



# Equal But Different

November 2010 – Issue 48

## The Priscilla and Aquila Centre: A New Initiative of Moore College

BY JANE TOOHER, DIRECTOR OF THE PRISCILLA AND AQUILA CENTRE

In August 2009, I joined the faculty of Moore College. John Woodhouse employed me to begin a women's ministry centre. The more I thought about what this might look like, the more I was convinced that although the focus would be on benefitting women and their ministries, the centre would intentionally avoid considering women and the ministries of women in isolation from men and the ministries of men. I wanted everything in the name of the centre and the working of the centre to be obvious that it was in partnership with men. That is why I have called it The Priscilla and Aquila Centre.



*Jane has worked in Christian ministry to women, children and teenagers. Prior to taking on this job she was the women's pastor at St Peter's Barge, Canary Wharf in London.*

When we look at the New Testament, we see that Priscilla and Aquila served the cause of Jesus Christ together in a variety of capacities (e.g. Acts 18:2,18-19,26; Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).

Their example has broad application to women and men together in ministry. In this context the Centre aims to:

1. Encourage, strengthen, and improve the training of women for ministry at Moore College.
2. Encourage and promote a wide range of ministries by women, in genuine 'complementary' partnership with the ministries of men.
3. Encourage and support women to pursue post-graduate theological study at Moore College.
4. Encourage and support Christian women to write and publish in the fields of Theology, Biblical Studies, Church History, Ethics, Ministry and Mission – at both a popular and academic level.
5. Encourage, strengthen, and improve the practical expression of Complementarianism at Moore College in order to teach and model Biblically faithful patterns of men and women in partnership in ministry.

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6. Communicate the fruits of its work to the church and the world.

The establishment and the ongoing work of the Centre has been made possible because of the support of the Anglican Deaconess Institution Sydney Limited.

The Centre's first conference will be on February 7, 2011 at Moore College. This conference marks the public launch of the Centre and I hope it will be the first in an annual series of conferences discussing Biblical teaching and wider issues related to men and women working together in Christian ministry. The conference is aimed at men and women, lay and clergy - any Christian interested in how men and women can work better together in ministry.

The conference title is 'Male and Female He Created Them' with the main talks from Genesis 1-3 given by Peter Jensen. Other speakers include: John Woodhouse, Stewart and Helen Binns, Caroline Spencer, Mark Thompson, Tracey Gowing, Keith Condie, Phil Wheeler, Tara Thornley, Joshua Ng, Kara Gilbert, Rick Smith, Paul Dale, Hayley Neal, and myself.

Registration will be online and that should be open at the end of November by going to [www.moore.edu.au](http://www.moore.edu.au) and following The Priscilla and Aquila Centre links. If you would like any brochures sent to you either by mail or email, please contact me, [jane.tooher@moore.edu.au](mailto:jane.tooher@moore.edu.au) and I will be more than glad to send you some. I hope to see you February 7<sup>th</sup> at Moore College.

## THE PRISCILLA & AQUILA CENTRE



*Conference and Official Launch  
Monday 7th February 2011, 9am-4.30pm  
Moore College*

*"Male and female  
He created them"*

**Key Note Speaker: Archbishop Peter Jensen**

For details contact Jane Tooher on 9577 9303 or [jane.tooher@moore.edu.au](mailto:jane.tooher@moore.edu.au).

## Why I'm Still a Complementarian (Part II)

*[This is the second instalment of Mandy Curley's article. In the first instalment, she argued that the complementarian position makes the most sense of the Biblical texts that acknowledge the distinctive roles and contributions of men and women. She is convinced that different roles or responsibilities don't determine value and equality and that the created differences between men and women are **good**. Whilst the first instalment focussed largely on the Old Testament, this second instalment of her article will look at the relevant New Testament passages]*

