

Chapter 12

Gal 3.28

Now Pythagoras made an epitome of the statements on righteousness in Moses, when he said, “Do not step over the balance,” that is, do not transgress equality in distribution, honouring justice so. “Which friends to friends for ever, binds, to cities, cities—to allies, allies, For equality is what is right for men; but less to greater ever hostile grows, And days of hate begin,” as is said with poetic grace. Wherefore the Lord says, “Take My yoke, for it is gentle and light.” And on the disciples, striving for the pre-eminence, He enjoins equality with simplicity, Saying “that they must become as little children.” Likewise also the apostle writes, that “No one in Christ is bond or free, or Greek or Jew. For the creation in Christ Jesus is new, is equality, free of strife—not grasping—just.” For envy, and jealousy, and bitterness, stand without the divine choir.¹

- CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

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The natural inferiority of women, slaves and Barbarians (non-Greeks) taught by Aristotle and imported into the church by Clement in the second century, was a radical departure from the natural equality of all believers espoused by Paul (Gal 3.28, Col 3.11). The change did not take place overnight for in 369 CE, Gregory of Nazianzen wrote a laudatory oration for his brother Caesarius in which he affirmed the abolishing of earthly distinctions.

This is the purpose of the great mystery for us. This is the purpose for us of God, Who for us was made man and became poor, to raise our flesh, and recover His image, and remodel man, that we might all be made one in Christ, who was perfectly made in all of us all that He Himself is, that we might no longer be male and female, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free (which are badges of the flesh), but might bear in ourselves only the stamp of God, by Whom and for Whom we were made, and have so far received our form and model from Him, that we are recognized by it alone.

One of the consequences of the synthesis of Aristotle’s philosophy with theology was the gradual removing of both women and slaves from leadership as the rule of inferiors was considered hurtful. In the Arabic Canons, attributed falsely to the council of Nicea (325), Canon II prohibits the ordination of slaves. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas forbade the ordination of slaves because a slave could not serve his carnal master and exercise his spiritual ministry at the same time, for he could not give what was not his, although Thomas did acquiesce that a slave could in principle be ordained for freedom was not required for the validity of the sacrament, only for its lawfulness. But because “the reception of spiritual power involves also an obligation to certain bodily actions, and consequently it is hindered by bodily subjection,” it was not advisable.² If a slave was ordained with the owner’s knowledge, the slave became a freedman. But in case a slave was ordained without the owner’s consent, the bishop and those who presented him were to pay the owner double of the slave’s value, if he knew him to be slave, or if the slave

¹ *The Stromata*, Book V, Ch V

² *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Question 39, Article 1, Reply to objection 1

had possessions of his own, he was obligated to buy his freedom or return to slavery, regardless of his ordination.³

Through the European Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, the biblical concept of equality became eventually an inseparable part of western ideology, for where Christian ethics are infused into the customs and beliefs of a society universal brotherhood becomes a reality - even when the church resists it. The great irony of church history is that whereas the modern secular society affirms the natural equality of all humans based on biblical principles, the church still clings to its dogmas which are based on secular philosophy. With the rise of modern science, a by-product of the European Renaissance, Aristotle was set aside, for as Marjorie Grene points out, "in some important respects biology, like all modern science, really is, and must be, un-Aristotelian."⁴ The direct result of the replacing of Aristotle's philosophy with biology, psychology and sociology was the inclusion of women in both civic and ecclesiastical leadership in the twentieth century as the natural inferiority of women was rejected.

The Industrial Revolution eroded the old class system in which one's birth determined one's place in the social fabric. Education became imperative in the new social order and women soon realized that they had to gain admittance to higher education if they were to succeed in the new society.⁵ Rosalind Rosenberg describes in *Beyond Separate Spheres* the forces at work to prevent women from gaining admittance to higher education in the nineteenth century America - and their failure.

The Protestant dogma of the all-encompassing vocation of marriage and motherhood for all women permeated the nineteenth-century society. As women began to enter colleges, in separate facilities at first, the medical profession set out to oppose their inroad.

