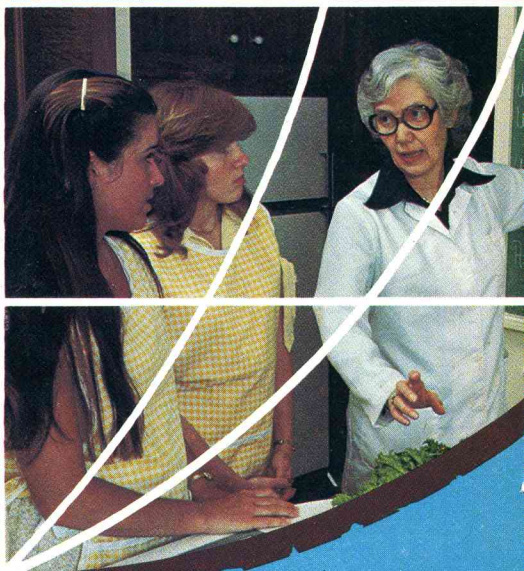
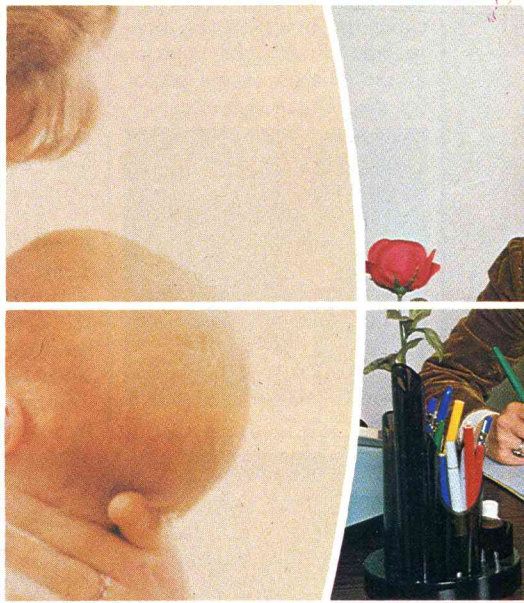




Women and God's Plan

By Ronald Kelly

The traditional role of women is under attack. Just how do women — one half the human race — enter God's Kingdom? Women, read here how to prepare for rulership in the world tomorrow.

What role do women play in the plan of God?

Stop and think about it! This question is of life-and-death importance. Women make up half the human race, and men, who make up the other half, must interrelate with women, in whatever role they play, for all eternity.

When God made man almost 6,000 years ago, did He make *just* man? Was the woman merely an afterthought? Had God intended all along for mankind to be male *and* female?

Can women enter God's Kingdom just like men? And will their rewards be the same?

Will the "battle of the sexes" that has raged through the centuries continue in the Kingdom?

Let's look into it.

In the beginning

Everyone is familiar with the story of creation in Genesis 1. We all know on the sixth day God created Adam and Eve. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl . . ." (Gen. 1:26). Since the first chapter of Genesis does not elaborate

on the whole creation process, we have to draw certain conclusions from what we read. This verse refers to the creation of all *mankind* — not just Adam, the man. We find in verse 27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; *male and female created he them.*"

We would not conclude from these verses that women were created inferior to men. The creation process does not imply that. The woman was not created as an afterthought.

In the second chapter of Genesis the story is told more completely.

When God made man, He made him from physical, earthy materials — "red mud." Adam was made with God's own hands from the dust of the earth, and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

On the sixth day God created cattle and beasts and the creeping creatures of the earth. When He made Adam we could presume it was well into the sixth day. It was not days, weeks or months later when God observed, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [suitable] for him" (Gen. 2:18). At most, that was only a few short hours later. And it was what God intended all along.

On the same sixth day, "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon



Photos by Warren Watson, Roland Rees, Scott Smith, Dave Conn. Center photo: Worldwide Church of God.

Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (verses 21-22). God was not making some subordinate species. Adam himself realized immediately, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (verse 23). She was completely equal to man — of the same substance. Some men, for some unknown reason, have felt because woman was taken from man it made him superior to her.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Eve was made exactly from the same substance from which Adam was made. If man realized he was made from red mud he would realize his humble origins are no cause for vanity. The sum total of chemicals necessary to make a full-grown human being amounts to less than \$25 on the retail market. Nothing about which to be vain.