The New Testament establishes a similar pattern to that already seen in Part I of the article). Jesus treated women with dignity and respect. Jesus taught women and they accompanied him as followers (eg Mt 9:18-26, Mt 12:46-50, Mt 27:55-56, Mk 15:40-41, Lk 7:36-50, Lk 8:1-3, Lk 10:39, and Jn 11:27). He went against his culture and interacted with women in a surprising way. With the Samaritan woman, Jesus shows that the kingdom of God is open to even a non-Jewish woman living in an adulterous relationship. Against the common practice, he talks to women (bringing reaction from his disciples - Jn 4:27). Jesus' actions indicate that women are fully human and that salvation is for them. However it is questionable whether the conclusion that some egalitarians draw from that evidence is justified:

Jesus established the principle of full access of both men and women to the responsibilities attendant to the harmonious functioning of the new community. Jesus taught his followers in word and deed to consider the gender differences *irrelevant* to the concerns and processes of the kingdom of God.<sup>8</sup>

While Jesus afforded women great honour and dignity, he didn't appoint a woman as one of the 12 apostles. He didn't bow to cultural pressure during his ministry, healing on the Sabbath, eating with tax collectors and sinners and similar enacted repudiations of cultural norms, so it is likely that his failure to appoint a woman had more to do with theological objections than a desire to not overturn cultural practices.

The remainder of the New Testament treats men and women differently at certain points. Marriage is the primary context where gender is a significant factor in distinguishing appropriate behaviour for each party to the union. In Ephesians 5:21 and Colossians 3:18 the relationship between husbands and wives is

presented as an asymmetric and complementary one. The husband is called to love his wife and lay down his life for her, while the wife is called to submit to him. The husband is never called to submit and the wife is never called to lay down her life. While there is much more that can and should be said about these passages, it is enough for our purposes to observe the different roles assigned to men and women in these specific relationships on the basis of gender.

While the New Testament encourages all people to use their gifts in the service of the body of Christ (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4), differences in how this is to be done are drawn out on the basis of gender. Sometimes different instructions are given to different groups of people (see 1 Tim 2:8-10, Titus 2:1-6). Paul gives age and gender specific instructions for growing in godliness, suggesting there are certain lifestyle godliness issues that have a distinct importance for each group depending on gender and age. While all are called to grow in Christ-likeness (Rom 8:29; c.f. Deut 6; Col 3; Eph 4-6 and Gal 5:16ff), specific issues exist for different groups. Older women are exhorted to teach what is good to the younger women (Titus 2). Timothy is told to treat people differently on the basis of gender in 1 Timothy 5:1-2. The differences in gender serve as the basis for appropriate behaviour within and towards each group.

Certain roles in the church are assigned to one gender and not the other. While all can prophesy, only men weigh the prophecies (1 Cor 14:34). Women are not to teach or have authority over men (1 Tim 2:14). Gender is the basis for distinguishing whether one should fulfil a certain role, and the basis of the appropriateness of the man serving in these roles is often grounded in the created order, and is never attributed to being a result of the Fall, nor merely grounded in the culture of the day.

Does Galatians 3:28: 'there is neither Jew nor

Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' undermine anything that has been said so far? For many egalitarians, this verse trumps all others in establishing the full equality of women and precludes the exclusion of women from any role or responsibility on the basis of gender. Understanding this verse in its context is essential, for Galatians 3:28 is not an abstract statement about gender roles nor social equality, but comes at a climactic point within Paul's description of salvation history, describing the inclusion of the Gentiles into the promises of God, redefining the people of God. Galatians is concerned with access to salvation – and in Galatians 3:28 God's word proclaims that there is equal access for all groups within society - Jews and Greeks, Slaves and Free, and Male and Female.

I am still a complementarian because, while I agree that the emphasis that men and women have equal access to God will have social implications, I reject the notion that being one in Christ means that there cannot be any distinction in appropriate roles and responsibilities. It is a fallacy that in order for men and women to be equal, there must be an interchangeability of the roles and functions they can perform.

