

**06/01/04 - No. 87: Liturgical Man, Liturgical Women -- Part 2**

Rite Reasons, Studies in Worship, No. 87  
Copyright © 2004 Biblical Horizons  
June, 2004

The New Covenant changes none of this. There is nothing new or odd about Mary's sitting at Jesus' feet, nothing strange about various "deaconesses"• serving the Incarnate Tabernacle. Paul affirms that in Christ there is neither male nor female, but he equally insists on a distinction in liturgical roles, as we have seen. The Church is the new Temple, not a new synagogue, according to the repeated testimony of the New Testament. It is the place of the offering of living sacrifices and sacrifices of praise. It is the place of the new sacramental meal, the new bread and wine of the new Tribute and Peace Offerings (Lev. 2; 7:11-14; Num. 15). To be sure, wise women like Lydia, Priscilla, and others have much of value to say, and can instruct men like Apollos, but they do not do so in the sacramental liturgical context. To use modern parlance, there is nothing wrong with a Huldah as Sunday School teacher.

It is argued by some that Paul did not tackle the matter of women as ordained "priests"• in the Church because of cultural reasons. The time was not right, it is said. To which we must reply that this is nonsense. Paul is not in the least hesitant to attack sabbaths, circumcision, food laws, calendar issues, and other matters of intense cultural and traditional relevance. He does not hesitate to offend Jew and Gentile alike. Had women's ordination been part of the Divine agenda for the New Covenant, it would have been part of that list of extremely controversial issues.

### **The Special-Priestly Burden**

Now, it is also sometimes argued that only men should serve as liturgical leaders because only men can stand iconically as representatives of the Father to Daughter Zion, and of Jesus Christ to the Bride. And this is true enough. But it can imply that men take these roles only for "merely symbolic"• salvation-historical reasons. It can imply that women might just as well do it, but that it just happens that only men are symbolically right for the job. Such thinking does not do full justice to the Biblical conception. The reason that only men may be priests in this special sense (servant priests to the royal priesthood) is that men and women were created as two different kinds of liturgical beings. It is a matter of creation design, not merely a matter of historical role-playing.

Now, we are told that in glory there is no longer marriage and giving in marriage.

After the resurrection, Jesus Himself will be the sole Priest and will lead His Bride in worship. Hence, in a sense, the fact that only men serve as special or servant priests in the Church is something limited only to this present phase of history. The present situation continues for as long as men and women are still in their creation bodies, not in their glorified bodies. But the present situation does not arise simply because Jesus was a man and so only a man should represent Him before the congregation. Though that is part of it, there is more to it than that. It is because God created men and women differently precisely for this liturgical reason.

Women will never serve as liturgical leaders, not in this age or in the age to come. But the time will come, in glory, when male priests, liturgical leaders, will joyfully give up this role and rejoice to have Jesus Himself as Sole Priest and Liturgical Leader. Far from coveting this position, women should rejoice that they don't have to take up this burden, that they are already in glory in a real sense, for "the woman is glory of the man"• (1 Cor. 11). Women already partly possess what men can only look forward to: glory and joyful submission to the leadership of the Supreme Male.

### **Priests and Angels**

The fact that priests are linked with angels points to this change. Men were created lower than the angels, but destined to be put over them. Angels were priests to train men during mankind's childhood. Good angels joyfully give up their supervisory role when men come of age; bad angels, of course, try to prevent man's maturation. Similarly, male human priests rejoice at the thought that someday they will relinquish this role and become fully part of the Bride before the Supreme Male Priest.

"Angel"• is "messenger."• Spirit angels are closely tied to the Holy Spirit. The Father sends the Spirit to the Son, and the Son sends the Spirit back to the Father. Historically, the Father sends the Spirit and spirit angels to bring the Son into history, and then the Son sends the Spirit and human angels to bring the Bride with Him to the Father at the end.

The human priests under the Law served in a replica of the heavenly sanctuary. They were symbolic angels. They moved on the "ladder to heaven"• between men and God in the rituals. They were dressed in white angelic garments and "flew"• about in the Tabernacle, which was an image of the heavenly cloud with its furniture symbolically positioned along the bar midway up the sides of the Tabernacle and hence in the air. As we have seen, Malachi sees priestly words as those of the "angel of Yahweh."• [For a full, if not entirely orthodox, discussion of this see Margaret Barker, "The Angel Priesthood,"• in Barker, *The Great High Priest: The*

Temple Roots of Christian Liturgy (New York, T. & T. Clark, 2003).]

According to the New Testament, spirit angels gave the Law, and in Christ humanity is now over the angels (Heb. 1-2; Gal. 3-4). It might seem to follow from this that now all human beings are eligible for the office of liturgical leadership. But, at this point history is only half-way over. (I don't mean that literally and chronologically, but in terms of covenant history.) The Spirit and His spirit-angels have moved from Father to Son, and the Son has come. The Spirit has been given to the Incarnate Son. But there is still a need for the Spirit to work through angels to bring the Son and His Bride to the Father. At Pentecost, the Spirit is sent from the Son to begin this movement back to the Father.

