
The Evangelical Gender Agenda: The Subversion or the Supremacy of Scripture?

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Review article on *Speaking of Women Interpreting Paul*, Andrew Perriman, Apollos, 1998, 237pp, £19.95

Time was when many evangelicals assumed that the Bible taught that men and women had different functions in the home and in the church: women were not to teach in a mixed Christian congregation and wives were to be submissive to their husbands. “Not so,” said a new breed of evangelicals, whose reading of the Bible was much more sophisticated. “Peel back the crusty layers of prejudiced tradition and you find that that older view was really a misreading of Scripture; and since Scripture, not tradition, is our authority and since the Reformation view is that the Church should always be being reformed, the sooner we ditch these bizarre prohibitions on women, the better.”

Some who held the older view have been somewhat disorientated by this newer understanding of Scripture, fearing that if they have misunderstood something which appeared to be quite clear to them, then it is possible that they have been equally mistaken about other matters in Scripture. Might this have implications for their understanding of the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture and the right of private judgment? Others have been less impressed, particularly since they have a sneaky kind of feeling that it is not entirely coincidental that evangelicalism should be experiencing such a *volte-face* at the very time when women’s issues have been to the fore in society at large. They fear that it’s the old problem of the Church allowing the world to set her agenda and conforming to the culture instead of countering it.

Enter Andrew Perriman! In *Speaking of Women* he argues that it is right for the Church to conform to the culture because those passages of Scripture which appear to require the submission of women and to prohibit women teaching are culturally relative. Since until fairly recently our society has held a view of women not too dissimilar to that of the first century Mediterranean world, it was right for the Church to exclude women from some areas of service. But now that this has changed, the Church should change too. For, according to Perriman, a careful reading of Scripture indicates that while there is teaching which requires women to be submissive, this is not because of an inherent difference between the sexes but because it was, in New Testament times, a cultural expression of that difference. If Perriman is right, a way out of the trench warfare between “trads” and “rads” is possible.

While the older understanding of key passages is declared valid, the more egalitarian theology of women is held to be the proper application of those passages. Everybody has won and all shall have prizes, not the least of which is evangelical unity and an end to this distracting and disfiguring debate. But *is* he right? And what if he’s

wrong? Before answering these questions, it will be helpful to summarise the main arguments of the book.

On the issue of headship, Perriman disagrees that the Greek term *kephale* denotes “head” in the sense of *head over*, and also that it means *head of, source*. He believes that it means *prominence*: the New Testament is not teaching that the man has authority over the woman, but that he was in the Mediterranean world of that period (as largely throughout history), the prominent partner in a marriage and in society. Paul’s call for wives to submit to their husbands is not a universally binding commandment but a call for wives to do in a Christian spirit what society and custom required: *as to the Lord* (Eph. 5:22). Paul was very concerned that Christians did not give the gospel a bad name by being insensitive to the customs of society, provided that those customs were not contrary to God’s will. Since women did not have a vocal role in political assemblies, it was important for them to know their place in Christian assemblies. Moreover, since the church was composed of Jews and Gentiles, there was need for Gentile Christians to respect the cultural sensitivities of Jewish believers in the interests of the unity of the church and the primacy of the gospel. In this way Perriman deals with Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 14 and is able to harmonise it with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 of women prophesying and praying.