Clarke was not the first doctor to assert that women's unique physiology limited her social role. The conviction that women's subordinate position was biologically ordained had roots in antiquity, and it was a commonplace in nineteenth-century medical discussion to note that the womb exerted a supremely powerful force from which men were free. As one physician explained, it was as though the "Almighty, in creating the female sex, had taken the uterus and built a woman around it." The womb the doctors emphasized, dominated a woman's mental as well as physical life, producing a weak, submissive, uncreative, emotional, intuitive, and generally inferior personality.⁶

The strong appeal to the inevitableness of biology had not existed before the middle of the nineteenth century, and its introduction was largely due to the greater availability of (separate) college education for women and an increase in opportunities that was created by the Industrial Revolution, which threatened the sexual segregation of the Victorian era.⁷ Philosophy was no longer providing adequate answers due to increase in knowledge, and evolutionary biology became the new source for answers for those wishing to preserve gender segregation - but also for those who sought its demise.⁸

In evolutionary biology, the womb dominated the whole woman, making her a less intelligent person. In addition, women's brain, being lighter, was not believed to be suited for intellectual exertion; instead "her affinity for lower forms of life" became the perfect example for the evolutionary belief that "there is no fundamental difference between men and the higher mammals in their mental faculties."⁹ To this Antoinette Brown Blackwell objected, "How incredibly singular, blind and perverse, then is the dogmatism which has insisted that man's larger brain, measured by inches in the cranium, must necessarily prove his mental superiority to Woman."¹⁰

John Hopkins anatomist Dr. Franklin Mall concluded that the only method to link brain weight, sex and intelligence was for the researchers to know the sex and to look for specific characteristics. Mall suggested that the scientists begin by not knowing the sex to ascertain that the differences they claimed existed were

³ Ibid, Article 3, Reply to objection 5

⁴ Marjorie Grene, "Aristotle and Modern Biology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (July-Sept, 1972) www.culturaleconomics.atfreeweb.com (accessed June 29, 2009).

⁵ Rosenberg, 4

⁶ Ibid., 5-6

⁷ Ibid., 6

⁸ Ibid., 14

⁹ Ibid., 8-9

¹⁰ Ibid., 106

truly there. None did, for as soon as it was found that girls did generally better in school, the sexless intelligence became the norm. To this, Dr. Helen Thompson Woolley commented with heavy irony

So far as I know, no one has drawn the conclusion that girls have greater native ability than boys. One is tempted to indulge in idle speculation as to whether this admirable restraint from hasty generalization would have been equally marked had sex findings been reversed.¹¹

The inferior woman disappeared as soon as it was discovered that the beliefs that had so long supported the inferiority of women, and her restricted role, were in fact caused by the lack of education and equal opportunity.

S. Lewis Johnson Jr. recognizes that Galatians 3.28 nullifies the distinctions of race, social rank and sex in the church, but he believes it has to do with our equality as sons and daughters of God, not our social roles.¹² But the only social role Johnson believes is still valid is female subjection, for he maintains that although Paul was not about to abolish slavery, he provided the justification for the future abolishing of the institution.¹³

As a parallel, we can note William MacDonald, who is convinced that all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles have been removed, but that distinctions based on social rank and sex are still valid today because Paul gave separate instructions to wives and slaves. MacDonald circumvents the existence of slavery in the New Testament by applying the instructions for the slaves to modern day employees.¹⁴ But ignoring the fundamental questions about personal freedom and human dignity does not explain how Paul could have approved of slavery, while Christians have successfully used the Bible to argue for its abolishing. Thus we must further examine Johnson's claim, that female subjection was rightly preserved while slavery was abolished *after* the Bible was written.

Wayne Grudem argues in his essay *An overview of Central Concerns*, co-authored by John Piper, that Paul did not approve of slavery.

“Paul’s regulation for how slaves and masters related to each other do not assume the goodness of the institution of slavery. Rather, seeds for slavery’s dissolution were sown in Philemon 16 (“no longer a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother.”), Ephesians 6:9 (Masters... do not threaten [your slaves]”), Colossians 4:1 (“Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair”), and 1 Timothy 6:1-2 (masters are “brothers”). Where these seeds of equality came to full flower, the very institution of slavery would no longer be slavery.”¹⁵

Yet, although believing women are called sisters (1 Tim 5.2), and although husbands should not treat their wives harshly (Col 3.19) but love them as they love themselves (Eph 5.25), Grudem does not see a parallel between women and slaves, for he refutes “the trajectory position” when applied to gender, although he explicitly approves of it in the case of slavery.