While in some sense the New Humanity is resurrected in Christ and seated with Him in the heavenlies, in another sense earthly saints still await this glorification. And all await the resurrection of their bodies.

The sense in which earthly saints are not yet in glory is precisely their Adamic-body sense. We are still in our Adamic, first bodies. And because of this, the liturgical differences between bodily men and bodily women are still in play. This is Paul's reasoning.

Under the Law, human priests represented the Angel of Yahweh, and were like spirit-angels. Being of the Adamic bodily creation, they were all men. In the Gospel Age, human servant priests represent the Man Christ Jesus, and hence speak and act in union with His glorified presence and body. They speak His words and supervise His table, and must do so only as He wishes, as revealed in Scripture. They are also like angels, because they act "in the Spirit,"• but in the Spirit as sent by Jesus on Pentecost. Hence, the pastors of the seven churches in Rev. 2-3 are "angels."•

Because of the absence of Jesus Christ, in heaven until the end, the duality of the human race continues to be liturgically relevant. There must be those who represent Him and those who respond to Him. There must be leaders and there must be helpers. Until the transformation of our bodies, and until the time when we all stand in the physical presence of Jesus Christ, the Supreme Male, there must be liturgical men and liturgical women.

The "already"• of full salvation is that in Christ there is neither male nor female. But the "not yet"• of full salvation is that we still live in Adamic and Evian bodies. And as we have seen and shall see, those bodies do not differ primarily in their plumbing and psychology, but in their liturgical design. As long as this is the case, only men

may take up the burden of being angels of Christ in liturgy.

### **Trinity and Liturgy**

The early Church recognized that the differences between men and women are related to the differences between the Son and the Spirit. And because Son and Spirit are uniquely different from one another, and not merely masks over something that is the same underneath, so men and women are uniquely different. The Church recognized that as Creator, the Spirit is not feminine but masculine over against the creation. But the Church also recognized in the Spirit an archetype of the feminine.

In God, the Son is Word and the Spirit is Glorifier. Language that initiates ("take and eat"•) and guards ("thou shalt not"•) is associated with the Son, while glory that brings to fullness is associated with the Spirit. This is what Paul says when he says that the woman is glory and that the man is not. Hair is glory, for it flows out from the body. The man is not to have glory-hair, but the woman is (1 Cor. 11).

To be sure, Son and Spirit, with Father, are God, and in that respect the same. But at the same time, the differences in "property"• and "person"• of the Father, Son, and Spirit are total. Those differences go "all the way down."• The differences fully permeate each Person as God, and are not differences added to some substratum of sameness. And the differences are liturgical. While the Father does serve the Son and Spirit in various ways, the way in which the Son and Spirit serve the Father is by worshipping Him. And they each worship the Father in their own specific and different ways: the Son by word and the Spirit by glory. And they do so together, not separately, each in His own way.

[For a good discussion of this matter, see Thomas Hopko, "On the Male Character of the Christian Priesthood,"• in Hopko, ed., *Women and the Priesthood* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999).]

### **Initiation and Consummation**

Word initiates; glory completes. Adam was made first, then Eve. Humanity began with a man; humanity ends as a Bride, the New Jerusalem. Jesus, who had no form or comeliness, initiates the Church; but at the end the Bride is all glorious within and without. At the end, human males will all be part of a glorious Bride who interacts with the Supreme Male, Jesus Christ.

These differences between initiation and glorification play out in history the differences between Son and Spirit. And they are integral to liturgy, which is the

human reflection of the worship of the Father by the Son and the Spirit. Men alone may teach and lead in the dialogue of worship because they are created for this initiating purpose. But women must participate and thereby lend glory to worship. "It is not good for the man to be alone,"• and it is not good for worship to be done exclusively by men. The glorifying voices of women must be heard responsively in prayer and song.

It is the liturgical differences between men and women that account for their other differences, not the other way around. Men's voices are generally an octave lower than women's. A musician can tell you that lower notes are more foundational and higher notes are more decorative. The harmonic or "totality"• movement in homophonic and polyphonic music is directed from the bass line, while the glory and decorative aspects of the music, including the melody, are in higher notes. Men's voices (low notes) control the direction of the music, but women's voices (high notes) glorify it.

On average women live longer than men. Women complete what men begin. Of course, women do initiate many things in the wider cultural area, but as a general rule, in a marriage or family, it is the women who will live to complete and bring the most glory to the situation. Take any normal home: The man provides the house, but it is the woman who is motivated to decorate it. (This is not to say that healthy heterosexual males may never be home-artists. I'm pointing to the norm.)

As a rule men are stronger than women. Their bones are larger and heavier. As a result, men tend to be the guardians and protectors of society, a society that is decorated and glorified by women.