Perriman’s treatment of I Timothy 2:11-15 begins with the argument that in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul is giving specific instructions on a range of culturally variable matters and is not necessarily laying down instructions for all times in all places. For example, he does not understand eldership to be divinely ordained. “There is little to suggest that eldership as it appears in the New Testament is understood as a divinely ordained form of church leadership. [Eldership]... was taken over from Judaism ... without much reflection ... elders appear almost incidental to Paul’s understanding of the nature of the Christian community” (p. 203). This being the case, Perriman suggests that the fact that the majority of women would have been uneducated and that their sexual attractiveness might make them vulnerable to being deceived by false teachers meant that they should learn quietly. The material from Genesis 2 and 3 are not cited to establish universal norms grounded in creation and reaffirmed after the Fall: “... verses 13-14 are statements not so much about a state of affairs established at creation ... as statements about the situation in Ephesus in language *borrowed* from the Genesis story ... This being the case, in a situation in which women are no more likely than men to be seduced into moral or spiritual error, a model derived from Genesis 2:21-23 may be less appropriate than, say, the egalitarian model of Genesis 1:26-27” (italics Perriman’s, p.164). The chiasmic structure of this part of the chapter is such that verse 12 is something of a parenthesis, and that it is not a universally binding command is demonstrated by Paul’s use of the verb *epitrepô*: “I permit”. Furthermore, the verb *authentein* does not denote *having* authority but *using* or *exercising* authority. So while Paul was not allowing women to teach or exercise authority in the Ephesian context in which Timothy found himself, the Church would be wrong to see this as being a perpetual bar to women having authority or exercising a teaching ministry.

Published by Apollos, the scholarly publishing wing of IVP, it clearly presents a very different understanding from that of JB Hurley’s *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, also published by IVP in 1981. Before attempting an evaluation of the book’s thesis, a few general comments are in order.

First, the debate about gender differences is of fundamental importance. Since all are agreed that male and female are God's image bearers and that God has not made us as neuter "persons" but as His image bearers as male or female, it inevitably follows that this debate is dealing with something very basic. We ignore it at our peril. If Perriman is right, then more polarised approaches will inevitably be wrong; so we need to evaluate his case carefully.

Secondly, we cannot dismiss Perriman's approach by saying that issues of culture are not to enter into our reading of Scripture. I doubt if many who read these pages wash the feet of their fellow church members, or if the men greet one another with a kiss, even though Scripture commands these practices. We can fulfil the obligations imposed on us without having to do so in a manner that is culturally meaningless. Perriman might argue that he is simply applying and extending the same kind of argument. If we think that to be mistaken, we must be able to distinguish what he is doing with the role of women from what we do with foot washing and kissing.

Thirdly, it is somewhat naive for Perriman to lament the tension which is created by the heavy theological ammunition which is being used in this debate. After all, it was the more egalitarian evangelicals who opened this Pandora's box. They can hardly complain if those of a different view fight for a position rather than throw in the towel at the first bell. Moreover, Perriman himself is taking up a position, and although he discharges his gun in the most irenic of ways he is nevertheless quite definite that the more traditional approach is out of place today. If others think he is wrong about so important a matter, then they can hardly be silent and be in submission!

The last general comment is that the ferment over women's ministry may well be the latest manifestation of a problem which has been with the Church since the beginning: that is, the tendency to turn some parts of Scripture into an interpretative grid through which other passages are forced in order to fit. Take the Christological controversies. Some held that since Jesus is God, He could not be a real man, and thus mangled texts asserting Christ's deity. Others reasoned that since He was a real man He could not be God, and thus mangled texts which asserted His humanity. Church politics notwithstanding, which always makes it more difficult to maintain the balance of Scripture, thank God that the early church thrashed out the doctrine of God and of the Person of Christ. The gender issue today is also frequently entangled with non-theological considerations. However, if we fail to get to grips with it, we shall bequeath a terrible legacy to future generations.

But we must analyse Perriman's arguments in detail. To begin with, his work may be criticised as to its *methodology*. In the final paragraph of the book he writes: "There is need for reconciliation. The church is being torn apart and something needs to be done about it. Perhaps exegesis can help, if it is candid, critical and constructive. *But as we struggle towards scholarly consensus*, something more fundamental is also required..." (p. 212, italics mine). The concern for peace in the Church is commendable. But if there are irreconcilable views, why must we seek consensus? By all means let us avoid what RT France calls on the back of the book, "a dialogue of the deaf". Also, if painstaking exegesis can remove misunderstanding and achieve greater unity, all well and good. But can exegesis be truly "candid, critical and constructive" if it is influenced by the desire to achieve consensus? Has not greater theological

understanding frequently been obtained in the heat of controversy and as a result of theological positions being sharpened, corrected, qualified and refined in debate?