[W]e do see the apostles in a process of coming to understand the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church (Acts 15; Gal 2:1-14; 3:28). But the process was completed within the New Testament, and the commands given to Christians in the New Testament say nothing about excluding Gentiles from the church. We do not have to progress on a “trajectory” beyond the New Testament to discover that. Christians living in the time of Paul’s epistles were living under the new covenant. And we Christians living today are also living under the new covenant. ... That means that *we are living in the same period in God’s plan for “the history of redemption” as the first-century Christians*. And that is why we can read and apply the New Testament directly to ourselves today. To attempt to go beyond the New Testament documents and derive our authority from “where the New Testament was heading” is to reject the very documents God gave us to govern our life under the new

¹¹ Ibid, 106

¹² Piper and Grudem, 158

¹³ Ibid., 159

¹⁴ MacDonald, “Ephesians 6.5.”

¹⁵ Piper and Grudem, 65

covenant until Christ returns. ... Most evangelical interpreters say that the Bible does not command or encourage or endorse slavery, but rather tells Christians who were slaves how they should conduct themselves, and also gives principles *that would modify and ultimately lead to the abolition of slavery*.¹⁶

Grudem recognizes that “Scripture sometimes regulates undesirable relationships without condoning them as permanent ideals,” and his criterion for an “undesirable relationship” is that it is not based on the creation order. Since, “the existence of slavery is not rooted in any creation ordinance,” it was rightly abolished, but because creation gives “an unshakable foundation for marriage and its complementary roles for husband and wife,”¹⁷ male headship should be preserved. However, not all human relationships that should be preserved are based on the creation order; civil governments, for example, were instituted because of sin, to punish lawbreakers.¹⁸ Thus, the criterion is not whether the relationship was instituted at creation, but whether it was instituted by God for the benefit of humanity.

Despite his arguments in favor of abolition, slavery continues to cause problems for Grudem, for the pro-slavery arguments used in the nineteenth century sound very much like the ones used by the complementarists of the twentieth century. Grudem attempts to solve the problem by making a distinction between first- and nineteenth-century slavery.

[Slavery] was the most common employment situation on the Roman Empire in the time of the New Testament. A bondservant could not quit his job or seek another employment until he obtained his freedom. But there were extensive laws that regulated the treatment of such bondservants and gave them considerable protection. Bondservants could own their own property and often purchased their freedom by about age 30, and often held positions of significant responsibility such as teachers, physicians, nurses, managers of estates, retail merchants, and business executives. ... The first-century institution of “bondservants” is far different from the picture that comes to mind when modern readers hear the word “slavery.” This helps us understand why the New Testament did not immediately prohibit the institution of “bondservants,” while at the same time giving principles that led to its eventual abolition. And it helps to understand why the Christians in England and the United States who campaigned for the abolition of slavery based on the moral teachings of the Bible saw it as a far worse institution, one that was not at all supported by the Bible but was so cruel and dehumanizing that it had to be abolished completely and forever.¹⁹

According to Sarah B. Pomeroy, although the minimum age for manumission was thirty (Lex Aelia Sentia, 4 CE), many slaves obtained their freedom earlier. That a slave could obtain his or her freedom through marriage or by saving enough through the original tipping system to pay back the purchase price did not mean that a majority of slaves became freedmen. As an example we may note that over half of the wives of imperial slaves and freedmen were dead before thirty, most dying between twenty and twenty-five, and the mortality rate of the slaves of poorer classes was most likely even higher.²⁰

Revealingly, while Grudem portrays the first-century slavery as benign, Rachel Pendergraft, a spokesperson for the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, uses the same argument in her article *The Shocking Story of Real Slavery in America*, in defense of the nineteenth-century American black slavery.

