimination on the basis of colour, has caused the denial of these rights to be written into the laws of the land.

- Every woman has the right to choose her marriage partner.
- Every woman has the right to live with her husband throughout her married life.
- Every woman has the right to live with her children, to protect them and to care for them.
- Every woman has the right to free education for her children.
- Every woman has the right to own or to rent property in her own name.
- Every woman has the right to freedom of movement and residence.
- Every woman has the right to work, to free choice of employment and to just and favourable conditions of work.
- Every woman has the right to live out her declining years with those who wish to care for her.
- Every woman has the right to these fundamental rights and freedoms which shall not be violated by any law or administrative action.

See Mrs. J. Sinclair's letter on page 14

LETTERS:

TWO VIEWS ON BLACK THEOLOGY

Denise Goodwin,
Rustenburg, Tvl.

I WOULD LIKE to say a few words on the subject of Black Theology.

In the Bible there is a story about a woman, who was taken in adultery and how her accusers brought her to Jesus Christ before stoning her in accordance with the law of Moses, and how Jesus said "Let he that is without sin, cast the first stone".

This story is comparable with the world situation of today and South Africa in particular. The black man accuses the white man of doing that which he himself does.

Black Theology, the new movement embraced at Hammanskraal, casts stones at the white man, denouncing his "white-dominated churches, proved beyond reasonable doubt to be a support for the *status quo* which to the black people means oppression. This is clearly manifested by their over-emphasis of inter-racial fraternization, as a solution to the problems of this country, whereas they are fully aware that the basic problem is that of land distribution and the consequent dis-inheritance of the black people", and continuing, "therefore to make the Christian message a really healing and saving message to *the people of God* we embrace Black Theology".

Black Theology being "the theology of the future of the black man in the light of Christ as liberator", and "a reflection on God in the light of our black experience", does not seem any different from "white-dominated churches solely concerned with the future of the white man".

Black Theology therefore ranges itself beside the white-dominated churches, equally wrong and equally culpable.

To those who say "Ah! the white man taught the black man these things, so I do not blame him", I address this question: do you believe that Almighty God made a mistake when He chose the Jews, for obviously by your way of thinking, the black man is fundamentally innocent and only learnt evil from the white man, therefore he would have been a better choice?

God in his divine wisdom chose the Jews. To

support its resolution of Black Theology, the conference quotes some verses from St. Luke. "The spirit of the Lord has been given me, he has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to the blind new sight, to set down trodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour". Quotation ends.

But St. Luke does not end there, he continues "And Jesus began to say to them, "This day is fulfilled this scripture in your ears ... there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elias the prophet and to none of these Elias sent but to Sarepta of Sidon ... and there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elias and none was cleansed but Naaman, the Agrian", and St. Luke tells us all they that were in the synagogue were filled with anger.

They were filled with anger because they perceived very clearly that Jesus had not come to liberate their Jewish nation and restore its former earthly glory, that he was not a liberator of nations but a liberator from sin.

The Jews failed because they reflected on Christ's teaching in the light of their own Jewish national experience. So when Jesus taught them saying "Love thy neighbour as thyself", their Jewish ideal of our nation and place, made them ask "and who is my neighbour?".

Jesus taught them in the story of the good Samaritan, giving new sight to the blind.

This new sight to the blind is manifest itself throughout the world, and the white man is holding out his hand in friendship by advocating inter-racial fraternization but Black Theology is rejecting it, questioning the white man's motive and clinging to the false god of our place and nation as did the Jews long ago.

Before his death Jesus prayed to the Father, "that they all may be one, as thou in me and I in thee", and because that is his prayer, it is the will of God and therefore being the will of God it is possible.

Inter-racial fraternization is the practical application of "love thy neighbour as thyself", it implies the desire for one-ness which is the leaven that must permeate the whole world for it is the prayer of the Lord.

Bonganjalo Goba,
Soweto.

With the emergence of the Black consciousness movement, it is becoming abundantly clear that our role and our presence as black churchmen in the so-called multi-racial church, has been a fulfilment of the white churchman's interests, of the idea: "You got to get me a black guy". And as a result of re-discovering ourselves and also because of the shocking discovery of the hypocrisy of the so-called Multi-racial Church and the questionable concept of multi-racialism, we cannot help but to reject the whole concept because it has not solved the racial tension nor has it sought to accept and to exalt our human dignity as black men. Apart from that we are beginning to see that the whole concept is not genuinely the practical outcome and implication of the gospel of reconciliation. For we are beginning to see that it is the white Christians who want it to alleviate their consciences and not because they genuinely wish to accept us blacks on completely and fully equal terms.

I think that for a very long time we have allowed ourselves to be deceived, that by virtue of our being members of a multi-racial church our dignity and our ability to hold responsible positions is recognised. But on the contrary we have subjected ourselves as black men to a paternalism of white churchmen that has sought to do things for and to direct the life of our churches - even to determine the theology that we should pursue. One cannot simply speak of multi-racialism in this country, particularly in this country, without referring to paternalism. At this point it may be asked: Who does the so-called multi-racial church involve? This is a simple question to answer; it only involves the African intelligentsia and the white liberals - the bulk of the people both black and white are left out. It is not the Church as we know it in our practical daily life that is attempting to be multi-racial, but only the Assemblies, the Synods and the Annual Church Conferences. We have no multi-racial congregations to point to as a proof of our multi-racial character irrespective of restrictions that are imposed. To me the whole business of being a multi-racial church, where the idea of white supremacy is profoundly entrenched and has become a way of life, is fictitious - unreal - impracticable. Whilst we observe even at the Assemblies, Synods and Conferences an undercurrent of the master-servant relationship, the idea of a multi-racial church is nonsense and meaningless. Again, whilst positions of power in the churches are controlled by whites; in the multi-racial church, positions concerning finance, secretarial work, education, management boards, bursary committees, theological commissions etc. are so controlled. The idea of a multi-racial church sickens me, for all this reveals to me that I am con-