No, from the beginning, God established His will to make mankind both male and female — and for a great purpose.

Why male and female?

In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul explains how husbands and wives should relate to one another. This subject is expanded further elsewhere in the Bible. We are not left without principles by which we can live our lives regarding male and female — husband and wife — relationships. But more than any other place in the Bible this fifth chapter of Ephesians reveals to us an all-encompassing purpose for which God created mankind male and female.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31-32).

Herbert W. Armstrong has been making the Church keenly aware for some time of the urgency for the Church to be prepared as the Bride for the coming Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Mr. Armstrong is working tirelessly to present the Church as an

espoused Bride to Christ — holy, pure and blameless.

Part of the way we learn that great spiritual lesson for the Church to marry Christ is to understand and live as husbands and wives in proper harmony with God's law.

To understand God making mankind male and female and to understand the female destiny as well as the male destiny is important.

We should be able to observe after nearly 6,000 years of human experience that women were not made inferior to men. As we have pointed out, woman, taken from the flesh and bone of man, is the same as man. And we have also seen that the creation of the family unit in marriage reveals the mystery of the marriage of Christ to His Church.

Certainly Christ does not intend to marry an inferior subspecies. But rather, He will marry the resurrected saints who have been made immortal in His exact form, image and substance. Christ will take a bride who will then exist on His same high immortal plane. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:1-2).

We will all, both male and female, be exactly like Christ is — "head and . . . hairs . . . white like wool, as white as snow; and . . . eyes . . . as a flame of fire; And . . . feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and . . . voice as the sound of many waters" (Rev. 1:14-15).

Under Christ's authority

The Church, made immortal and married to Jesus Christ, born into the Family of God and made of spirit, will nevertheless constantly and eternally be lovingly in subjection to Christ. Always under His authority.

Authority is not a bad word. *Subject to* is not a demeaning phrase. True Christians could never dream of eternal life in a rebellious, hostile environment struggling with God for power. Government and authority are necessary.

Have you ever wondered why God placed the husband as the head of the home? Is it because women are inferior or incapable? I hope no one believes that.

Would authority be necessary in a perfect home? If both husband and wife were perfectly compatible and completely harmonious with one another, would authority in the home be mandatory?

The answer is — yes!

Authority is always necessary.

Witness Christ and God the Father. No two beings in the entire universe are more at one, cooperative and harmonious. Yet they are not equal in authority — God the Father is clearly in charge. Absence of authority is anarchy. Someone must be in charge — in the Kingdom and in the home.

God did not make the husband the head of the home to place a great burden on women. And neither did God make men to be tyrannical and despotic dictators. Men were not placed as head of the home because they were inherently smarter than women, superior to women in any way. We are not dealing with a matter of "superiority" or "inferiority." Rather, it is a matter of God specifically designing each — husband and wife — for a distinct purpose in this physical life.

God designed and programed men to fulfill certain responsibilities and duties. Included is the responsibility to lead and guide the family. Woman, on the other hand, was designed by God from creation to fulfill a purpose no man was capable of fulfilling — to become wife, mother, and even more importantly, to be the spiritual type of the Church.

The woman's special role

Some women have come to feel that because God ordained the man to be head of the home that a woman has nothing to do to qualify for leadership in God's Kingdom. This is not true.

A woman's responsibilities are just as much a part of God's plan as a man's. Because a wife is in subjection to her husband does not mean she is void of opportunities that develop the character necessary to be born into the Kingdom of God. It is God's will for all to be saved.

This life is a training ground for the Kingdom of God. What we do now determines the reward we will receive when Christ returns. We are told in Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." It is logical to presume that one half of those born into the Family of God will have been physically women in the flesh. There is simply no room, when we truly understand God's Word, to think women are relegated to menial tasks or that they are less important in God's eyes.

