



**An Idea
Whose Time
Has Come**

Floyd E. Rose

An Idea
Whose Time
Has Come

Second Printing

Floyd E. Rose

An Idea
Whose Time
Has Come

Floyd E. Rose

Copyright © 2002
All Rights Reserved

PUBLISHED BY:
BRENTWOOD CHRISTIAN PRESS
4000 BEALLWOOD AVENUE
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA 31904

Dedication

To the thousands of women who remain in the Church of Christ, but who are troubled by the inferior status imposed upon them by men whose eyes are turned backward... women who live with the faith that today's male dominance and exploitation, will give way to a more charitable tomorrow, when they will enjoy true respect and equality in Christ.

Acknowledgements

“Words are things; and a small drop of ink, falling like dew upon a thought, produces that which makes thousands, perhaps millions think.”

The value of *An Idea Whose Time Has Come*, like any other book, lies in its ability to make people think, and therefore, act. It is intended to inform, and to inspire its readers to look first in the mirror and see themselves and then look out the window and see others as their equals in Christ—whether male or female.

The road to the conclusions reached in *An Idea Whose Time Has Come* has been long and difficult. Along the way, I have learned so much from so many people, for which I am grateful. This is not to suggest that all of them agree with my thesis. Most of the quotes were not in the context of the issue of women and their role in the church. However, without their words of inspiration and encouragement this book would not have been possible.

I am grateful to Carl Ketcherside who helped me understand that *“there is room in Christ for differences, but there is no room for division”*. And, *“in as much as God did not make us all to look alike, He does not expect us all to think alike.”* We may not always see everything alike or like everything we see. However, we must always be free to see what we see, in a fellowship of unconditional love where the differences that make no difference to God make no difference to us. I am thankful to Dr. Leroy Garrett who reminded me in the early seventies that *“it is not doctrinal conformity or theological agreement that unites us, but the spirit which Christ has given us—unity is a gift to be received rather than a goal to be achieved”*, and to Franklin Delanor Roosevelt who reminded me that the *“only thing I had to fear was fear itself”*, and to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who taught me that *“once a man conquers the fear*

of death, all other fears fade away,” and “no man is free if he has to ask any one of three questions: (1) What do other people think? (2) Who else is with me? (3) What will happen to me if?” I am thankful to Mahatma Gandhi who reminded me that in my greatest moments of despair, *“all through history the way of truth and love has always won”*. I am thankful to Dr. Ralston Mondazie who helped me understand that *“if a man pleases God, it does not matter who he displeases, and if he displeases God, it does not matter who he pleases.”* After all, when one truly surrenders to God, *he cannot be intimidated, dominated or quiet.* I am thankful to Dr. Ari Santas, Associate Professor of Philosophy, who told me that the pen is mightier than the sword...*only if it writes.* I am thankful to the stranger who told me, *“When a man decides, how something is done is more important than why it is done, it is usually not done.”* I am thankful to Susan B. Anthony who reminded me that *“cautious, careful people who want to preserve their reputations and social standing, never change anything; not even their own minds”,* and *“there is a thin line between cautiousness and cowardice”*.

I want to thank the members of the Church At Pine Hill who joined me in establishing a church of Christ without walls; without denominational, cultural, class, race or gender walls; a church where women could participate in the total ministries of the church without reservations or restrictions.

I want to thank Dr. Al Jumper, without whose brilliance, insight and critical analysis this book would not be. I'd like to express profound thanks to my sister, Sylvia Rose, whose love and encouragement I cherish, and whose honest evaluation of this work I needed. I want to thank Dr. Linda Bennett Elder, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Valdosta State University, for her review and critique of the manuscript. I want to thank the People's Tribunal, the civil rights organization which grew out of the untimely death of Willie James Williams in 1998 and which catapulted me into the forefront of black leadership in Valdosta. Its composition of whites, blacks, Jews, Christians and Muslims, has helped me understand that neither culture, race, religion nor sex need be a barrier to those who fight for a common cause.