sidered inferior to assume these responsibilities. If evidence is sought for this shocking authoritarian monopoly of white church leaders, collect the various church year books and study the constitution of these committees; it will be discovered that most of them - in fact the vast majority - are white. It is the hypocrisy of the so-called multi-racial church which in purporting to accept me as a unique human being on equal terms and irrespective of the colour of my skin, actually lies - it is this hypocrisy that I reject.

I am not impressed by the argument which is constantly offered that we need this racial contact in the church and that this can only be achieved in the so-called multi-racial church. My reaction to this argument is that it is not the black man who needs this contact, for he knows and understands very well that he is rejected and considered inferior wherever he comes into contact with whites. Apart from this, even those whites who desire contact are not willing to accept him (the black man) as an equal. If they fail to treat their servants who happen to be just as black on an equal footing, we would be deceiving ourselves in believing that they genuinely accept us on equal terms. There are black churchmen who believe that we need racial contact which is encouraged by the multi-racial church in order to achieve 'confrontation'. But again my reaction is that such confrontation is minimal because in most Assemblies and conferences because the agenda is so full as to exclude it. Apart from that even the contact that is sought is very occasional, not to say ephemeral.

My own experience (though admittedly narrow) has revealed to me how many whites who attend the conferences are hypocrites. On such occasions they become extraordinarily polite and pretend to accept us (blacks) as their equals. To me all this is false for I know that they do not accept me as equal. Again, I think that many of us (blacks) in attending the so-called multi-racial church conferences have done so in order to please our white counter-parts. Many of us have not asked ourselves how serious is the so-called multi-racial church. Are we blacks being honest with ourselves in believing that this is what we need - i.e. a multi-racial church? Do we sincerely believe that we are being accepted as black men by whites who so desperately want a multi-racial church? My answer is No, the whole thing is just a farce.

As a black man who is seriously concerned about these questions which I have raised, I am beginning to realize that the so-called multi-racial church will not and cannot improve my lot nor help me to recover my dignity. I believe the time has come when I must do things for myself. I must affirm my God-endowed dignity. I must decide for myself on all crucial issues that affect my life and this I can do when my blackness is taken seriously. For my blackness represents poverty, de-humanization, disinheritance, all that is

Continued on page 10.

The Role of Women in the Catholic Church

Honor O'Connor O.P.

As I write my 'answer' to this question I am inclined to think that there are as many answers as there are Catholic women. Indeed, even my own 'answer' is changing the more I think about and discuss the attitudes of, and towards, women today. Education and sociological changes have brought women actually for potentially in many cases and/or areas to social adulthood. Financial and intellectual independence or self-respect (and the consequent freedom from the fear of being poor maiden aunts) have given today's women an energy that often overstates its case in Women's Lib. demonstrations.

These changes are evident in the Catholic Church too. It could hardly be otherwise. In fact Catholic women have to face a triple challenge: firstly they have to grow up as women, secondly they have to become adult Christians - after the mind of Vatican II on Christian responsibility - and thirdly they have to live (not exist or endure!) as Christian women in a male-dominated Church.

In the throes and adventure of this triple challenge it seems to me that *newness* and *variety* are key words. Mankind, and therefore the Church, is entering a new era, an era in which women are partners, comrades, not minors. So, instead of trying to imagine deaconesses, priestesses and bishopesses based on, or cut from, the existing male patterns of

ugly and soiled, so that my contact with white Christians, within the community of Christ, where I am denied the right to assert my dignity, becomes an affliction. I believe that we are one in Christ, but I question the commitment of those Christians who do not practise the fact and the reality of our being equal in Christ. I may be termed racist, but that I am not for I am beginning to look at myself with honesty and to assert that black is beautiful for God has made it stupendously beautiful. Christ is redeeming my blackness.

In conclusion I wish to say how I long for a black church that will ultimately become the Church of Christ, a church that will embrace and be a community of the faithful human beings. In order to work for that Church, we must both re-discover our common humanity and our God-given dignity - both black and white. Christ must by his power to love and liberate, rule supreme over our lives. But we must re-discover ourselves in sinful, horrible background situations, and this cannot and will not take place in the so-called multi-racialism of South Africa.

Catholic deacons, priests and bishops, let us be open to the new idea of deacons, priests and bishops who are women. There is a difference, though it seems a mere rearrangement of words. Deacons, priests and bishops who are women would naturally be different from those who are men, just as teachers and doctors who are women differ from their male counterparts. But this difference does not destroy effectiveness. Rather, it enhances the general effectiveness of the teaching and medical professions. Could not the general effectiveness of the Church be likewise enhanced by the complementary service of men and women in the ministerial role and concern of the Church?

It would seem that such service could be given by many of the women who up to the present have been confined to the forms of service offered by the Orders and Congregations approved by the Church. Here again newness and variety are all-important. Social services, adult education, remedial work, university research, the roles of priest, deacon, bishop, parish secretary are fields for individual and/or team work by women, religious or lay. Those who shudder at such ideas do so, I suggest, not because of theology but because of a sneaking doubt that women are really people.