As this brief survey of the Biblical material has shown, I am still a complementarian because I

believe that the created differences between men and women are part of God's good creation and are foundational in defining how men and women are to relate to one another. There is a fundamental unity to our humanity that has basic and primary importance – both male and female are created in the image of God and tasked with dominion over it. Yet this equality in being does not preclude a distinction in the responsibilities and functions that we are to exercise as men and women. In God's goodness, he created us as men and women. Let us use our God given differences to love and serve him fully.

*The following notes accompany both Part I (July 2010) and Part II of this article.*

<sup>1</sup> [http://solapanel.org/article/why\\_i\\_am\\_an\\_egalitarian/](http://solapanel.org/article/why_i_am_an_egalitarian/)

<sup>2</sup> Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Illinois: IVP, 2002), 157.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Hearing the cry' in *Women, Authority and the Bible* (ed Alvera Mickelson; Downers Grove, IL; IVP, 1986), 286-294, 292.

<sup>4</sup> Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A biblical picture of gender equality*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Groothuis, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Groothuis, 190.

<sup>7</sup> Schreiner, *The Ministries of Women*, 216

<sup>8</sup> Bilezikian, 118.



*Mandy is currently doing a Masters of Theology study at MTC, working towards a thesis on 'gender and identity and its implications for ministry', while serving particularly amongst the women at City Night Church, St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney.*



## A Review of the Women's Katoomba Convention

BY KARIN STACE

You don't have to look very far to spot a powerful woman do you?

As I become more engrossed in the daily grind of 'messy mummy-dom' these women seem to be easier and easier to notice. You know the ones? Beautiful and glamorous with every unsightly hair waxed away; in control of their workplaces, their husbands and their nutrition; climbing the corporate ladders – even all the way to the top job in our country! Turn on the tele and they're there too – after all where would Raymond be without Deborah; or Karl without Lisa, and don't get me started on "Sex in the City"! And, perhaps, even within our own Christian circles, we can become overwhelmed by the seemingly 'powerful' whose Facebook updates reveal the perfect lives!

Well, once again, Women's Katoomba Convention was a much-needed retreat from this busy and tempting world! This year's topic "Dressed for Power: Women and God in a Power Hungry World" addressed the very real temptations we face as Christian women to long for impressive lives of power.

Joan Young, Lesley Ramsay and Susan Ravenhall each spoke passionately from God's word and I was struck again by the way in which God turns the 'wisdom' of this world upside down! Out of each of the talks came the overwhelming reminder that true power comes through weakness- most importantly in the death of Christ on the cross that conquered the power of sin and death and brought salvation! The implications for me as a Christian woman, is that to be 'dressed for power' I need to constantly look back to the cross, remembering my Lord Jesus and what He has already accomplished

***A 'powerful' woman of God is a woman of prayer who looks out to others and seeks to share this powerful gospel with the world around her.***

on the cross; remembering that it is the Gospel that is the true power of God for the salvation of all who believe. A 'powerful' woman of God is a woman of prayer who looks out to others and seeks to share this powerful gospel with the world around her. That means I can be 'powerful' even in the mundane 'everyday' as I share the powerful news of Jesus with my children; as I pray for others when cooking a meal, or as I serve and care for my husband or those around me.

Along these lines, I was particularly challenged as Susan spoke from 1 Peter 2:4-3:6. It struck me that 'submitting' – in this case to my husband, but I guess in all cases too- actually requires great strength and 'inner power'. Even though it may seem weak to the world, it requires great strength to submit and 'not give in to fear' - the fear of not being noticed, the fear of not having our husbands respond as we'd like them too, the fear of being taken for granted. A strong and 'powerful' woman is able to submit freely in all things because she plays to the audience of one – her Lord who sees all things and knows the thoughts of our hearts. This was a massive challenge for me!

After a full day of talks, Lesley's seminar "The Power to Change" was practical and helpful. It answered many of my 'where to now' questions. It was very challenging to have the layers of my negative emotions peeled back to recognise the doubts and lies that lie behind them. Why do I want to have 'power' or look like I am in control? Ultimately it was a great reminder that God loves ME, just as he has made me, and my identity as a new creation in Christ is what motivates me to grow and change to be more like Christ. Now all I

need to do is find more time to read Tim Chester's "You Can Change"!!