Again, a weakness in Perriman's methodology becomes apparent in his treatment of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. Having considered the text critical question of the precise location of the words found in verses 34-35 and the relationship of verse 33b to verses 34-35, Perriman begins his treatment by saying: "If verses 34-35 are authentic and we accept that Paul required women to be silent and not to speak in church, how are we to reconcile this with the participation of women in prayer and worship presupposed in 1 Corinthians 11:5?" (p.108). But this is the wrong question to ask. Clearly, all who believe in the unity and inerrancy of Scripture must seek to harmonise passages which appear to contradict each other. Indeed, systematic theology seeks to organise all of the teaching of Scripture on a given subject into a coherent and consistent pattern. But for that very reason, it is misguided to approach the exegesis of a passage with the question, How can I best interpret this so that it can be reconciled with another passage? Rather, one should seek to ask what the passage means in its immediate context and only then seek to understand it within the wider biblical context. Failure to do this led to imbalanced views in the Christological and Trinitarian controversies, and in other controversies within the Church. The problems with this methodologically flawed approach are compounded when other believers take 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as their absolute starting point and then ask how 1 Corinthians 11:5 can be reconciled with these verses.

I am not naively assuming that exegesis either can be or should be unaffected by systematic theology. As Carson has written, "If every theist is in some sense a systematician, then he is a systematician *before* he begins his exegesis".¹ However, he goes on to note that we are not locked into a hermeneutical circle but are in a hermeneutical line which moves from exegesis, through biblical theology, to systematic theology, with historical theology making a direct contribution towards systematics without itself being part of the line. However, he then affirms that there are feedback lines and acknowledges that it is absurd to deny that one's systematic theology does not affect one's exegesis. "Nevertheless," he writes, "the final line of control is the straight one from exegesis right through biblical and historical theology to systematic theology. The final authority is the Scriptures, the Scriptures alone".² When Perriman should be gathering the individual exegetical building blocks from which he intends to construct his Pauline theology of womanhood, instead he is arbitrarily making one of those blocks something of a cornerstone or foundation stone of his theology. This inevitably influences the way in which other blocks are fitted together. Obviously every building needs cornerstones and foundation stones. But the exegetical foundation stones upon which the theology of womanhood rests are to be found in the opening chapters of Genesis rather than in the Pauline writings themselves. But Genesis is considered in detail towards the end of the book. Perriman is confusing roofing work with foundation work; inevitably the building is somewhat out of line!

Another aspect of Perriman's methodology is its inconsistency in application. Central to his thesis is that Paul wanted believing women to conform to the cultural *mores* of their society so as not to bring the gospel into disrepute. But as many

egalitarians have rightly pointed out, Jesus' inclusion of women among His disciples; His readiness to teach the woman of Samaria; His commendation of Mary for publicly sitting at His feet, and His appearing to women and charging them with telling the other disciples that He had risen from the dead, were radically counter cultural. If, then, Paul's teaching is governed only by cultural considerations, is he not turning the clock back on Christ's teaching and needlessly putting something of a straitjacket on the women?

But there are also problems with Perriman's treatment of the place of women in the Gentile world of the Mediterranean at that time. Perriman states:

Opinion and practice regarding the value and role of women were by no means uniform, and, at the time of Paul, were in a state of flux. Still, powerful legal, cultural and social forces contrived to drive a wedge between the sexes and to confine women to a position of inferiority and subordination. According to Aristotle, "the male is by nature superior and the female inferior, the male ruler and the female subject"...While a handful of remarks from disparate ancient writers, taken out of context, does not amount to a social history, they are nevertheless highly suggestive and can reasonably be taken as illustrative of prevailing opinion (p. 51).