I include Catholic laywomen in the vista opened out by Vatican II, because one of its most significant 'break-throughs' was the removal of the invisible label which classified laywomen as second-rate Christians. The 'holy-virgins and widows' used to get special mention in the liturgy, while the married, and especially those who enjoyed being married or marriagable, were somehow lumped together with the other unclassified faithful. The Council is thus largely responsible for the heightened awareness of its being possible and desirable to lead a Christian lay life, which characterizes Catholic women today. That the number of Sisters has decreased, owing to this and other factors, may be a sign that laywomen are going to be vital parts of the mustard tree that Christ spoke of, by giving Christ-like support and shelter to all they meet in details of daily life.

Maybe the slogan: 'a pluralistic Church in a pluralistic society' could sum up these rambling thoughts on women in the Catholic Church. There has been too much of a tendency to divide people, ideas and forms of Christian life into categories, to be filed away neatly in an office in Rome or to be given a place in canon law. Why not let the Spirit blow where he wills and accept the new varied ways in which he may make himself felt in women?

SO SÊ DIE HERE..... SO SÊ DIE HERE

Dr. C.J. Labuschagne

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JEREMIA 28: 1-11

EN IN DIÉ JAAR, in die begin van die regering van Sedekia die koning van Juda, in die vierde jaar, in die vyfde maand, het Hananja, die seun van Assur, die profeet, wat uit Gibeon afkomstig was, met my gespreek in die huis van die HERE in teenwoordigheid van die priesters en van die hele volk en gesê: So spreek die HERE van die leerskare, die God van Israel: Ek het die juk van die koning van Babel verbreek. Binne twee volle jare bring Ek in hierdie plek terug al die voorwerpe van die huis van die Here wat Nebukadnesar, die koning van Babel, uit hierdie plek weggeneem en na Babel gebring het. Ook Jekonja, die seun van Jojakim, die koning van Juda, en al die ballinge van Juda wat na Babel gegaan het, bring Ek in hierdie plek terug, spreek die HERE; want Ek sal die juk van die koning van Babel verbreek. Toe het die profeet Jeremia vir die profeet Hananja gesê in teenwoordigheid van die priesters en van die hele volk wat in die huis van die HERE gestaan het, en die profeet Jeremia het gesê: Amen, laat die HERE so maak! Laat die HERE vervul jou woorde wat jy geprofeteer het, deur die voorwerpe van die huis van die HERE en al die ballinge uit Babel na hierdie plek terug te bring! Maar luister tog na hierdie woord wat ek spreek voor jou ore en voor die ore van die hele volk: die profete wat daar voor my en voor jou gewees het, van ouds af, het geprofeteer teen baie lande en teen groot koninkryke van oorlog en onheil en pes. Die profeet wat profeteer van vrede - as die woord van die profeet uitkom, dan sal die profeet bekend word wat die HERE waarlik gestuur het. Daarop het die profeet Hananja die juk van die nek van die profeet Jeremia afgeneem en dit verbreek. En Hananja het gespreek in teenwoordigheid van die hele volk en gesê: So spreek die HERE; So sal Ek verbreek die juk van Nebukadnesar, die koning van Babel, binne twee volle jare, van die nek van al die nasies. En die profeet Jeremia het weggegaan.

In Juda en Jerusalem was dit die jaar 594 vóór Christus. 'n Onstuimige jaar sowel op politieke as op godsdienstige gebied. Jerusalem het 'n gees van drukke diplomatiek en koersagtige profetiese aktiwiteit geadem. In die stad het aangekom die afgesante van Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tirus en Sidon wie se taak dit was om koning Sedekia van Juda oor te haal om tot 'n anti-Babiloniese koalisie toe te tree. Aanleiding daartoe was die feit dat Nebukadnesar, wat nog besig was om sy magsposisie in Sirië en Palestina te konsolideer, hom op daardie stadium verplig gevoel het om 'n groot deel van sy strydmagte aan

daardie gebied te onttrek vir 'n offensief teen die Mede en die Elamiete. Op aanstigting van Egipte het die klein staatjies in Sirië en Palestina wat deur Nebukadnesar onder die voet geloop is, gemeen dat die tyd gekom het om hulle, met die steun van Egipte, te bevry van die Babiloniese juk. Tydens die oorlegpleging is die profete ook geraadpleeg. Saam met die buitelandse gesante het immers ook profete gekom wat hul leiers by hul politieke beslissinge moes adviseer betreffende die wil van God ten aansien van die beleid wat gevolg moes word. In Jerusalem self het die profete van die Here gereed gestaan om die wil van die Here aan hul koning bekend te maak. Hul advies het reeds vasgestaan - hulle sou inskaker by die redevoeringe van die gesante en hul solidariteit verklaar met hul heidense kollegas, wat hul leiers eenstemmig geadviseer het: Julle moet die koning van Babel nie langer bly dien nie! Met 'n beroep op die Godswoord het die profete van Jerusalem hul orakels op die koning afgevuur: So sê die Here: U moet die koning van Babel nie langer bly dien nie! Hul advies was gelykluidend met dié van hul kollegas uit die omliggende lande. Die woord van die Here was net soos die woord van Baäl en Kemos. Hoe kon dit ook anders, het hulle gedink. Dit het immers gegaan om dieselfde goeie saak: nasionale bevryding! Nou het die tyd aangebreek om in die naam van die Here nee te sê teenoor Nebukadnesar en hulle van die onderdrukker te bevry. Dit was 'n heilige saak, so het hulle betoog, wat vir die diens van die Here in Jerusalem van onskatbare waarde sou wees. Daarom het hulle voorspel: Kyk, die voorwerpe van die huis van die Here sal uit Babel teruggebring word!