Another very encouraging aspect of the conference was a number of women who shared their testimonies of how God's power had turned their lives around. These were moving and beautifully reflective of our Saviour's work in this broken world. These testimonies, alongside Colleen Hirst's seminar on addictions, reinforced for me that very often "power exteriors" simply dress up brokenness and hurt. I was very thankful to these women for their honesty.

Ultimately, so much of what I was reminded of at WKC can be summed up in Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:7 ***But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.*** The life of true power is the life of a weak jar of clay that beautifully reflects the glory of her glorious Lord.

I have recently become a 'Rector's Wife' (!! ) and the last six months have been an enormous learning curve – one which has shown me how

much our 'power-hungry' world can influence our Christian lives and ministries. We look to those who lead us to be strong and unbreakable, there to fulfil our every need. So too, we who lead, are tempted to use the modern day 'street corners' of Facebook and Twitter to draw attention to our ministry accomplishments! If I am honest, I often long to be that 'powerful superwoman' who is never weak or broken. But at WKC, God gently reminded me again that the beauty of the gospel is that He chooses to use fragile jars of clay whose fragility makes His glory even more evident!

So can I encourage us all to fight the temptations of this world to seek after the worldly 'power clothes' of fame and success, wealth or great gifts. But rather let us pray that God will help us learn afresh that true power comes in weakness, as we pray, serve and love others in the sight of an audience of one – our Saviour Jesus!

*To download MP3s or purchase CDs of the talks go to*  
<http://shop.kcc.org.au/cubecart/index.php?act=viewCat&catId=160>



*Karin is serving alongside her husband who is the Senior Minister of St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church, South Carlton. She loves catching up with friends, seeing people 'get' the gospel and relaxing holidays with Baden and her three small children.*

### ***Copying Journal Articles***

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## Oh, Eve! Some thoughts on Genesis 3:16(a)

BY HELEN JENSEN

*To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children .....*"

I was preparing a study on Hannah when I began to think about the judgement in Genesis 3:16(a) on the woman in the Garden. Was there more to God's judgement on the woman than first meets the eye? Have our translations from the Hebrew into English been unhelpful to us in understanding the judgement correctly? What has it really meant for women through the centuries? Could Hannah's situation as a childless, seemingly infertile, wife have something to do with the judgement on the woman in the Garden?

Much has been written, especially in the last few decades, of the true meaning and implications of Genesis 3:16(b) but is there more to Genesis 3:16(a)?

The more I pondered and read this verse the more it seemed to me that there was more meaning and impact than a first reading would suggest. What else could the judgement mean? What more could there be to the declaration of God that "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children"? Isn't this enough? I shared part of my concern with someone who is skilled in Hebrew and asked if our English translations conveyed all that the Hebrew was saying. I was somewhat pleased to learn that there is more to it than my translation conveys although my source was not much help in telling me what exactly our translations should say.

### **So, here are some thoughts on Genesis 3:16(a).**

I am convinced that the judgement on the woman in the Garden in Genesis 3:16(a) and on all womankind since, is to do with her womanliness. That is, not only will she suffer increased pain in childbirth and childbearing (does this imply that there was already some pain in childbearing?) but everything to do with her being a woman has been judged. From puberty through childbearing to menopause, from the beginning of pregnancy through the sleepless nights with a new baby and the anxieties of being a parent of teenagers to the

scariness of seeing the next generation born and concern for that generation, too. Does motherhood ever end?

When I think of puberty I remember those girls who had such pain that they took strong painkillers and missed several days of school each month. It was not an easy time for them at all! When I think of pregnancy I think of those women who have and are facing the desperation of infertility. Longing to be pregnant, they wait each month hoping that this time they will find that it has happened. In our time this has resulted in the IVF programme, which has enabled many couples to finally become parents and hold their own baby in their arms. But with some, this longed-for miracle has never happened despite all the medical intervention and time and money that the programme has taken.