Shocking it is then, to learn that Negro slaves didn't really have it that bad. No, it wasn't within their power to travel abroad if they wished, but then again they weren't at the mercy of an African witch doctor or head hunter either. But aside from being removed from the savagery of Africa did they benefit at all from their new home? Robert Fogel a 1993 Nobel Prize winner says yes. ... he is best known for his book *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. The book

¹⁶ *Evangelical Feminism*, 57, 77.

¹⁷ Piper and Gruden, 65-66

¹⁸ “For since man, by departing from God, reached such a pitch of fury as even to look upon his brother as his enemy, and engaged without fear in every kind of restless conduct, and murder, and avarice; God imposed upon mankind the fear of man, as they did not acknowledge the fear of God, in order that, being subjected to the authority of men, and kept under restraint by their laws, they might attain to some degree of justice, and exercise mutual forbearance through dread of the sword suspended full in their view” (*Against Heresies*, Book V, XXIV, 2).

¹⁹ *Evangelical Feminism* 78-9. The difference between Roman and American slavery was used in the seventies to highlight the fact that Roman slavery was not limited to skin color, which was believed to have been the case in Rome. Salley and Behm carefully pointed out that their comparison did not justify slavery in any form (*Your God Is Too White*, 88-89).

²⁰ Pomeroy, 194-195

that Fogel co-authored with Stanley Engerman, has startled historians and has caused an outcry among many for its radical conclusion that slaves were commonly better off than northern free laborers. Among the examples in the book that establish their assertion: Black women slaves were allowed maternal leave, were taken well care of and received attentive care during the pregnancy. They had one-year maternity leave after the birth of their child. Slaves were now allowed to work while they were sick, even if there were suspicions that the slaves were faking it, it was usually considered best to allow the slaves a few days rest rather than take a chance. Slaves were allowed to conduct a home business if they wished to do so and were even allowed to make and sell their wares and crafts in town at the market place. Slaves were also given generous incentive programs and rewarded for their production, such rewards were usually cash bonuses. There was an average retirement age after which the slave was well cared for by the plantation owner and would usually spend time on business or helping with the slave children. Slaves usually lived their whole lives in a close knit “slave community” where they ran their own affairs. Families were rarely split apart and slaves were encouraged to marry as the owners felt that breaking up families was simply poor business – it created unhappy slaves, which would affect production. They even had family garden plots where they were able to raise food for their family, Negroes in the south had guaranteed housing, food, clothing, medical care, business opportunities, support after retirement and a bonus program.²¹

Pendergraft ignores the cruelty of black slavery in order to support her racist theology, which maintains that white people are called by God to lead the rest of the world, and have done so in the past with compassion. Similarly, Grudem omits the starvation, physical abuse, the sexual exploitation - which included children – and the threat of crucifixion, “the slave’s penalty,”²² to explain why the nineteenth-century slave owners were not able to use the Bible to support their view. Both Pendergraft and Grudem treat the singularly most devastating part of slavery – being considered someone’s property - as casually as a person rising from the dinner table treats world hunger, which mirrors the indifference of Horace, the Roman writer (65- 8 BCE), as described by Edith Hamilton.

It goes without saying that he never took note of slaves, but it is worthy of remark that a man sensitive and quick of feeling as he was would write of their terrible punishments with complete unconcern. He does say mildly that a man who has a slave crucified because he stole a bit of food must be out of his mind, but he speaks of slaves being beaten as a matter of course, of “the horrible scourge,” with pieces of metal attached to the lashes, and of others of the methods of torture devised to keep in order a class grown dangerous because of its enormous size. A man of position, says Horace, is mean if he walks out with only five slaves attending him; on the other hand, one can be seen with two hundred has passed the limit of good sense. And yet in spite of their great numbers they were so completely without human significance, so casually mistreated and murdered in that city accustomed by all the favorite forms of amusement to mortal agony and violent death, that their condition never drew a passing thought from even the very best, a man like Horace, a thinker, gentle, kindly, dutiful. His bewilderment, if he could be recalled to life and confronted with out point of view, would be pitiful. He was wise and good, yet he lived with a monstrous evil and never caught a glimpse of it. So does custom keep men blind.²³