□

Intussen het Jeremia van die Here opdrag gekry om sy woord aan die buitelandse gesante en die koning van Juda te openbaar. Onderwerp julle aan die koning van Babel. Jeremia moes dié woord aanskoulik predik deur 'n juk op sy nek te lê en te dra, welke handeling die onderwerping aan Nebukadnesar simbolies voorgestel het. Met al sy oorredingskrag het hy by die gesante aangedring: U dan, gee geen gehoor aan u profete, u waarsêers, u dromers, u toekomstvoorspellers en u towenaars nie, wat vir u sê: U moet

nie diensbaar bly aan die koning van Babel nie; want hulle profeteer vir u leuens! Ook by koning Sedekia moes Jeremia die advies van die profete van Jerusalem as leuens ontmasker, en hy het tot die priesters en die hele volk gesê: So sê die Here; Gee geen gehoor aan die woorde van die profete wat vir u profeteer: Kyk, die voorwerpe van die huis van die Here sal uit Babel teruggebring word, nou, met spoed! Want hulle profeteer vir u leuens. Gee geen gehoor aan hulle nie! So het Jeremia hom geroepe gevoel om die optimisme van sy kollegas aan die kaak te stel en hul optrede as voorbarig, omdat hul woord nie van die Here afkomstig was nie. „Ek het hulle nie gestuur nie, lui die woord van die Here, en tog profeteer hulle ten onregte in my naam”.

Teen hierdie agtergrond moet ons ons skrifgedeelte sien. Die bittere en pynlike teenstelling tussen profeet en profeet bereik hier sy hoogtepunt. Die skrilte kontras tussen waar en vals, feit en leuen, werklikheid en wensdenkery, kom hier in 'n felle lig te staan. Die toneel is die tempel, die publiek en die getuies is die priesters en die hele volk, die hoofrolspelers Jeremia en Hananja. Hierdie laasgenoemde, ongetwyfeld 'n vooraanstaande figuur uit die kringe van die Jerusalemse profete, tree op as woordvoerder van die pro-rebellie profete. Hy rig hom op 'n dramatiese wyse met name tot Jeremia, wat hom duidelik teen die voorgenome opstand uitgespreek het deur die dra van 'n juk. Dié juk wat Jeremia gedra het, het vir Hananja net so hoog as die juk van die koning van Babel gesit. Daar moes nou vir eenmaal klaargekry word met die jukke! „So sê die Here van die leërskaer, die God van Israel”. So begin Hananja sy profesie teen Jeremia met die geykte profetiese formule, wat aandui dat die profeet namens God spreek as gesaghebbende boodskapper. Voor die toehoorders spreek God nou self. „Ek het die juk van die koning van Babel verbreek! Binne twee volle jare bring Ek in hierdie plek terug al die voorwerpe van die huis van die Here ... ook Jegonja ... en al die ballinge van Juda ... bring ek na hierdie plek terug - lui die woord van die Here - want ek sal die juk van die koning van Babel verbreek”.

Op hierdie indrukwekkende en met groot stelligheid geformuleerde Godswoord kon Jeremia alleen maar „amen” sê, wat egter nie beteken het dat hy dit beaam het in die sin dat hy daarmee ingestem het en sy goedkeuring daaraan wou gee nie. Intendeel! Die Godswoord wat aan hom gegee is om te verkondig, het radikaal daarvan afgewyk. Dit sou onjuis wees om te meen dat Jeremia met sy „amen” op die woorde van Hananja aan die waarheid van sy eie profesie getwyfel het. Verre van ja en amen te sê - hy was immers geen jibroer-profeet nie - wou hy alleen maar die vurigste wens van sy menslike hart uitspreek: „So doen die Here! Mag die Here die woorde wat jy geprofeteer het, vervul!” As 'n goeie patriot, wat hom die lot van sy volk diep aangetrek het, wou hy, net soos Hananja, niks liever as dat

hul aller hartewens vervul word nie. Maar om die mens se hartewens te omskep tot die vader van die gedagte en tot die outeur van 'n Godswoord is heeltemal 'n ander saak. Daaraan wou Jeremia hom nie skuldig maak nie, want dan sou hy 'n valse profeet wees. Daarom het hy Hananja se aandag pertinent op die onderwerp van die valse profesie gevestig. Hy het hom daaraan herinner dat die ware profete van ouds gekenmerk was deur die feit dat hulle oordeel en onheil verkondig het, en verder dat die profeet wat van vrede geprofeteer het, eers daarna, wanneer sy woorde reeds bewaarheid is, as 'n egte boodskapper van God gesien kon word. Met ander woorde, dit sou nog moes blyk of Hananja inderdaad deur die Here gestuur was. Jeremia het hom van verdere kommentaar weerhou - dit was immers God se saak om die bewys te lewer. So het dan op dié moment profeet teenoor profeet gestaan, Godsmen teenoor Godsmen, Godswoord teenoor Godswoord, „So sê die Here” teenoor „so sê die Here”. 'n Onhoudbare situasie ...