Here I write as a non-medical person who has been involved with women over several decades and shared with them their hopes and dreams. The desire to have a child/children has resulted in adoptions and fostering which has, in some cases, met this mothering desire. Yes, I know that some people adopt and/or foster children because they see the needs of the children and their heart is stirred to help and be hands-on involved. But the urge to have their own children and to find that they cannot, is, with some women, such a grief that they cannot face other people's children and their noise and antics without distress and pain. And what of the dreadful sickness which some women encounter during pregnancy itself, commonly misnamed 'morning sickness'? Some women wish that it was indeed confined to the morning only!

I am reminded of those who die in childbirth. It is still a very real occurrence and not only in developing countries elsewhere in the world. And miscarriages? And premature birth? And stillbirth? And what about obstetric fistulas? We may, also, think that they are of a bygone era or only in some poor African countries, but they are still happening in our own country with all its great medical

developments and technologies. What of those who suffer endometriosis? That condition which affects some each month and has the side effects of difficulty in having children, as well as pain. When I think about the problems of being a woman, I remember, also, the women who have had their dreams shattered by ectopic pregnancies and hysterectomies, to say nothing of the great difficulties which others face at the other end of their reproductive lives. The dreaded menopause! And what of premenstrual tension? As a teenager, I remember a neighbour who regularly was very grumpy and yelled at her husband and children for a few days every month. Now I have come to understand that that poor lady was probably suffering from premenstrual tension and probably did not know why she was behaving as she was. There may be other conditions of being a woman that I do not know about and which you can add to this list? Being a woman on this earth and under the judgement of God is a fearsome thing!

#### **Being a woman in this fallen world.**

Does the Bible recognize the difficulties of being a woman in this fallen world? Yes, I have found more recognition than I would have first thought – more verses have leapt from the pages of the Scriptures than I have ever noticed before. Here are some of them:

1. Hannah, of course, is not the only example of a woman who seemed infertile. What of Sarah and Rachel, Samson's mother and Elizabeth? What of those telling verses in Proverbs 28:15(b)-16. 'Three things are never satisfied: four things never say, "Enough": Sheol, the barren womb, the land never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says, "Enough."' As an Australian, I understand about drought (the land never satisfied with water) and remember the fantastic display of spring wildflowers in the desert when rains did come. The many bushfires we see in this country bring to life the starkness of the next phrase - the fire that never says, "Enough". We may even have a notion of Sheol never being satisfied. But it is, as a woman, that the barren womb which longs to be filled, strikes home.
2. Rachel's labour is described as 'hard' (Genesis 35:16). An obvious result of the judgement on the woman in the Garden? How often is a difficult time likened to the

anguish of a woman in labour? (Psalm 48:6, Isaiah 13:8, Isaiah 42:14(b)) The common experience and timelessness of this in the Scriptures makes it very plain that giving birth became no easy process.

3. I have often wondered if the circumstances of Benjamin's birth indicate that Benjamin was premature? (Genesis 35:16-18) Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:8, that Christ appeared to him as one 'untimely' born, also indicates a knowledge of premature birth.
4. Job 3 shows an understanding of the birthing process. His despairing cry, "Why did I not die at birth, come out of the womb and expire?" (Job 3:11) reveals a knowledge of the death of children at the time of birth. His cry "Or why was I not as a hidden stillborn child, as infants who never see the light?" (Job 3:16) reveals that stillbirth was indeed known to him. The curse he utters on the morning that "did not shut the doors of my mother's womb" (Job 3:10) show a recognition of the birthing process .
5. It is interesting that Rachel can give as an excuse for not getting up (and so hiding the stolen household gods of Laban) that she is of the way with women (Genesis 31:35). Surely this is a reference to menstruation?
6. Death during childbirth is also seen in the death of Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife (Genesis 35:16-20) and Phinehas' wife in 1 Samuel 4:16-22.
7. The difficulties of motherhood dealing with growing and grown children are also seen particularly in Proverbs where a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother (Proverbs 10:1) and the son is instructed not to forget his mother's teachings (Proverbs 1:8). And a foolish man is seen to despise his mother (Proverbs 15:20).
8. The people of God knew of miscarriage (see Exodus 23:26). It is interesting that miscarriage and lack of milk for feeding children is part of the curse on Israel in Hosea 9:14. Exodus 21:22-24 is about men causing miscarriage through their actions. It is also a recognition of premature birth ('but there is no harm' verse 22).
9. The vulnerability of the pregnant woman and