This is a highly misleading statement of the position. To begin with, quotations from Aristotle may tell us something about the situation a few hundred years before Christ, but they are no more helpful in telling us the prevailing views during the New Testament period than Archbishop Laud's views of Puritans can help us to understand Dr Carey's opinions concerning nonconformists today! Indeed, it is a commonplace of Roman Law studies that the position of women, especially married women, had improved enormously by imperial times as compared with the republican period.³ But Roman Law is not Andrew Perriman's forte, even though he makes a foray into it on pages 51 and 52. He tells us that "it was a basic principle of Roman law that all women should be under male guardianship because of the levity and weakness of their sex", and immediately goes on to inform us that a daughter grew up under the authority of a *paterfamilias* "who could choose to transfer her to another male guardian or to the power (*manus*) of her husband". But he does not say that boys as well as girls would be under the potestas of a *paterfamilias*.⁴ Moreover, a woman could be either *filiafamilias* or *sui juris*.⁵ By the time of the Empire, free marriage was common and this meant that the wife was not in *in manu* to her husband.⁶ Contrary to the impression conveyed by Perriman, the guardianship to which he refers was something quite different from *patria potestas* and had to do with protecting the property of minors. Since the inheritance rights relating to women's property was somewhat different from that which related to the property of males, the Romans devised a type of guardianship – *tutela* – which applied to girls after puberty.⁷ The reference to the levity and weakness of their sex was something of a legal fiction⁸ and by the time of the Empire this form of guardianship was largely a formality.⁹ Furthermore, husbands and wives owed each other a respect and kindness known as *reverentia*.¹⁰

The above comments are not intended to suggest that women at this period were the emancipated products of the post Germaine Greer era, but simply to point out that they had far more privilege than is sometimes realised by those who are not versed in the Roman law of persons. But this leads us to the point that the husband was, as a social

fact, the prominent one and that the wife was to acknowledge this in a Christian way. Is this all that Paul was saying in Ephesians 5? Surely not, and that for the following reasons.

To begin with, we should deal with the vexed issue of the meaning of *kephale*. Clearly the semantic range of a word may be such that it may have different referents in different contexts. Perriman has certainly done a lot of work on the Septuagint use of this term and on its usage by Philo, Josephus, as well as by classical writers and by Paul himself. However, impressive as this scholarship is, the simple fact remains that in Ephesians 5:23 Paul grounds the imperative of verse 22 – “wives to your husbands” (the reference to “submitting” being supplied from verse 21) – on the indicative of verse 23: *the husband is the head of the wife*. This is made abundantly clear by the use of the causal conjunction, *hoti*, at the beginning of verse 23. Therefore, whatever verbal equivalent we use to render *kephale*, it is quite clear that Paul uses the term in this verse to refer to a reality which implies a certain “head over” dimension. Let us, for the moment, accept Perriman’s argument that Paul is not laying down a universal norm but rather is calling on Christian women to live in accordance with the prevailing cultural *mores* as part of their allegiance to Christ. This would not alter the fact that since the women were submitting to their husbands *because* the husbands were the heads of their wives, headship in such a context must imply some element of authority. This point cannot be evaded simply by saying that the husband was the prominent one; if so, it was a prominence which led the wife to be submissive. And in arguing for the fact that headship implies an element of authority, traditionalists have been contending for nothing more than the fact that such headship requires a corresponding submission on the part of the wife.

Perriman’s argument that the imperative in verse 21 is not so much emphasising a general duty – women are to be submissive – as the person to whom a wife is to be submissive – her own husband – and the reason why she is to be so – “as to the Lord” – is quite beside the point. For the traditionalists (certainly this reviewer, at any rate) have never argued that Ephesians 5:22 is calling for all women to be submissive to men. Rather they have argued that a Christian wife is to be submissive to her husband as part of her obedience to Christ. That is what this debate is partly about.