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Aan hierdie situasie het Hananja op gewelddadige wyse 'n einde probeer maak deur die juk van Jeremia se nek af te ruk en dit te breek. Daarmee het hy 'n einde gemaak aan die simboliese juk-profesie van Jeremia, wat weer op sigself 'n simboliese handeling was: „So sê die Here: So sal Ek verbreek die juk van Nebukadnesar, die koning van Babel, binne twee volle jare, van die nek van al die nasies”. Hananja was die held van die dag. Die irriterende juk van Jeremia en Nebukadnesar was van die toneel verwyder. Daarbenewens het hy hierdie lastige profeet flink op sy plek gesit. „En die profeet Jeremia het weggegaan”. Hy het die saak waarom dit eintlik in die konflik tussen hom en Hananja gegaan het, nl. die kwessie van die ware of die valse profesie, aan die orde gestel. En die maatstaf wat vir die onderskeiding tussen waar en vals toegepas moes word, was nie of 'n profeet pro- of anti-Babilonies was, of selfs dat hy heil of onheil verkondig het nie, maar of hy sy profetiese woord van die Here ontvang het al dan nie. Hieroor kon alleen die toekoms uitsluitel gee. Dié uitsluitel het gou genoeg gekom. Jeremia het 'n nuwe Godspraak ontvang: Die hout juk sou deur 'n yster juk vervang word, en Hananja is tot die dood veroordeel: „Luister nou, Hananja, die Here het jou nie gestuur nie, en jy het hierdie volk op 'n leuen laat vertrou; daarom, so sê die Here: Kyk, Ek stuur jou weg van die aardbodem, nog hierdie jaar is jy 'n lyk, omdat jy afval van die Here verkondig het”. Enkele maande later het Hananja gesterf, ontmasker as 'n valse profeet wat sy eie politieke wense aan die volk as Godswoord opgedis het. Sy „so sê die Here” het bedrog en leuen geblyk te wees. Daarom is hierdie jibroer-profeet deur die Here self tereggestel (vgl. Deuteronomium 18:20).

(*) (*) (*) (*)

OPEN LETTER: A Widow's Agony

WE HAVE TAKEN the Open Letter that follows over from and by courtesy of the Sunday Tribune. It appeared in the Tribune on August 15 of this year. It may perhaps not fit into the general context of this Special issue on the rôle of women in the Church. It is, however, undoubtedly a woman's voice that speaks, and a most authentic one.

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THIS IS AN OPEN LETTER to the conscience of White South Africa. It was written by an old woman - a widow of 75. Her husband was a prominent businessman. A building in a South African city is named after him. Now she has been classified Coloured and told to quit the home where she lives with her adopted daughter and grandchildren. Her plight was revealed to the Sunday Tribune by Mr. Eric Winchester, the United Party M.P. Whom does it concern? **IF YOU LIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY IT CONCERNS YOU.**

YES! YOU KNOW ME.

When my husband was alive we used to visit you fairly often. But I don't go calling any more. Perhaps you've wondered about it at times and supposed that I have too much to do, or that I'd prefer to be left alone.

If you only knew! You see, I don't go out any more because I feel ashamed. And I don't want to embarrass anyone.

But since you're bound to find out sooner or later I thought I'd take this way of letting you know - of telling you what it's like.

The fact is, I am a Coloured. I shouldn't be here at all. Or so the Government says. I'm supposed to go and live in one of the Coloured townships out on the Cape Flats with all the other Coloureds.

And if I visited you and your family as I used to and you found out afterwards I was a Coloured, you might feel cheated. You might report me.

They might make me move and I couldn't face that, not after living here in this same street for over 20 years. And have you seen the Coloured townships?

Of course you say you would never report me. That what the Government calls me means nothing to you. That you judge a person for what he is, not by the colour of his skin. And haven't you many friends who are Coloured?

You may be right, but I couldn't take the chance. The fact is I don't trust you!

Why should I? Remember when my husband was alive and we used to discuss politics, how you used to say that you weren't interested and that politics was for the politicians and that they should get on

with it and leave you alone?

I have found out that they *won't* leave you alone. They've made me a Coloured and they don't even know me!

Remember, too, how you used to say that the one good thing about the Government was the fact that they were the only people strong enough to sort out South Africa's racial mess, and that the Coloureds were all right in their place but should go and live among their kind?

Well, I am a Coloured. Must I go and live among my own kind? You thought I was your kind then, but what do you think now, now that I'm called Coloured? you see why I can't trust you not to tell?

You say it can't be true, that you've known me for years and that you knew my husband. That you could swear we aren't Coloureds. That we always lived and acted like White people.

After what has happened to me, a Coloured who thought she was White, I can only say I'm confused.

I don't suddenly think and act any differently. I feel exactly the same as I did before. I have the same worries about the children when they're sick and when they're away from home. I still love them and my grandchildren just as much as I did before.

Nothing inside me has changed. But outside, nothing will ever be the same.

My husband was a fine man. You knew him well!

When he died they named one of the most important buildings in the city after him. Now I wonder if they'll change the name of the building when they find out he was married to a Coloured woman. That is another reason why I've tried to hide the truth.

There is no question about my husband being White - it's only me they've called Coloured. Even my children are safe because we adopted them when we found out I couldn't have children of my own.

At least the Government can't touch *them*. You have no need to feel panicky about the times they played with your own children when they were small, about how they attended the same school as yours did.

But I can't help wondering what would you have done if you'd known the truth about me then.

One of my children still lives with me, together with her husband and their children. My grandchildren.

I haven't told them what the Government has done to me because I frankly don't know how.