Custom does indeed blind people. Grudem denounces racism, which was the foundation of black slavery but upholds female subjection, which Pendergraft in turn refutes with indignation as an importation from Judaism. Similar blindness to injustice is found in the nineteenth century suffrage movement and the mid-twentieth century civil rights movement. An exasperated Elizabeth Cady Stanton fought against black men gaining the suffrage before white women,²⁴ and the Baptist pastor Martin Luther King Jr. did not consider women fit for leadership in the civil rights movement.²⁵

Finally, Grudem tries to evade the charge by the somewhat defensive statement, “We must remember the real possibility that it is not we but the evangelical feminists today who resemble nineteenth century defenders of slavery in the most significant way: using arguments from the Bible to justify conformity to

²¹ Rachel Pendergraft, “The Shocking Story of Real Slavery in America,” The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, www.kkk.com.

²² Hamilton, 37.

²³ Ibid., 125.

²⁴ Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns, *Not For Ourselves Alone, The Story of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony* (New York: Alfred A. Knopp, 1999), 111.

²⁵ Branch, 258.

some very strong pressures in contemporary society (in favor of slavery then, and feminism now).”²⁶ But if the pressure from the contemporary society caused the Southern slave owners to pick up their Bibles to defend slavery, why did Kentucky wait to 1976, and Mississippi to 1995, to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment which ended slavery in 1865? It is far more believable that the slave owners picked up their Bibles because of the universal sin of greed, fortified by racism. Slavery was extremely profitable for the plantation owners and the ending of slavery would have meant drastically reduced profits. The greed of the plantation owners can be seen clearly in that black people were coerced to work for low wages on the same plantations they had been freed from, and that Jim Crow (segregation) continued to severely limit the freedom and rights of the black people for another century. As a parallel we can note that Roman slavery was not ended because it was considered immoral, but because it became unprofitable.²⁷

Slavery in the Roman Empire did not suddenly end, but it was slowly replaced when new economic forces introduced other forms of cheap labor. During the late empire, Roman farmers and traders were reluctant to pay large amounts of money for slaves because they did not wish to invest in a declining economy. The legal status of “slave” continued for centuries, but slaves were gradually replaced by wage laborers in the towns and by land-bound peasants (later called serfs) in the countryside. These types of workers provided cheap labor without the initial cost that slave owners had to pay for slaves. Slavery did not disappear in Rome because of human reform or religious principle, but because Romans found another, perhaps even harsher, system of labor.²⁸

Grudem’s attempt to evade the charge makes it clear that he is anxious to distance himself from the nineteenth century slave owners, but he cannot deny that the central belief of complementarism is female obedience to male authority as a religious duty. And it is this belief which ties complementarism to American black slavery.

Although many slaveowners shared the motivations of the clergy, their concerns tended to be more pragmatic. They wanted to cultivate docility and efficiency in their slaves and combat the attacks of the abolitionists by demonstrating the stability of their conservative, yet humane, social order. If slaves could be taught to believe that obedience to their masters was a religious duty, then the authority of the planters would be established upon a solid foundation.²⁹

Columbus Salley and Ronald Behm observe that the form of Christianity taught to the slaves was designed to support slavery “almost to the exclusion of the historic dogmas of the Christian faith.”³⁰ The justification for slavery was that it was natural, ordained by God, and benefitted the slave, because it was approved by both the Old and New Testament and because the black people were cursed due to Noah’s son Ham.³¹ The slaves were taught that “slavery had divine sanction, that insolence was as much an offense against God as against the temporal master.”³² Grudem admits that “some slave owners tried to use the Bible to support slavery in nineteenth-century America, but opponents of slavery used the Bible too, and they were far more persuasive, and they won the argument.”³³ But he cannot avoid the similarity between his own arguments and those of the slave owners for complementarism tells women their subjection is ordained by God, it is beneficial, is approved by both the Old and the New Testament and that insolence is an offense against God as much as it is towards the husband.

²⁶ Piper and Grudem, 66.

²⁷ Fatima Mernissi notes a similar development within Islam, “The paradoxical result is that, despite Islam’s opposition to slavery in principle, it only disappeared from the Muslim countries under pressure from and intervention by the colonial powers” (Mernissi, 129).