They have helped me appreciate the saying, “*It’s not what you know, but what you show—that really matters*”.

Without the love and patience of my wife Estell, I could never have finished this book. She lived with my uncertainties and struggles through the weeks and months it took me to prepare the manuscript. More than anyone else, she understood my need to finish this work. Because it was important to me, it was important to her. Thanks “*Peaches*” for your long suffering; for understanding when you didn’t understand what drives me. *I love you.*

Above all, I am thankful to Jesus to whom I have given all that I am and have, and for whom I want to live, and if need be, to die. The eighteen days and nights I spent with Him fasting and praying in 1992 gave me a new sense of who I am and why I am here. My body was cleansed, my mind renewed, my senses sharpened, my vision broadened, and my spirit freed—freed from the fear of doubt, criticism, and even death. I found a peace in the midst of my imperfections, and joy beyond human understanding. Now He is my all and love is my law. It is in the spirit of His love and by His grace that I discovered an “*Idea Whose Time Has Come*”.

Foreword

Carl Jung is quoted as having said "As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being." In this book, *An Idea Whose Time Has Come*, Floyd Rose does not kindle the light, but is rather a mere keeper of the flame. The light, in fact, has been kindled in generations past and the fire is stoked, even to this day, by women in our brotherhood who speak in loud and clear voices as they collectively challenge us (men) to rethink the position delineated in the Word of God as it relates specifically to the role of women in the church. It is, as far as I can see, perhaps the greatest challenge the church will face in this, the dawn of a new millennium. What I hear is nothing less than a call to give voice to hundreds of thousands of women in our congregations; women who understand that it is not God who has subjugated nor subordinated them in anyway; women who were created in God's very image and for whom Christ gave his life.

Injustice, like ostracism, is no stranger to Floyd Rose. When he sees what he perceives to be an injustice, he speaks. I admire that quality in any man and I am proud to say that I have never numbered Floyd among those who in their silence, betray all sense of conscience, duty, and devotion to teaching the Word of God in keeping with their calling. The question before us in, indeed, *An Idea Whose Time Has Come*.

Alfred D. Jumper, M.D.

Introduction

“It is not light that is needed, but fire. It is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling in this nation must be quickened. The conscience of the nation must be roused. The hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed, and its crimes against God and humanity must be denounced.”

These were the words spoken by abolitionist, Fredrick Douglas in a speech in Rochester, New York in 1852. Slightly paraphrased, they express what is needed in the year 2001 to challenge the unwarranted subordination of women in the Church of Christ. We are a brotherhood too willing to adjust. We are manipulated by powerful preachers, elders and editors of our national publications. We need the fire, the thunder, the storm, the whirlwind and the earthquake. The conscience of our brotherhood must be roused and its hypocrisy exposed. If *An Idea Whose Time Has Come* is one of the matches which lights the fire or becomes a small tremor which begins the earthquake, followed by a calm of reason and common sense, it will be worth whatever personal sacrifice and pain the author must endure. After all,

“A book that is written without pain is usually read without pleasure.”

It is no secret that there is a quiet, irreversible evolution taking place in the Church of Christ all over the United States, inspired and driven by independent minds and a few courageous men and women who have chosen not to sell their spiritual birthright for a mess of brotherhood pottage. Men like Cecil

Hook, Robert H. Rowland, Rubel Shelly, Dale Pauls, Al Jumper, Ken Morrison, and Leroy Garrett. They have all challenged us to park our cars outside the church building, but not our brains, and to listen to what we hear with reason, common sense, and commitment to the word of God. And a few of us have done so and dared to respond at great personal sacrifice and peril.

*“There’s nothing so powerful as an idea whose
time has come.”*
--Victor Hugo

*"The day you see the truth, and cease to speak the truth,
is the day you begin to die."*

--Dr. Joycelyn Elders

Slavery in America was built on the premise that the worst white man was better than the best black man.

Male chauvinism in the church is built on the premise that the least qualified man is more qualified than the most qualified woman.