Grandmothers, mothers, teenage girls — all of you were created to fulfill a calling no man could ever adequately fulfill. Your strengths lie in a specific area — the area of homemaker, wife and mother. You are the undisputed, unquestioned champion in these fields. Your husband, or any man, would be woefully inadequate. For the female of the species, there is no greater calling, no greater accomplishment and no greater reward possible than the successful fulfillment of the goals and high standards God has set.

A woman who chooses to marry and have children accomplishes just as much in the character building process as any career woman or any male business executive. The apostle Paul was inspired by God to write the evangelist Titus, "That they [older women] may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit. 2:4-5). I know this statement is not popular with the modern feminist movement. But it is what the Eternal God says.

I was shocked while listening to a television talk show recently on which a leading Protestant theologian was a guest. The subjects of the Equal Rights Amendment and the feminist movement were being discussed. When asked about the apostle Paul's instruction that women should not be ordained to the ministry (I Cor. 14:34), the leading doctor of theology stated, "On this subject, the apostle Paul was wrong!" He went on to proudly proclaim his Prot-

estant denomination was the first major American denomination to ordain women into the ministry, sometime in the middle part of the 1880s. I couldn't believe what I was hearing — the apostle Paul wrong?! But this illustrates the problems we must face in coming to understand the Bible in a complex modern society. Some leading theologians simply do not believe what the Bible says.

But in God's Church we must!

We are not dealing with superiority and inferiority when we talk about men and women and their roles in life. We are simply coming to understand the great purpose for which each was created.

Some modern problems

President Jimmy Carter recently startled young men and women in the United States by proposing to reinstitute draft registration not only for young men of normal military age, but also for young women.

All of a sudden it seems everyone once again is talking about women, rekindling the debate on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), women's rights, the feminist movement and a host of related subjects. Perhaps as never before attention has been focused on women's rights and women's responsibilities.

In the light of so much interest on the subject of women in the Western world, it's a good time to search the scriptures on this subject. If anyone has previously believed the Bible is antiwomen, I hope we have changed his or her mind.

God created mankind male and female with an overall, transcendental purpose from the beginning. Even though today's complex society may have created many problems, there is a Bible answer.

The answer lies in understanding the God-created roles of male and female. Ancient societies developed a "me Tarzan, you Jane" syndrome. When we think of ancient history we think of the proverbial cave man dragging his woman behind him by a hank of hair. Later societies kept women in silence and subjection, 10 paces behind. Women, like children, were to be seen and not heard. In our century came women's suffrage, women's rights and now the feminist movement.

Which, if any, of these societies, ever understood women's roles properly?

The answer — none of them.

Mr. Armstrong has so often pointed out that when Adam and Eve took of the forbidden tree in the midst of the garden, they made the choice to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. They rejected God as the source of knowledge. Mankind, ever since, has followed the same path — the right to choose for himself which way he will go. In 6,000 years of human history there has never been a society created by man in which men and women understood the true role intended by God from creation.

So no matter how complex the society may be, the only answers lie in the pages of the Bible.

Where to from here?

Since we are faced with these problems created by a modern world, should we assume the traditional role of the woman as homemaker is out of date? Is wife, mother, homemaker passe? Can a woman really develop the skills and obtain the experience as a homemaker that will qualify her for rulership in God's Kingdom?

These questions seem almost absurd. But some people have felt that if a woman is not out there making all those multimillion dollar decisions like men do she just isn't developing the ability to serve as a king and priest in the Kingdom.

But wait a minute.

How many men are out there making those multimillion dollar decisions? What about the small businessmen, the farmers, the salesmen, the laborers — the thousands upon thousands who have been in God's Church over the generations? Christ's called apostles were carpenters, fishermen, a tax collector. Yet He deemed them capable of ruling over the 12 tribes of Israel when the Kingdom is established.

But those men became ministers — apostles — you may say. They qualified for their positions by directing God's Church for the remainder of their lives.

Well then, how about Mary, the mother of Jesus? And how about Joanna? And Mary Magdalene?

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Women

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And Susanna? And Sarah and Deborah and Ruth and Lydia and all the other great women of the Bible? They are all certainly going to be in God's Kingdom, ruling with Christ.