²⁸ “Slavery in Ancient Rome” www.crystalinks.com/romeslavery.html (accessed June 29, 2009)

²⁹ George A. Rogers, R. Frank Saunders, *Swamp Waters and Wiregrass: Historical sketches of Coastal Georgia*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 44.

³⁰ Salley and Behm, 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 23. That someone is believed to be cursed by God has been a method of assigning subjection and inferiority to a group. Women were considered inferior because of the assumed curse of Eve; Jewish people were considered cursed by God because of deicide (murder of God) and black people have been considered inferior because of the curse of Ham. None were based on logic, for God did not curse Eve or Adam, nor Ham (Noah cursed Canaan whose descendants, the Canaanites, became the servants of Israel (Joshua 17.13), nor the Jewish people for we are all responsible for the death of Christ.

³² *Ibid.*, 21.

³³ *Evangelical Feminism*, 79.

It is not enough to destroy an institution for the underlying philosophy will create another mutated form of the previous institution: the belief in white superiority, which created black slavery, created segregation and later ghettoization.³⁴ Similarly, the subjection of women was based on their assumed inferiority which became institutionalized in the many laws and customs which segregated women from men and excluded women from the political, educational and social institutions. Although the legal standing of women was changed, the underlying philosophy of male superiority created “equal but different” which continued to exclude women from leadership and full participation in society.

Slavery exists in the Bible for a reason and should not be explained away, for as long as sin exists, people will enslave others. In the church, however, slavery as an impossibility for how can own one’s brother or sister?

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Women of the Victorian era were accountable before the law, which they had gained as a result of the witchcraze as husbands refused to be punished – hanged or burned on the stake - for the crimes of their wives, the old system which had ensured the man’s control in the home. Prior to the sixteenth century “the European legal system lumped women, children, serfs, and slaves into the category of dependent property and therefore largely ignored them, except when they got too far out of line.”³⁵ In the nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon world, a woman was by law required to obey her husband who was her lord and master, and without positive political rights, women had little hope to change their condition for the better.³⁶ Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), the great abolitionist, wrote in his newspaper, the North Star, in favor of female suffrage.

All that distinguishes man as an intelligent and accountable being is equally true of woman; and if that government only is just which governs by the free consent of the governed, there can be no reason in the world for denying to woman the exercise of the elective franchise, or a hand in making and administering the laws of the land. Our doctrine is that “right is of no sex.”³⁷

Douglass was a half a century ahead of his time in his affirmation of the woman’s equal intelligence, perhaps because he had felt the injustice of discrimination personally as a black man. Similarly to the slave owners, men refused to grant women, whom they considered inferior and lacking in reason, equal rights without a prolonged fight; seventy-two years after the initial effort to secure the ballot, President Wilson ended the legal minority of women - and the man’s lordship - in 1920. Yet, the church would continue to argue that the woman was obligated to obey the man, although it lacked the legal means to enforce the obedience and could only appeal to the woman’s sense of religious duty and the newly formulated concept of “equal but different,” which was created to maintain the *status quo*, endangered by the new legal standing of the woman.³⁸

A similar attempt to avoid full equality is found in “equal but separate,” the concept created to enforce segregation after slavery was officially abolished in 1865.³⁹ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr exposed the inherent hypocrisy of the concept by pointing out that eleven o’clock every Sunday was the most segregated hour in

³⁴ Salley and Behm, 44.

³⁵ *Witchcraze*, 41.

³⁶ A group cannot defend itself from exploitation without political rights, as observed by John Stuart Mill, “And we know that legal protection the slaves have, where the laws are made by the masters” (Mill, 97).

³⁷ Ward and Burns, 41.

³⁸ “Equal but separate” would prevent also black men from becoming leaders in the mainstream Protestant churches, “Yet another evidence of white racism in the white church is the refusal of white Christians to accept a black leadership which will not compromise with racism in any form and which challenges the *status quo*” (*Salley and Behm*, 113).