It is the beauty and glory of women that inspires men. Men do things in order to win and please women. The history of literature, music, and art proves this beyond a shadow of a doubt. Young men "show off"• and older men go out and do great deeds "" initiating history over and over again "" for the sake of women and their glory and beauty. (Think of the Trojan War, or Petrarch's Laura, of Dante's Beatrice, of Berlioz's Harriet Smithson, of all the nude women painted by artists, of knightly romances, etc. etc. etc.)

Women bring the future, and hence future glory, by bearing children. Men do not. Men initiate the process, usually, and the man's sexual organ displays that initiating function. But women complete the function of sexuality as it relates to the future, bringing the future to pass. Like their hair, the children that come from their bodies are their glory.

Examples could be multiplied, but what I have sought to demonstrate is that the physical and psychological differences between men and women arise from their differing liturgical purposes. They were created differently because they have different liturgical functions, and those differences play out in all the rest of life.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the differences between men and women exist because they are created reflections of the difference between the Son and the Spirit. The differences are foundationally liturgical in nature, because the Son and the Spirit worship the Father in two different ways. Eventually, in our Spirit-permeated glorified bodies, we shall all be Bride before the Ultimate Male, the Son, Jesus Christ. While we continue to exist in our first bodies, however, the liturgical distinction between male and female will continue to exist.

Far from coveting the office of liturgical leader, women should rejoice that they are not even eligible for it. "Be not many of you teachers, my brothers, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment,"• writes James (3:1). It is not a privilege so much as a burden to be a servant priest, and true servant priests will rejoice to lay down this burden when they stand before the True and Only Priest.

Back in the old days they understood this. They used to drag bishops to their ordination in chains.

Afterword: Servant Priest and Bride

This essay is not complete unless I point out another and related oddity of modern worship, an oddity that is found in many evangelical churches that would never ordain a women to the office of minister. I refer to the practice of having laymen (and laywomen) get up and read Scripture or lead in prayer during worship. As far as I know, this practice is a post-1960s development. I do not believe it went on in the early church, the medieval church (East and West), in Reformation churches, or in post-Reformation churches until very recently.

Churches engaging in this practice might well ask themselves what was wrong with the whole history of the Church. Why were all these pastors and leaders and theologians blind to the value of having laypersons participate in leading worship? They might ask themselves why the Holy Spirit waited nearly 2000 years to guide the Church into this wonderful practice?

The answer is that the our fathers in the faith were not blind at all. Rather, they had

a different conception of worship. The Christian religion regards worship as a dialogue between Father and Daughter Zion, between Husband and Bride. The congregation as a whole is feminine, and that includes men as well as women. The only "man"• in a liturgical setting is the "servant priest,"• the male human being ordained to lead in worship. It is for this reason that he and only he stands with Christ to lead the congregation in prayers. It is for this reason that he and only he reads the Word of Christ to the congregation. It is his voice that is to be heard consistently throughout the liturgy in all leading and initiating roles. Those who are not ordained to this role only speak in unison with the congregation.

This is not to say that the ordained minister may not appoint another man to take up this role in his absence. But it is to say that the man who stands for Jesus Christ in the liturgy should be the only man to lead in liturgy. (The question of whether it is advisable to have more than one ordained man take a leadership role in worship will be the subject of the next issue of Rite Reasons.) There are plenty of other occasions in the life of the Church for laypersons to share their gifts. They can do things on Sunday night and in Wednesday night studies and prayer meetings. In the Garden, where the sacrament is present, however, things are different. The tradition of the Church in this regard is not to be discarded lightly.

Christian liturgy anticipates the liturgy of the New Jerusalem, the final liturgy. In the final liturgy, all men are part of the Bride and are in dialogue with Jesus, the Supreme Male. It is for this reason that it is wrong for laymen to take up leadership roles in worship. In the absence of Jesus (before His return), the ordained pastor (servant priest) stands with Him, speaks His words, and oversees His table. In sacramental worship, worship "in the heavenlies,"• the congregation is not a collection of men and women led by a minister who is some kind of "player coach."• Rather, the congregation is Bride, and is led by Jesus through His ordained representative.

Just as in the resurrection, the men in the congregation are to respond as part of the Bride to the words and actions of the Groom. Just as women are not to lead in worship, neither are unordained men to be asked to read various things or offer various prayers.

This was true in Israel as well. Laymen did not take up any of the roles of the priests. Those roles were carefully laid out in Leviticus "" in the "dialogue"• of the rituals it is clearly set out what the layman does and what the priest does. Laymen and laywomen did exactly the same things, and never what the priest did. (Note: There is no hint that laymen performed rituals as representatives of wives and daughters. Women did exactly the same things as men, on their own, or with Levite

or deaconess assistance.) This is the pattern God set in play for 1500 years, and there is no hint in the New Testament that this pattern has been altered. In liturgy, laymen and laywomen are in exactly the same position before the Priest (Jesus Christ) and His servant-priest representative (the minister, or someone he appoints in his stead in his absence).