

## **Men and Women**

### **There is Neither Male nor Female (Gal 11:2-16):**

[ I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you.<sup>3</sup> But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband\* is the head of his wife,\* and God is the head of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head,<sup>5</sup> but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved.<sup>6</sup> For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil.<sup>7</sup> For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection\* of God; but woman is the reflection\* of man.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man.<sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.<sup>10</sup> For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of\* authority on her head,\* because of the angels.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman.<sup>12</sup> For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God. ]

In the Jewish and Hellenistic (idolatrous) system of convictions, women are viewed as having a subordinate status to men according to which women are inferior and therefore have limited rights. He would want to affirm a part of these traditions as fundamentally true, but he would want to reject another part of these traditions as resulting from the absolutization of this truth which makes out of it an idolatry with a power of bondage resulting in a perversion of the relationship between men and women. Paul affirms as valid the view which sees women as subordinate to men: "a woman's head is the man" (11:3). But for Paul, this subordination is to be understood in terms of the relation to God and to Christ. In I. Cor. 11:2-16 Paul affirms the traditional view of the subordination of women to men. <sup>1</sup>

But in 1 Cor. 11:11-12 Paul expresses how this subordination is redefined "in the Lord." Women and men have the same status. "There is neither woman without man nor man without woman (11:11). Indeed, the subordination can be reversed. "For just as woman originated from man, so too, man exists through woman" (11:12). In terms of Paul's structure of authority in the community of believers, men have authority over women in that they are (according to the Jewish and Hellenistic traditions) the first in relation to God ("women originated from man") and thus a more direct image and reflection of God (11:7). This is also true in Christ. Women have to acknowledge the authority of men who are believers and who themselves acknowledge the authority of Christ ("the head of every man is Christ;" 11:3) and are thus Christ-like (in them, there are Christ-like manifestations of God). But these men who are believers also have to recognize the authority of women by seeing them as preceding them, which is in accord with the Jewish and Hellenistic traditions stating that "man exists through woman." In other words, they should have toward women the attitude they have toward Christ. This is not a paternalistic attitude; indeed, it considers women as better than themselves. In women, men discover Christ-like manifestations of God. And thus women are in turn in a position of authority over men. In Christ, "there neither male nor female" (Gal. 3:28). <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Patte. *PAUL'S FAITH and the POWER OF the GOSPEL* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 340.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Patte. *PAUL'S FAITH and the POWER OF the GOSPEL* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 341.