³⁹ “The [white] Protestant church, a major southern social institution, was among the first groups to segregate after the Civil War and to accept racism as the basis of race relations. Protestantism helped pave way for the capitulation to racism at the turn of the century.” “Baptist and Methodist churches were by far the most popular among former slaves. The independent African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church which had been organized by freedmen in the North during the slavery period experienced phenomenal growth. They were formed largely because the white society would not tolerate the presence of blacks as equals in common public worship” (*Salley and Behm*, 32-33).

the United States.⁴⁰ Neither “equal and separate” and “equal but different” cannot be defended using logic for equality and inequality cannot co-exist, as was recognized already in the third century by Arnobius.

In our opinion, however, that which is good naturally, does not require to be either corrected or reproof; nay more, it should not know what evil is, if the nature of each kind would abide in its own integrity, *for neither can two contraries be implanted in each other, nor can equality be contained in inequality, nor sweetness in bitterness.*⁴¹

Although the nineteenth century is considered pristine by many, due to its heavy emphasis on female submission, nostalgia and selective memory distorts the picture. Sarah Grimke, who was active in the abolition movement of the early nineteenth century, advocated also for women’s rights. In her *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman* (1837), Grimke described the reality of life in the Victorian Era.

She merges her rights and her duties in her husband, and thus virtually chooses him for a savior and a king, and rejects Christ as her Ruler and Redeemer. I know some women are very glad of so convenient a pretext to shield themselves from the performance of duty; but there are others, who, under a mistaken view of their obligations as wives, submit conscientiously to this species of oppression, and go mourning on their way, for want of that holy fortitude, which would enable them to fulfill their duties as moral and responsible beings, without reference to poor fallen man. O that woman may arise in her dignity as an immortal creature, and speak, think and act as unto God, and not unto man! There is, perhaps, less bondage of mind among the poorer classes, because their sphere of duty is more concentrated, and they are deprived of the means of intellectual culture, and of the opportunity of exercising their judgment, on many moral subjects of deep interest and of vital importance. Authority is called into exercise by resistance, and hence there will be mental bondage only in proportion as the faculties of mind are evolved, and woman feels herself as a rational and intelligent being, on a footing with man. But women, among the lowest classes of society, so far as my observation has extended, suffer intensely from the brutality of their husbands. Duty as well as inclination has led me, for many years, into the abodes of poverty and sorrow, and I have been amazed at the treatment which women receive at the hands of those, who arrogate to themselves the epithet of protectors. Brute force, the law of violence, rules to a great extent in the poor man’s domicile; and woman is little more than his drudge. They are less under the supervision of public opinion, less under the restraints of education, and unaided or unbiassed by the refinements of polished society. Religion, wherever it exists, supplies the place of all these; but the real cause of woman’s degradation and suffering in married life is to be found in the erroneous notion of her inferiority to man; and never will she be rightly regarded by herself, or others, until the opinion, so derogatory to the wisdom and mercy of God, is exploded, and woman arises in all the majesty of her womanhood, to claim those rights which are inseparable from her existence as an immortal, intelligent and responsible being. . . . If man is constituted the governor of woman, he must be her God; and the sentiment expressed to me lately, by a married man, is perfectly correct: ‘In my opinion,’ said he, ‘the greatest excellence to which married woman can attain, is to worship her husband.’ He was a *professor of religion* – his wife a lovely and intelligent woman. He spoke out what thousands think and act. Women are indebted to Milton for giving to this false notion, ‘confirmation strong as proof of holy writ.’ His Eve is embellished with every personal grace, to gratify the eye of her admiring husband; but he seems to have furnished the mother of mankind with just enough intelligence enough to comprehend *her supposed inferiority to Adam, and to yield unresisting submission to her lord and master*. Milton puts into Eve’s mouth the following address to Adam: “My author and disposer, what thou bidst, unargued I obey; so God ordains – God is thy law; thou mine: to know no more, is woman’s happiest knowledge and her praise.” This much admired sentimental nonsense is fraught with absurdity and wickedness. If it were true, the commandment of Jehovah should have run thus: Mans hall have no other gods before ME, and woman shall have no other gods before MAN.”⁴²

⁴⁰ James P. Comer recollects the astonishment he felt when he realized that also many white people were Christians, “I did not know that so many white people ever went to church. I could not understand how they could go to church and treat blacks the way they did” (Comer, 22).