"Give as freely as you have received"

--Jesus

What the author has freely received, he wishes to freely give. Therefore, there are no copyright restrictions imposed on those who wish to use any parts of this book to enlighten others. Perhaps, this too is an idea whose time has come.

Contents

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
An Idea Whose Time Has Come: Introduction	15
What Has Gone Wrong	17
Historical Perspective	21
Daddy, Why Can't I Do That?	26
The Contradictions	27
Blacks/Whites--Men/Women	30
The Scriptures	35
Behold, I Show You a Parable	44
Conclusion	48
Epilogue	49

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Introduction

When Martin Luther King first introduced his then fiancé, Coretta Scott, to his father and told him that they were planning to be Married, his father looked into his son's eyes and asked, "Can you Help it?" When Martin Jr. quietly responded, "No sir", the Senior King said, "Well, marry her!"

Given the fact that my life seems to be a never-ending stream of controversy, "Why", my friends will ask, "Would Floyd Rose write another book that is likely to create even more controversy and further alienate him from the mainstream of the brotherhood that he loves so much?" The reason lies in the answer that Martin Luther King Jr. gave his father. I simply can't help it. Why would Carl Spain, a bright, brilliant, gifted preacher and darling of the white Church of Christ brotherhood, risk his national reputation and his livelihood by challenging Abilene Christian College in 1961 to tear down the walls of racial segregation? Carl Spain couldn't help it. He couldn't help it because he knew it was wrong, and he loved the brethren. He was driven by principle, not by popularity. He was motivated by what was morally right and not by what was either politically expedient or socially acceptable. He was on the right side of history and understood that what is morally right, but politically wrong, today, will be both morally and politically right tomorrow. Like all men of integrity, when his courage caught up with his knowledge, he acted. He couldn't help it.

I can't help it because to assign women a role in the church that is separate, apart and inferior to men solely on the basis of

gender is wrong. I can't help it because to deny women, because of their gender, the right to do whatever God has given them the ability and desire to do is wrong, just as it was wrong to deny African-Americans the right to do what God had given them the ability and desire to do based on race. Neither has any basis in the message and mission of Jesus Christ. I can't help it because exclusivism based on gender, just as exclusivism, based on race, closes our minds to new and progressive ideas and our hearts to new and meaningful relationships. After all, when we build walls of race or gender, we wall out far more than we wall in. We rob ourselves of the knowledge, wisdom, friendship, love and fellowship of so many who could give us so much. I can't help it because men cannot be completely free until women are free. I can't help it because in the family of Christ, just as there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew and slave and free men, there can be no division into male and female. For we all share a common relationship with Christ, which puts us in a common fellowship with each other. That is the conclusion the Apostle Paul reached in Galatians 3:28. I can't help it because it's an idea whose time has come.

What Has Gone Wrong

*"It is always the radical few, never the complacent many,
who inspire change in any society."*

If there is anything that is clear in the message and mission of Jesus, it is that there are three fundamental requirements for a harmonious and happy life. (1) Love for God; (2) Love for oneself; and (3) Love for others, *whatever their race or gender*.

*"I love God and therefore I love you.
You love God and therefore, you love me."*

And

*"Love never gives up
Love cares more for others than self.
Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.
Love doesn't strut
Doesn't have a swelled head,
Doesn't force itself on others.
Isn't always, 'me first'
Doesn't fly off the handle,
Doesn't keep score of the sins of others
Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,
Puts up with anything,
Trusts God always,
Always looks for the best,
Never looks back
But keeps going to the end."*

I Corinthians 13—The Message

Dr. Andrew Hairston, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Southwestern Christian College said during the One in Christ Conference at Abilene Christian University in 1999,

“Those who have the power to define you, have the power to control you.”

Through the years, sexism, like racism, has given men the right to define, confine, and control women. We have determined what they are, what they can and cannot do, and where they could and could not go. We have created a brotherhood, which not only emphasizes the difference, but gives men the advantage based on that difference.