the nursing mother is seen in Jesus' comments in Mark 13:17. His words to the daughters of Jerusalem on the way to his crucifixion in Luke 23:29 also reveal his understanding of this vulnerability.

10. It is interesting that the Scripture also knows that there is a time when women are past childbearing (see the commentary on Sarah when the messengers from God tell Abraham that Sarah will have a son about this time next year in Genesis 18:11). Also, consider the instructions for the younger widows in 1 Timothy 5:14 as compared with the instructions to Timothy concerning the widow over 60 years of age who is presumably no longer able to have children and has no family to support her in her circumstances (1 Timothy 5:9-10).
11. I also wonder if the wisdom that 'It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife' may not be applied to the premenstrual woman (Proverbs 21:9)?

These are just a selection of some of the verses which indicate the difficulty of being a woman in this fallen world. Perhaps you have noticed others?

It is interesting that some of the commentaries on Genesis do notice the consequences of the judgement on the woman, although not many, but the nature and hardships of these consequences are not much discussed beyond the obvious ones

related to increased pain in childbirth.

So what are we to make of our lot? Are we to wring our hands and blame Eve? Are we to cry out to our Maker when in any of the difficulties of our fallen womanliness? Are we to support medical and psychological research which we hope may relieve us of the various pains and sufferings connected with being a woman? Certainly we can appeal to our loving Maker who can and does hear our heartfelt pleas and appeals and does act in love for He not only hears but cares for us. Because He knows and wants what is best for us we do not always get exactly what we pray for nor when we pray for it. Certainly we would want to support research which will relieve and help us in our 'difficult' times as women and in childbirth. But the judgement on us as women will still remain in varying degrees as long as we live in this fallen world. We are part of that world which waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; part of the creation which was subjected to futility; part of the creation which will be set free from the bondage to decay; part of those who wait eagerly for adoption – for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:19-23). Our difficulties in being women remind us that we are part of a fallen world and that God has chosen to redeem us through the sacrifice of His Son for us. We will see that redemption and be fully as we were designed to be only when we are in the new heavens and the new earth: where righteousness dwells and where there is no more death or mourning or crying or pain. Some may be tempted to call out, "How long, O Lord?", and, "Come, Lord Jesus!"



*Helen Jensen is married to Phillip Jensen, Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney. She is the mother of three and grandmother of 10. She loves being in Bible Study with women and has served on the Equal but Different steering committee for a number of years.*

## In Trouble and In Joy: Book Review

By EMMA PFAHLERT

“In Trouble and In Joy: Four women who lived for God” by Sharon James.

Do you know why I like reading Christian biographies? Being of the bullet-point persuasion, I'll give you four reasons.

1. They are encouraging without being too heavy: good night-time reading without being so plot-driven that you can't put them down when you're meant to be going to sleep.
2. They increase my thankfulness to God as I am exposed to others who live with much greater hardships, in different times and different countries.
3. They remind me that we are all different but part of the one body, with different gifts, abilities, circumstances and struggles – we are all unique but indispensable to the body (see 1 Corinthians 12). This in turn counteracts the envy I sometimes feel for my Christian sisters whose lives seem easier or happier.
4. They remind me that people don't change and God doesn't change. People are always sinful and God is always faithful!

Sharon James' book on the lives of four faithful women proved to be enormously encouraging for these reasons and many others.