The apostles are the only ones named to rule in a specific area. You and I, men and women, are only told we will become rulers over one, two, five or 10 cities or more based on how we utilize our talents and abilities. We will receive responsibility in proportion to how much we overcome. Multimillion dollar decisions and corporate presidencies have little to do with it.

So how do women enter God's Kingdom?

Exactly like men do!

We must all come to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then everyone has to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ. After baptism we receive the Holy Spirit. Then we must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. And remain faithful. And overcome to the end.

It's the same for everyone — no shortcuts. It doesn't matter whether you're male or female. It isn't better to be one or the other. We are all in this together.

There is a crown of righteousness laid up for all Christians. Christ has gone to prepare a place for us, and He will come again (John 14:3). When He comes again, we will all be caught up together to meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:17). And then both men and women will be changed to spirit — given immortal life.

So the course of life you pursue in career, homemaking, whatever, only makes a contribution to your overall character development process. It is not the end, but a means to the end.

"But could you be a little more specific?" you might ask.

Are there ways women do develop skills to qualify for rulership in a specific manner, especially when they are homemakers?

Certainly. And in coming issues of *The Good News* we will be covering that very subject — the homemaker as executive manager. We hope you will look forward to this information. □

Example

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lief" (Heb. 4:11). Paul specifically says that it was "because of unbelief" that Israel could not enter the promised land (Heb. 3:19).

Paul then shows Israel's warning message to God's people: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest [God's Kingdom], any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them [Israel], not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:1-2).

Faith was the missing element needed in their lives to enter the promised land. And faith is what we need to develop in order to succeed where they failed.

Doubt is deadly to us, for it will open the door to all the terrible attitudes and sins of ancient Israel.

Israel's warning message is simple, yet far reaching. The greatest single danger to those of us (modern-day Israel) journeying toward the promised Kingdom of God is doubting God! It's doubting that Christ can lead His Church through Mr. Armstrong, His leader today. The movements of God's Church are not being decided by a man, but by God.

How do we grow in this thing called faith? It is simple. We just do what Israel did not. Whenever trials come upon us, we face them as opportunities to build faith, rather than as calamities to be feared.

We know that although the physical circumstances may look disastrous, we look to an invisible circumstance that can affect the outcome. God is that invisible reality standing beside us ready to make "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Though scattered around the world, God's people are marching, united by the Spirit and Work of God, toward the Kingdom of God. Mr. Armstrong has stated that this Work is a work of faith.

We see this faith demonstrated daily by our Church leaders to challenge all the trials that come upon the Work, but do we as individual members realize we too should be

challenging our personal troubles with that same kind of faith?

Our daily troubles are opportunities to build faith. Problems intrude into all our lives. Our trials can come from almost any area of life — school, work, home or play.

We also have Satan's influence and the pull of the world to continually cope with. We have to contend with our own human nature. Unless we fearlessly approach these trials as opportunities to build faith in God, life can become a tremendous burden.

None of us enjoy adverse circumstances in our lives, but if we can accept them as necessary in building faith, then we can at least approach our trials with a positive rather than negative attitude. Peter said "the trial of your faith" is "much more precious than . . . gold" (I Pet. 1:7). Why? Because faith is the essential element we must build in order to do the Work and enter the Kingdom of God. Without faith we would all fail.

At times life seems filled with many "Red Seas," some little and some so big they look impossible for us to cross. But let us learn the beautiful truth that ancient Israel did not — that there is no "Red Sea" too big to cross with God.

Let's view each day of our lives, with all its joys and sorrows, as just another step toward the Kingdom of God. We should expect trials to come upon us in our journey, as they did on ancient Israel. We can learn from Israel's wrong examples and determine to refuse to face our troubles with useless doubt and fear. Rather, we can choose to challenge life with a positive attitude of faith.

When we do this, we will see our lives transformed into an exciting, happy journey. We will be able to understand how Paul was able to say, "I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation" (II Cor. 7:4).

God is with us each step of the way and will deliver us. Choosing to challenge life — with all its troubles — with faith will give us the pleasant fruits of hope, strength, peace and joy.

We will succeed where ancient Israel failed. And then their message will not have been delivered in vain unto us "upon whom the ends of the world are come." □