What do you say to three little children to make them understand their Granny is not the person they thought she was, that she is really another kind of person altogether?

How do you tell them their Granny is committing a crime by even living in the same house with them?

HUMILIATION

You will never know what it is like to stand hours on end at a counter trying to explain to a young Government clerk why he should change your "Coloured" card to White. So many times did I visit that office, and each time my humiliation was greater than the last ...

I'm not bitter against them. They're doing no more than they are paid to do. But I am bitter against the politicians who instructed them, and the likes of you who allowed them to do it.

Do you know what it's like to be told where you must live, that you no longer have any right to stay in the same house with your own family? A house, you and your husband saved for and bought over 20 years ago?

Have you ever thought of being forced to leave the friends of a lifetime, to go and live among strangers with whom you have nothing in common? Again, I ask, have you seen the Coloured townships on the sand dunes of the Cape Flats?

Have you ever lived in fear that the next knock on your door will be a Government official telling you to get out of the neighbourhood because you're an affected person, as though suddenly you have some dreadful disease that might contaminate those near you?

Have you ever been told that the only solution to your problem was to go and live in a foreign land?

The person who told me that was a senior official who realised that his own fellow White South Africans had long since lost their souls.

I am nearing the end of my life and my last appeal to the Government was that they issue me with a White card so that at least I could be buried in the same part of the cemetery as my husband. They refused!

Do you think it would have upset some masterplan if they'd shown me a little compassion?

Am I in fact a Coloured? I really and honestly don't know. I am what God made me. All my life I lived and worked among the same people as I do now, and when I was small I never thought to ask my mother and father if they were White or Coloured?

Did you ask your parents such a question? Do you think God will ask me?

Letter from the Black Sash

Mrs. Jean Sinclair,
President, Black Sash.

The Black Sash has circulated its "Charter for Women" to various organisations, particularly women's organisations, with a request that it be studied and formally adopted. Our hope is that these organisations will strive for its implementation in whichever way is best suited to their particular activities and constitutions.

The Charter was very carefully drawn up in consultation with a Professor of Constitutional Law, and we feel that there can be no woman who will not support its nine clauses, which are fundamental to the normal life of any women and which are, for the most part, denied to African women.

For many years the Black Sash has run Advice Offices to help the African people to cope with the maze of laws and regulations which restrict their lives and twist them out of normally accepted patterns. The misery and suffering we see every day decided us to inaugurate a campaign to try to ameliorate the plight of African women.

On the basis of the mass of information gleaned in the course of our work we published a series of articles on all aspects of the lives of African women, which were subsequently incorporated in a booklet entitled "Who Cares?". These have already been on sale to the public and will be again, together with a re-edition of our "Memorandum on the Pass Laws" which is a comprehensive explanation and assessment of the exceedingly complicated system which governs and controls the lives of all African people.

The public cannot be expected to understand how some of the absolutely basic clauses of the Charter come to be included at all and are not simply taken for granted unless they are made aware of the actual conditions under which so many South African citizens labour. The Booklet and the Memorandum are our effort to supply the general public with some of the facts which we have learnt through first-hand experience.

The Charter for Women was originally incorporated in a Petition which was presented to Parliament on behalf of the Black Sash by Mrs. Helen Suzman, M.P. on the 18th February, 1971. The Petition contains a fairly detailed account of the many difficulties which beset African women in their daily lives, and was presented to Parliament in an effort to bring home to those directly responsible the repercussions of the welter of restrictive laws they make and pass.

The Charter is enclosed. The Booklet "Who Cares" is on sale at The Black Sash, 37 Harvard Buildings, Joubert Street, Johannesburg, at 20c per copy.

The Charter for Women appears on page 7.

Jesus was a Feminist

creature: "The Pharisee ... said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him and what a bad name she has'. But Jesus deliberately rejected this approach to the woman as a sex object. He rebuked the Pharisee and spoke solely of the woman's human, spiritual, actions; he spoke of her love, her unlove, that is, her sins, of her being forgiven, and her faith. Jesus then addressed her (it was not "proper" to speak to women in public, especially, "improper" women) as a human person: "Your sins are forgiven ... Your faith has saved you; go in peace".

A similar situation occurred when the scribes and Pharisees used a woman reduced entirely to a sex object to set a legal trap for Jesus. It is difficult to imagine a more callous use of a human person than the "adulterous" woman was put to by the enemies of Jesus. First, she was surprised in the intimate act of sexual intercourse (quite possibly a trap was set up ahead of time by the suspicious husband), and then dragged before the scribes and Pharisees, and then by them before an even larger crowd that Jesus was instructing: "making her stand in full view of everybody". They told Jesus that she had been caught in the very act of committing adultery and that Moses had commanded that such women be stoned to death. (Dt. 22:22 ff.) "What have you to say?" The trap was partly that if Jesus said yes to stoning he would be violating the Roman law, which reserved capital punishment, and if he said no, he would appear to contravene Mosaic law. It could also partly have been to place Jesus' reputation for kindness toward, and championing the cause of women in opposition to the law and the condemnation of sin. Jesus of course eluded their snares by refusing to become entangled in legalisms and abstractions. Rather, he dealt with both the accusers and the accused directly as spiritual, ethical, human persons. He spoke directly to the accusers in the context of their own personal ethical conduct: "If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." To the accused woman he likewise spoke directly with compassion, but without approving her conduct: "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord". And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again".