There is a frightening parallel between how blacks have historically been treated by a white dominated society, and how women are treated by a male dominated church. During the days of slavery, whites convinced themselves that they were superior to blacks, claimed for themselves the right to enslave them. But to succeed they also had to convince blacks that they were inferior to whites and therefore deserved to be enslaved. So it is with men and women. Men tend to believe that they have the right to dominate women. We call it, “taking care of them”, or “being the head”, and women, more often than not, believe that they deserve to be dominated by virtue of their sex. Women in the Church of Christ have traditionally been conditioned to believe that they cannot teach men.

To achieve white domination over blacks, whites needed blacks to do three things. (1) Respect them; (2) Fear them; and (3) Depend on them. With the Bible in one hand and the whip in the other, they were successful—for a season.

From the Bible, they read to their slaves,

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of your hearts, as unto Christ. Not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ.”
Ephesians 6:5,6

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.” *Colossians 3:22*

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."
1 Peter 2:18

Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again." *Titus 2:9*

The above referenced scriptures from the King James Version of the Bible, were used by white slave masters to justify their enslavement of blacks and to pacify blacks who were enslaved. And for two hundred and forty-four years, blacks accepted slavery as their God-ordained lot. They were descendants of Ham, cursed by God and destined to be the white man's servants forever, or so it was believed. They were, therefore, enslaved psychologically and physically. It was only after the chains fell from their minds that the chains were removed from their feet.

"And there we saw the giants, the sons of A-nak, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight." *Numbers 13:33*

Just as blacks saw themselves as inferior to whites in their own eyes, and were seen as inferior by whites and treated accordingly, women in the Church of Christ see themselves as inferior to men in their own eyes, and therefore, they are seen by men as inferior and treated accordingly.

In our wisdom, we revisited the scriptures that were used by whites to enslave blacks and interpreted them in relation to the facts at the time that they were being interpreted. Who among us would now use them to justify the enslavement of our fellow man based on race? And who among us would now accept them as justification for our own bondage? The practice of segregating people by race in the Church of Christ virtually went unchallenged until 1961 when a wise and courageous white preacher and scholar named Carl Spain risked his all to tell it all. Neither the Gospel Advocate, Firm Foundation, the 20th Century

Christian, the Christian Chronicle, nor any other national publication of the Church of Christ had spoken so forthrightly to this issue. And with the possible exception of Bob Jones University, we were the last to desegregate our schools, and last to offer a public apology for denying blacks the opportunity to attend our colleges and universities. Will we also be the last to end discrimination against women and admit that it is wrong?

Historical Perspective

With his permission, I lifted the following passage from Robert H. Rowland's, *I Permit Not A Woman To Remain Shackled*. It's an historical perspective of the roles that women have played in and outside of the church. When viewed objectively, we can see how we arrived at where we are and came to believe what we believe.

The coming of Jesus into the world and establishment of the early church were sandwiched between male-dominated religious institutions. Jewish traditionalists placed women in a subservient role to men in a patriarchal society. Under Jewish law, husbands could divorce their wives for any cause. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) Wives could not divorce their husbands. Wives were chattel. Polygamy was tolerated. (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 21:15-17) Women were inferior to men in every way, and less intelligent. They were considered spiritually inferior. They had no rights of inheritance if they had male heirs. (Numbers 27:1-11:36) They were subject to trial and stoning if their husbands suspected them of unfaithfulness. (Numbers 5:11-20) In spite of the same teaching on men in Leviticus 20:10, the Jews brought only the woman taken in adultery to Jesus for stoning. (John 8:3-11) Women were not allowed in the Temple and were not counted among the ten Jews necessary to start a synagogue.

At the coming of Christ, rabbinical schools were still debating whether women actually had souls. Under Moses, a woman was stoned if she were caught in adultery, but under Christ she was forgiven. Also under

Christ, there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female. They were all one in Christ Jesus. They received spiritual gifts, prayed, prophesied, spoke in tongues, interpreted tongues, and sang psalms in worship according to I Corinthians 11:14.