She writes about Margaret Baxter (Richard Baxter's wife) who lived in 17<sup>th</sup> century England, Sarah Edwards (Jonathan Edwards' wife) who lived in 18<sup>th</sup> century America, as well as Anne Steele and Frances Ridley Havergal – both single, both prolific hymn-writers, living in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries respectively.

Sharon James writes in a simple, clear way, so this book is an easy-read. She sets her four mini-biographies out clearly and helpfully, with sections on

- i. the historical setting
- ii. an outline of the woman's life

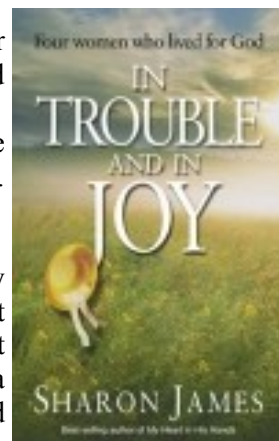
- iii. an assessment of her character and significance
- iv. selection of the woman's writings eg. letters, hymns, etc.

Overall, I was struck by each woman's contentment and joy, which were not dependent on good health, a fulfilling and well-paid career, or a happy family life. Their joy came from knowing God and trusting in the Lord Jesus, dedicating their whole being to serving Him all of their days. They visited the sick, evangelised friends and strangers, helped the poor, supported their husbands or other family members - and none of them ever earned a wage! This is a helpful example in modern times, when we fall into the trap of needing a pay-packet to feel like we're doing something that's truly useful or valuable to society.

I was also reminded that nothing really changes in terms of humanity's temptations and sin. Given today's obsession with gadgets, we need to be continually encouraged to lift our minds to lofty heights and contemplate eternity. Surprisingly, some of these women testified to that same temptation to revel in 'empty toys' and pointless distractions rather than meditation on God's word. Piano recitals and novels were yesterday's Facebook and reality TV-shows.

It was good to realise that the churches of previous centuries, just like ours, experienced ebbs and flows of growth and decline, along with changing emphases on faithful perseverance versus feverish evangelistic efforts. This encourages me not to despair during times of slow growth or fluctuations in focus.

More specifically, I was encouraged by each of the four women for different reasons.



Margaret Baxter married the much-older Richard, loving and respecting him through much persecution. She “was always there for him: comforting him, caring for him in his frequent illnesses, shouldering all of the practical concerns of life”<sup>1</sup>, and enabling his prolific writing. She loved and encouraged him despite the fact that it severely changed her station in life: wealth and status in youth became persecution and poverty in her married life.

I identified most with Sarah Edwards, perhaps because her situation was closest to my own. She was a minister’s wife with 11 children (yes, 11!). Her support of her husband’s ministry was not just a sign of her love for Jonathan, for she regarded it as a service of God. She wrote of the sheer exhaustion of mothering and of often being tense and tired when her kids were young (which was a fair proportion of her life). I was challenged by her emphasis on meditating on God’s word, by her generous hospitality to many friends and strangers, and by her fervent prayers that her children would have eternal life. She handed everything over to God, even the health and life of her children. Her frequent house-guests testified to the happiness of the household and to her generosity in visiting the sick, poor and bereaved. She experienced war, the death of children, poverty and the rejection and dismissal of her husband from his parish - all this from a woman who had grown up with wealth and comfort! Despite the trials, she willingly served and submitted to her husband, and saw him and his ministry as a gift to the church, wanting to free him up to write and preach so that many would be encouraged. By 1900, over 100 missionaries had come from the family that Sarah and Jonathan started, along with countless others who loved and served Jesus in many other ways.

Anne Steele challenged me with her faithfulness and perseverance despite years of illness (probably undiagnosed malaria). She maintained a calm, resigned contentment and saw her years of suffering as sharpening her focus on heaven. She wrote, “Perhaps if our path were always smooth and easy and we met with no cold storms or distressing accidents we should be ready to sit down or a least loiter by the way, forgetful of our journey’s end”.<sup>2</sup> Her suffering was the subject of many hymns that she wrote to encourage the church.