(One detail of this encounter provides the basis for a short excursus related to the status of women. The Pharisees stated that the woman had been caught in the act of adultery and according to the Law of Moses was therefore to be stoned to death. Since the type of execution mentioned was stoning the

woman must have been a "virgin betrothed", as referred to in Deut. 22:23 f. There provision is made for the stoning of *both* the man and the woman, although in the gospel story only the woman is brought forward. However, the reason given for why the man ought to be stoned was not because he had violated the woman, or God's law, but: "because he had violated the wife of his neighbour". It was the injury of the man by misusing his property - wife - that was the great evil).

JESUS' REJECTION OF THE BLOOD TABOO

All three of the synoptic gospels insert into the middle of the account of the raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter the story of the curing of the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years (Mt. 9:20ff; Mk. 4:25ff.; Lk. 8:43ff.). The especially touching thing about this story is that the affected woman was so reluctant to project herself into public attention that she, "said to herself, 'If, only I touch his garment, I shall be made well' ". Her shyness was not because she came from the poor, lower classes, for Mark pointed out that over the twelve years she had been to many physicians - with no success - on whom she had spent all her money. It was probably because for twelve years, as a woman with a flow of blood, she was constantly ritually unclean (Lv. 15:19 ff.), which not only made her incapable of participating in any cultic action and made her in some sense "displeasing to God", but also rendered anyone and anything she touched (or anyone who touched what she had touched!) similarly unclean. (Here is the basis for the Catholic Church not allowing women in the sanctuary during Mass - she might be menstruating and hence unclean). The sense of degradation and contagion that her "womanly weakness" worked upon her over the twelve years doubtless was oppressive in the extreme. This would have been especially so when a religious teacher, a rabbi, was involved. But not only does Jesus' power heal her, one of many of Jesus' acts of compassion on the downtrodden and afflicted, often including women, but Jesus also makes a great to-do about the event, calling extraordinary attention to the publicity-shy woman: "And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone forth from him, immediately turned about in the crowd, and said, 'Who touched my garments?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?' And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had been done to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease'. It seems clear that Jesus wanted to call attention to the fact that he did not shrink from the ritual uncleanness incurred from being touched by the "unclean" woman (on several occasions Jesus rejected the notion of ritual

uncleanness) and by immediate implication rejected the "uncleanness" of a woman who had a flow of blood, menstruous or continual. Jesus apparently, placed a greater importance on the dramatic making of this point, both to the afflicted woman herself and the crowd, than he did on avoiding the temporary psychological discomfort of the embarrassed woman, which in light of Jesus' extraordinary concern to alleviate the pain of the afflicted, meant he placed a great weight on the teaching of this lesson on the dignity of women.

JESUS AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

On another occasion Jesus again deliberately violated the then common case concerning men's relationship to women. It is recorded in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob (John 4:5 ff.). Jesus was waiting at the well outside of the village while his disciples were off getting food, and a Samaritan woman approached the well to draw water. Normally a Jew would not address a Samaritan, as the woman pointed out: "Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans". But also normally a man would not speak to a woman in public (doubly so in the case of a rabbi). However, Jesus startled the woman by initiating a conversation. The woman was aware that on both counts, her being a Samaritan and being a woman, Jesus' action was out of the ordinary for she replied: "how is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" As hated as the Samaritans were by the Jews, it is nevertheless clear that Jesus' speaking with a woman was considered a much more flagrant breach of conduct than his speaking with a Samaritan, for John related: "His disciples returned, and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'Why are you talking to her?' ". However, Jesus' bridging of the gap of inequality between men and women continued further, for in the conversation with the woman he revealed himself in a straightforward fashion as the Messiah for the first time: "The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' ... Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he.'".

Just as when Jesus revealed himself to Martha as "the resurrection" and to Mary as the "risen one" and bade her to bear witness to the apostles, Jesus here also revealed himself in one of his key roles, as Messiah, to a woman - who immediately bore witness to the fact to her fellow villagers. (It is interesting to note that apparently the testimony of women carried greater weight among the Samaritans than the Jews, for the villagers came out to see Jesus: "Many Samaritans of that town believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony ..." It would seem that John the gospel writer deliberately highlighted this contrast in the way he wrote about this event, and also that he clearly wished to reinforce thereby Jesus' stress on the equal dignity of women).

One other point should be noted in connection

with this story. As the crowd of Samaritans was walking out to see Jesus, Jesus was speaking to his disciples about the fields being ready for the harvest and how he was sending them to reap what others had sown. He was clearly speaking of the souls of men, and most probably was referring directly to the approaching Samaritans. Such exegesis is standard. It is also rather standard to refer to others in general and only Jesus in particular as having been the sowers whose harvest the apostles were about to reap (e.g. in the Jerusalem Bible). But it would seem that the evangelist also meant to specifically include the Samaritan woman among those sowers for immediately after he recorded Jesus' statement to the disciples about their reaping what others had sown he added the above mentioned verse: "Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony ..."