⁴¹ Adversus Gentes, Book II, 50

⁴² Sarah Grimke, “Letter XIII, Relation of Husband and Wife,” *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman*, 1837.

A telling example of the attitude of the church towards women who spoke in public was the treatment of Grimke, who was openly criticized for her speeches in favor of abolition in 1830s. A “Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts” was issued in response of her speeches in front of a mixed audience, called “promiscuous” in those days. The ministers did not only disapprove that women had left their “private sphere”, but seemed also to have been annoyed that the laity was bold enough to request a discussion without their initiation and concluded that there must be something “wrong in that zeal or in the principle which excite it.”⁴³

Frederick Douglass noted that “the cause of the slave has been peculiarly woman’s cause.”⁴⁴ The struggle for civil rights is intrinsically connected to women’s rights, for both are concerned with basic human rights, not only in the Anglo-Saxon world, but also around the world; in the late sixties, anthropologist Susan C. Seymour noticed how the struggle for civil rights movement also helped stimulate a women’s rights movement in India.⁴⁵

A parallel text to Gal 3.28 is 1 Corinthians 7 in which Paul describes the practical implications of our oneness in Christ: husbands and wives do not have authority over their own bodies (v. 4), neither is the man favored in the dissolution of the union, which is permitted only in case the unbeliever wishes to depart (vv. 10-16); although marriage was mandatory in Judaism, Paul was of the opinion that it is good to be married, but it is better to abstain whether one was a man or a woman, for the married have many troubles from which the celibate is spared (vv. 25-40); neither circumcision (Jew) nor uncircumcision (Gentile) matters, only keeping the commandments of God (v. 19); a slave is a freedman in Christ, as the free is Christ’s slave, and thus the earthly distinctions are obliterated (vv. 21-24).⁴⁶ Galatians 3.28 cannot refer only to faith and God’s acceptance of us as his children, for God spoke equally with Abraham (freeborn Jewish male) and Hagar (female Gentile slave) before the time of Christ. Even in the Mosaic Covenant, a stranger could become “as the native” through the circumcision of all the males in the household (Ex 12.48-49). It was not God who restricted access to Himself to a few chosen; it was His people who created a hierarchy of human worth.

The key to the correct understanding of Galatians 3.28 is not the phrase “you are all sons of God through faith” but the phrase “for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (v. 27). For that one has “put on Christ” has practical implications, not only abstract ones.

But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all. (Col 3:7-11)

Paul continued by exhorting the believers to “put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (3.12-13). They were also to “put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (v. 14). It is in this context that we find Col 3.18-4.1, a contracted form of Ephesians 5.21-33, which also follows a similar exhortation. In Col 3.25 Paul reminded the slaves that “he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.” He warned also the masters in Eph 6.9 that their Heavenly Master did not show partiality wherefore they were to cease from threatening their slaves. James wrote to the believers that God had chosen the poor to be heirs of the kingdom and that they dishonored the poor when they showed partiality towards the rich and did not love their neighbor as themselves (Jas 2.1-9). Treating one’s neighbor as one wants to be treated in return is

⁴³ Pastoral Letter of the General Association of Massachusetts, June 28, 1837, from Margaret Zulich, Wake Forest University, 4.1; 4.3; 11.1 <http://www.assumption.edu/ahc/abolition/PastoralLetter> (accessed June 29, 2009).

⁴⁴ Ward and Burns, 33

⁴⁵ Susan C. Seymour, *Women, Family, and Child Care in India, A World in Transition* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11.

⁴⁶ “The thought of the apostle, then, must be that in Christ the basic divisions which have threatened human fellowship, are done away. Not distinctions which enrich fellowship, but divisions which destroy fellowship by leading to hostility and exploitation – these have no more place in Christ” (Jewett, 143).

loving one's neighbor and we find this principle in Eph 5.28, "So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself." The demanding of preferential treatment because of one's sex, class or race is against the principle of natural equality of all humans as described in Galatians 3.28.