Perriman is also guilty of a *non sequitur* when he says that the headship of Christ over His church is not a model for, nor an endorsement of, the husband’s headship of his wife. We cannot here analyse in detail Perriman’s premise and consider if it is well grounded. But even if we concede his point, this entails nothing more than that just as the headship of Christ entails certain obligations on the part of His church, so the headship of the man entails certain responsibilities for his wife. Perriman wants to argue that the husband’s headship is just a social fact rather than being derived in some way from Christ’s headship. *But it is not an essential element of the traditionalist argument that the husband’s headship must be derived from Christ’s headship of His church, nor are there only two alternatives: a headship deriving or in some way formed on the basis of Christ’s headship of His church or a headship that is merely a temporary social reality.* There is a third possibility: that this headship is an integral element of marriage as God ordained it. I would join this with the position that also sees Christ’s headship in some ways as a pattern. But it is logically distinct and derives

from the fact that God ordained that the two become one flesh: verse 31 (c.f. Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5). The “body image” of marriage is, therefore, a creational reality rather than a cultural expression of the marriage relationship. Perriman might agree, but reply that the *husband’s headship* in that one flesh relationship is but a cultural phenomenon rather than a creational reality. This, of course, leads us to the crux of the issue: how are we to understand Genesis 1 and 2?

One of the major difficulties of Perriman’s treatment of Ephesians 5 is the way he glosses over Paul’s command to husbands to love their wives and how Paul ties this to the head/body image and also the counterbalancing of the wife’s duty to the husband with the husband’s duty to the wife. Logically, it would be very difficult to see why the husband’s duty should not also be seen as culturally relative. Paul grounds the love which the husband is to show the wife in the nature of the one flesh where the husband is the head of the wife. In addition, this love is to be patterned after Christ’s love of His church, He being the head and the church being the body. On what *logical* ground, then, can one resist the argument that since, as social reality, husbands are no longer the head of their wives, Paul’s commands no longer apply to them, just as they no longer apply to the wives? If the reply is that cold logic is inappropriate in exegesis, I must rejoin that sentimentality is inappropriate to exegesis. Perriman constructs an elaborate logical argument, and therefore cold logic is essential in analysing what he says. Nor can the force of what I am saying be evaded by responding that the husband is no longer to love his wife as her head, but he is still to love her: for by the same logic, I am then entitled to say that the wife is no longer to submit to her husband as head, but she is still to submit to him just the same. Indeed, at the end of the chapter, Paul baldly calls on wives to reverence their husbands and on husbands to love their wives. All of this surely indicates that the head/body image is less culturally constrained than Perriman claims and that the model of Christ and the Church is more central than Perriman is prepared to concede.

Moreover, while there were obviously husbands who loved their wives, ancient culture was not as monolithic or monochromatic as Perriman’s book would suggest. The notion of love for one’s wife may not have been as self evident to Paul’s contemporaries as it is for us. Concubinage “was accepted as a social fact”.¹¹ Greek and Roman writings indicate that homosexual relationships, especially involving pederasty, were highly prized as setting forth the ideal of human love.¹² Of course, Perriman would rightly reply that these relationships would be contrary to God’s will and that at that point the Christian must be counter cultural. Granted; but this is precisely the point: what Paul was calling for was, in measure, counter cultural for the husbands and the wives. The fact that when he treats of these matters he usually goes back to Genesis 1 and 2 should alert us to the fact that those chapters are more tightly tied to his theological argument than would be the case if they merely functioned in some figurative kind of way.

Perriman’s almost avalanche dodging approach to Scripture comes through in his exegesis of the word “law” in 1 Corinthians 14:34. While he is very detailed in his consideration of the term *kephale*, he is rather meagre in his treatment of the meaning of “law” and concludes that whatever Paul is saying, he is not enforcing submission on women on the basis of Old Testament teaching, even if there were unambiguous Old