Frances Ridley Havergal excelled in one-to-one ministry. She loved to talk with people about Jesus and took every opportunity to share her faith and challenge others. She talked to strangers on holidays, her music students, her friends and family members. She was bold, sometimes uncomfortably confronting, but always motivated by love. She wrote and distributed evangelistic tracts, even giving one to a potential suitor! She was, like Anne Steele, more than content with remaining unmarried and was thankful for the extra time and space this gave her. She was a great intellect, very talented at music, loved physical challenges and adventures, and desired to use all of her abilities for the Lord. In her later life, she received over 600 letters each week and used these opportunities to correspond about kingdom issues. Salvation for her friends and acquaintances was always foremost in her mind.

These women were truly inspirational: godly, wise, and persistent in their struggle with sin and their desire to be obedient to God and His Word. This book is very encouraging, but thankfully doesn’t lean towards deifying sinful women! The author illuminates some of their unhelpful tendencies and doesn’t whitewash their sin, so that I didn’t come away feeling guilty that I’m not a perfect Christian like these women. I finished the last page with a prayer that I would learn from each of them - these rescued, Spirit-filled women who by God’s grace knew him intimately in life, shared in Christ’s suffering, and remained joyful and sacrificial to the end.

<sup>1</sup>Sharon James, p.35

<sup>2</sup>Quoted by Sharon James, *In Trouble and In Joy*, p. 140.



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## Complementarianism: Current concerns and future fixes

BY PHILLIP COLGAN

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When I meet non-believers and they discover that I am a minister of a Sydney Anglican Church, I am amazed how often they are aware of the fact that our Diocese still holds to a ‘complementarian’ view of women’s ministry. Of course, they do not use that particular term and this awareness is rarely positive! However, there is no doubt that the fact that our Synod has, over the last 30 years, consistently resisted calls to ordain women as presbyters has been noticed by the wider community.

That said, my experience is that Sydney Anglican churches are nowhere near as conservative on this issue as we are publically perceived to be. I am amazed by the number of people I meet who are training for or already in fulltime ministry who ‘haven’t worked out where I stand on the women’s issue yet’. Really? Surely, anyone who purports to be a teacher of God’s word must have worked through the relatively few passages and come to an opinion? Not to have done so suggests either incompetency or, dare I say it, an unwillingness to stand up and be counted.

Moreover (and perhaps as a result of the above), I find that many lay people are only vaguely aware of the issues involved and the key passages. In my experience, preaching that upholds that women should not be allowed to preach to mixed congregations is often met with comments like:

- “Well you have to teach that, because that’s the line in this Diocese.”
- “That’s one point of view, but I hold another.”
- “Really, is this that important an issue that we should even bother arguing about it?”
- “I refuse to believe that!”

Even when people do preach on the topic it seems that it is often explained apologetically: ‘I understand that this offends, but it’s God’s word so we have to accept it, even if we don’t like it.’ It seems to me that our aim is often to defend, rather than to carefully explain and teach people to delight in these truths.

If my anecdotal evidence is true (and even if it isn’t!) we need to keep teaching the Biblical view of male and female relationships in the church and family. Our Theological College needs to prioritise teaching on this issue so that no one in ministry can say, “I don’t know what I think!” Our churches need to keep it on their preaching programmes, regularly teaching on 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3 and 1 Timothy 2. When our teachers teach these passages they need to slow down and teach them well. We need to answer the obvious objections and opposing arguments. We need go beyond teaching just the conclusion and teach the theological underpinnings. We need to explain why the relation of men and women in family and church is grounded in the doctrine of creation and in the very essence of the Godhead. We need to assert the authority of the Bible as we teach these truths, explaining that Biblical truth can only be challenged on exegetical grounds and that our understanding is not a matter of opinion or Diocesan policy. We need to teach these truths without apology. Instead, we need to believe and teach that God’s way is the best way for us. We need to encourage people to delight in the wonderful way God has created men and women as ‘equal but different’. Finally, we need to ensure that our next Archbishop (like the current one) is a man who will boldly and faithfully hold the line on this issue.



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