MARRIAGE AND THE DIGNITY OF WOMAN

One of the most important stands of Jesus in relation to the dignity of women was his position on marriage. His unpopular attitude toward marriage (cf. Mt. 19:10: "The disciples said to him, 'If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry'.") presupposed a feminist view of women; they had rights and responsibilities equal to men. It was quite possible in Jewish law for men to have more than one wife (this was probably not frequently the case in Jesus' time, but there are recorded instances, e.g. Herod, Josephus), though the reverse was not possible. Divorce, of course, also was a simple matter, to be initiated only by the man. In both situations women were basically chattel to be collected or dismissed as the man was able and wished to; the double moral standard was flagrantly apparent. Jesus rejected both by insisting on monogamy and the elimination of divorce; both the man and the woman were to have the same rights and responsibilities in their relationship toward each other (cf. Mk. 10:2 ff.; Mt. 19:3 ff.). This stance of Jesus was one of the few that was rather thoroughly assimilated by the Christian Church (in fact, often in an over-rigid way concerning divorce - but, how to understand the ethical prescriptions of Jesus is another article), doubtless in part because it was reinforced by various sociological conditions and other historical accidents, such as the then current strength in the Greek world of the stoic philosophy. However, the notion of equal rights and responsibilities was not extended very far within the Christian marriage. The general role of women was *Kirche, Kinder, Küche* - and only a suppliant's role in the first

THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE FOR WOMEN

However, Jesus clearly did not think of woman's role in such restricted terms; she was not to be limited to being *only* a housekeeper. Jesus quite directly rejected the stereotype that the proper place of all women is "in the home", during a visit to the

house of Martha and Mary (Lk. 10:38 ff.). Martha took the typical woman's role: "Martha was distracted with much serving". Mary, however, took the supposedly "male" role: she "sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching". Martha apparently thought Mary was out of place in choosing the role of the "intellectual", for she complained to Jesus. But Jesus' response was a refusal to force all women into the stereotype; he treated Mary first of all as a person (whose highest faculty is the intellect, the spirit) who was allowed to set her own priorities, and in this instance had "chosen the better part". And Jesus applauded her: "it is not to be taken from her". Again, when one recalls the Palestinian restriction on women studying the Scriptures or studying with rabbis, that is, engaging in the intellectual life or acquiring any "religious authority", it is difficult to imagine how Jesus could possibly have been clearer in his insistence that women were called to the intellectual, the spiritual life just as were men.

There is at least one other instance recorded in the gospels when Jesus uttered much the same message (Lk. 11:27f.). One day as Jesus was preaching a woman from the crowd apparently was very deeply impressed and, perhaps imagining how happy she would be to have such a son, raised her voice to pay Jesus a compliment. She did so by referring to his mother, and did so in a way that was probably not untypical at that time and place. But her image of a woman was sexually reductionist in the extreme (one that largely persists to the present): female genitals and breasts. "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" Although this was obviously meant as a compliment, and although it was even uttered by a woman, Jesus clearly felt it necessary to reject this "baby-machine" image of women and insist again on the personhood, the intellectual and moral faculties, being primary for all: "But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" Looking at this text it is difficult to see how the primary point could be anything substantially other than this. Luke and the tradition and Christian communities he depended on must also have been quite clear about the sexual significance of this event. Otherwise, why would he (and they) have kept and included such a small event from all the years of Jesus public life? It was not retained *merely* because Jesus said blessed are those who hear and keep God's word, but because that was stressed by Jesus as being primary in comparison to a woman's sexuality. Luke, however, seems to have had a discernment here and elsewhere concerning what Jesus was about in the question of the status of women that has not been shared by subsequent Christians (nor apparently by many of his fellow Christians), for in the explanation of this passage Christians for two thousand years did not see its plain meaning - doubtless because of unconscious presuppositions about the status of women inculcated by their cultural milieu.

In many ways Jesus strove to communicate the notion of the equal dignity of women. In one sense that effort was capped by his parable of the woman who found the lost coin (Lk. 15:8ff.), for here Jesus projected God in the image of a woman! Luke recorded that the despised tax-collectors and sinners were gathering around Jesus, and consequently the Pharisees and scribes complained. Jesus, therefore, related three parables in a row, all of which depicted God's being deeply concerned for that which was lost. The first story was of the shepherd who left the ninety-nine sheep to seek the one lost - the shepherd is God. The third parable is of the prodigal son - the father is God. The second story is of the woman who sought the lost coin - the woman is God! Jesus did not shrink from the notion of God as feminine. In fact, it would appear that Jesus included this womanly image of God quite deliberately at this point for the scribes and Pharisees were among those who most of all denigrated women - just as they did the "tax collectors and sinners".

(There have been some instances in Christian history when the Holy Spirit has been associated with a feminine character, as, for example, in the Syrian *Didascalia* where, in speaking of various offices in the Church, it states: "the Deaconess however should be honoured by you as the image of the Holy Spirit". It would make an interesting investigation to see if these images of God presented here by Luke were ever used in a trinitarian manner - thereby giving the Holy Spirit a feminine image. A negative result to the investigation would be as significant as a positive one, for this passage would seem to be particularly apt for trinitarian interpretation: the prodigal son's father is God the Father (this interpretation has in fact been quite common in Christian history); since Jesus elsewhere identified himself as the Good Shepherd, the shepherd seeking the lost sheep is Jesus, the Son (this standard interpretation is reflected in, among other things, the often-seen picture of Jesus carrying the lost sheep on his shoulders); the woman who sought the lost coin should "logically" be the Holy Spirit. If such an interpretation has existed, it surely has not been common. Should such lack of "logic" be attributed to the general cultural denigration of women or the abhorrence of pagan goddesses - although Christian abhorrence of pagan gods did not result in a Christian rejection of a male image of God?)

CONCLUSION

From this evidence it should be clear that Jesus vigorously promoted the dignity and equality of women in the midst of a very male dominated society: Jesus was a feminist, and a very radical one. Can his followers attempt to be anything less - *De Imitatione Christi?*

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