Testament teaching to that effect. Quite apart from weakness in his exegesis of this term, his general hermeneutic is seriously flawed in his treatment of this concept. Since Moo's contribution to *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* is cited in the bibliography, why is there no reference at all to Moo's detailed study of the Pauline use of the term *nomos*?¹³ Perriman seems determined in his treatment of 1 Corinthians 11:3 to ensure that this verse is not going to function as a major and integral part of the argument in verses 3-16. The section is, admittedly, a difficult passage to exegete, but the difficulty does not chiefly reside in verse 3. Indeed, this verse helps to provide a framework for the whole of the argument. God's headship of Christ is introduced to provide something of a model for the headship of Christ over the man and the headship of the man over the woman. The massive New Testament theology found in the gospels and expanded upon in passages like Philippians 2: 5ff makes it entirely proper for verse 3 to be seen to function as follows: Christ shares divine nature with the Father, as the Son of God, but as the divine human Messiah He voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father, and even though now exalted He has been *given* that position in the economy of redemption. Though man shares with Christ human nature, yet He differs from us in being the God Man, and in the church, men are in a special sense submissive to and *accountable* to Him. Though the woman shares human nature with the man, yet the difference between male and female *is* to be preserved in the church and this means that the man is head of the wife but she is not head of the man. Role reversal is therefore wholly out of place: even when she prays and prophesies, as indeed she may, she must do so in such a way as not to blur that distinction. But fundamental to that distinction is the headship of the man. (Note that Paul is using the headship image differently here from in Ephesians 5. There Christ is head of all the church, male and female; here, His headship is specifically expressed to be of the man, while the man is head of the woman. We are here dealing with the whole question of the order of the Godhead in the economy of redemption and the order between the sexes established in the churches.)

Perriman is right to see Genesis 1:27 as foundational. Both male and female equally bear the divine image. The equality of the sexes is the bedrock of biblical teaching on this subject. But it is not true that diversity of function is not found until chapter 2. It is hinted at in 1:28. In v. 28b the man and the woman are told to pro-create. They are *both* involved in this. But the woman obviously bears the heavier load (literally!) in the bringing of children into the world. We shall see that this implicit point is underlined and made explicit later in Genesis. This being the case, are we warranted in saying that while *both* are involved in the ruling over creation (v.28c), the man will bear the heavier burden? While the text does not explicitly say this, *it* is implicit and this fact will be teased out in the next two chapters.

In chapter 2, we learn that Adam was tending the garden and naming the animals *before* the woman was created. She was created to help the man. If some traditionalists have been guilty of loading the concept of "help" with unbiblical accretions, the more feminist writers have made too much of the fact that God is the helper of His people. The donkey may help to carry my goods: this is an inappropriate analogy because, as the text emphasises, the animals do not share my nature. God may help me in a task; but no mere human can help me as God does. My neighbour may help me to carry a

table, where we are equal in the load we bear. I may help my neighbour to build a shed, where I am merely assisting because I am a rather impractical man. There are indicators in the text that the woman was to stand to the man in this last category of helping him as his equal but under his leadership. Why? Precisely because the mandate imposed on man and woman (1 :28c) was historically fulfilled by the male first and with the woman coming after. This argument is not negated by the fact that man was made after the animals: it is the reason why woman was expressed to be created which is important. Secondly, the naming of woman *is* important, contrary to what Perriman alleges. Even egalitarians acknowledge this. Thus Ann Brown stresses that the real naming of woman came after the Fall; therefore male authority is the result of sin and is removed in Christ.¹⁴ But Adam named twice: first he names woman as woman; then after the Fall he names the specific woman, Eve, as the mother of all living. No doubt this was an act of faith. The point is surely that naming, which clearly expresses an element of authority, pre-dated the Fall and was continued after the Fall.

The point I am making can be put beyond all dispute. Why, in 2:24, is it the man who will leave his parents and cleave to his wife. Will she not do likewise also (cf. Gen. 24)? Yes; but there is an initiative which belongs to the man. This existed before the Fall and is reaffirmed by Jesus as still existing: Matt. 19:5. The point is borne out by the teaching of chapter 3. It is a commonplace of treatments of the judgments in this chapter that God takes the very blessings and, while not eradicating them, introduces an element of pain and frustration. The woman is affected in that which will be a large part of her life: the bearing of children and her desire for her husband (v. 16). The man has the sentence of death pronounced on him (vv. 17-19). But will not the woman die? Of course she will! But God is touching the man in what will particularly loom large in his life: the subduing of the earth (vv. 17 -19; c.f. 1:28c). What is implicit in chapter 1 is gradually unfolded in chapter 2 and, by the judgments of chapter 3 is made explicit. It is the man who is cast out of the Garden of Eden (3:24). But was not Eve cast out as well? Yes, but it is the man who is singled out and this is then developed in Romans 5. Of course, Adam represents the whole race. But the precise point is surely that it was not Adam and Eve who represented the race but only Adam. Primogeniture as male is crucial here.

The Mosaic covenant restricted the priesthood to the male descendants of Aaron. These had the specific responsibility of teaching God's covenant. Surrounded by a Canaanite culture where there were priestesses galore, is it not significant that while women could prophesy in Israel, the teaching function was confined to men? This did not make women inferior to men, any more than the other tribes were inferior to the descendants of Aaron. Are we to believe (which is what consistency would require of Perriman at this point) that in the Old Testament the church was to be counter cultural but in the New it was to conform to the culture? Is it not more hermeneutically consistent to say that what was embedded at creation and reaffirmed after the Fall became the pattern for God's Old Testament church and continued in the New Testament period. Paul does not quote a text in 1 Corinthians 14 because the teaching on the submission of women in the gatherings of God's people runs through the entire Old Testament. Nor will it do to say that we are all now priests unto God. Of course we are *in certain respects*. None of us is in the sense that nobody today offers blood

sacrifices; all of us are in our direct approach to Christ and in our offering of praise; only men are in the sense that only they may teach God's Word. Paul himself can be very nuanced in the way that he applies the Old Testament teaching on the priesthood (Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 9:13-14). Perriman seriously addresses none of these considerations, nor the fact that the Old Testament monarchy was reserved for the *sons of David*. Ruling and teaching were confined to the men.

In Matt. 19: 4-8, Jesus makes clear that some provisions of the Mosaic law have passed; those things rooted in creation will continue. Therefore, it is a sound hermeneutical principle to say that those things in the Mosaic covenant which work out creational principles are still valid today. The submission of the wife and of women in the church is one of these things.

Accordingly, Perriman's treatment of 1 Timothy 2 must be judged a failure, and an example of special pleading. It is not just that the details are wrong,¹⁵ but it is not these details which mar Perriman's book. It is, rather, that the whole work proceeds on the wrong footing by failing to see the significance of the creational pattern, which is distorted though not obliterated by the Fall and the judgements, and then rescued and restored in Christ.

Paul makes specific reference to the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 in 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5 and 1 Timothy 2, and to the Law in 1 Corinthians 14, and the Fall and judgment in 1 Timothy 2. These show that these passages were very much to the fore in Paul's thinking about male and female. That the Mosaic covenant confirms what we found implicit in the creation and Fall accounts means that there is a massive theology which Perriman has to dodge to establish the case that all along Paul was dealing with cultural issues rather than creational patterns. As Warfield pointed out in connection with the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, it is one thing to dodge a few stones, it is very different dodging an avalanche. You may dodge the odd text, but Perriman is dodging an avalanche of Scripture.

In conclusion, some cautionary remarks are in order. First, arguing for the cultural relativity of certain parts of Scripture has to be done responsibly and in a disciplined way. Otherwise what begins as cultural relativity will end as doctrinal and moral relativism. All Scripture was given in certain cultural contexts; but the God of Scripture is the God of providence. As Warfield pointed out, if God wanted the kind of letters written which a Paul would write, then He prepared a Paul to write them. Perriman may draw the line as to where he applies his principle of cultural relativity. But lacking, as he does, a principled theological hermeneutical control, he may be hard put to explain why those liberals were wrong who argued that since sacrifice was a central idea in the ancient world, it was natural for the biblical writers to explain the death of Christ in sacrificial language. They might go on to say that now that society has outgrown those outmoded concepts, we are free to restate the death of Christ and any theory of atonement which may remain in non sacrificial categories. Linked with this point is Perriman's failure to address the question of "common grace" and general revelation and whether certain cultural patterns preserve something of the divine ideal, which is then underlined and confirmed by special revelation.

It is cause for concern that numerous writers who argue against the teaching on submission of women to their husbands and in the Church reach identical conclusions