Shortly after the Apostolic Church period, a new male dominated church hierarchy began to rise up. Women's names were mentioned less and less in church writings. It culminated in the Ecclesiastical male order of the Catholic Church east and west.

Women were excluded from clergy roles, and a bold line was drawn not only between men and women in the church, but also between the clergy and the laity...until the last decade, the Catholic Church had only altar boys and no altar girls. Some heretical priests now allow altar girls to serve. But the church officially does not.

Most cultures of the world have placed women in a second-class status (and many still do). Under English law, barely a century ago, it was practically impossible for a woman to earn money. It was not until 1880 that the law allowed her to keep monies she earned. Modern Christianity often reflects the culture of our society as much or even more than it reflects Biblical truth.

Even in the United States, women have enjoyed the right to vote only since 1920. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 granted them further rights. Some states, up until a decade ago, had laws on the books limiting a woman's right to a full inheritance, which her husband had. In some states she received only a child's share or one-half of her husband's estate. Yet, he could inherit one hundred percent of her estate.

Christ's view of women and the view of Paul were quite different from the Jewish view, and the view of

much of Christendom today. The treatment of women by Jesus is in sharp contrast to that of Judaism. While Judaism required the stoning of a woman guilty of adultery, Jesus said to the one taken in the very act, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." In Samaria, Jesus conversed with the woman at Jacob's Well. She was surprised that He would even talk to her. Other Jews would not have. Jews would not even talk to Samaritan men, let alone a Samaritan woman. But Jesus did.

Dr. Michael C. Armour, highly respected Minister for the Skillman Avenue Church of Christ in Dallas, Texas, lecturer and writer, acknowledged that the *Church of Christ generally placed greater limitations on women in worship than do other evangelicals.*

As the 1900's opened, almost no one in the Church of Christ took issue with what we might think of as the traditional view of male and female roles in the church. Elders, deacons and ministers came exclusively from the ranks of men. Men alone were responsible for leading and facilitating worship. And where men and women were both present in the gathering of the church, only men were free to teach.

As an extension of these convictions, many congregations placed added limitations on women. For one, most churches did not permit women to participate in business meetings of the congregation or to serve on ministry steering committees. And in mixed settings of males and females, women usually did not lead prayers.

Yet, this consensus was hardly unchallenged. Beginning in the 1890's and continuing down to the end of the First World War, the Gospel Advocate carried a number of articles by Silena Holman, who argued articulately that women should have a larger place in

congregational life of the church, including a public teaching role.

A generation later, one of the Gospel Advocate's most esteemed writers, C.R. Nichols, likewise took aim at the prevailing consensus. In 1938, in a republished book called, God's Woman, he held that women served as deaconesses in the early church and that they should be accorded that same opportunity today...In the 1960's and 1970's, more and more churches began to question their own practice toward women. Much of this rethinking grew indirectly from burgeoning college ministries in the 1960's and the concurrent emergence of youth ministry as a major emphasis in congregational life. In both of these ministries females played more visible roles than was true elsewhere in the church.

Michael Armour notes elsewhere that:

Beginning in the 1970's and continuing ever since, a re-examination of women's roles has gone forward, both in local churches and at several of the universities associated with a cappella churches. Lectureships at both Pepperdine University and Abilene Christian University have frequently addressed all sides of this subject, providing a forum for speakers from both traditional and progressive perspectives.

Rowland observes that in most congregations of the Church of Christ, women are not allowed to preach, teach, lead singing, lead prayer, or read scriptures in the public worship services. They are not allowed to preside at the communion table or serve communion. They are not even permitted to serve as ushers, or collect attendance cards, pass collection baskets, or make announcements from the pulpit area. A woman cannot lead a prayer in the Bible classes, if a man is present, nor can she teach if a man is present. With rare exceptions, she cannot be a trustee, or serve on a committee doing "church work", let alone chair one.

She is not permitted to ask questions in the public worship services, nor publicly baptize. She must remain "silent" and in "subjection" to men.

In, *Ministers At the Millennium* (a survey of preachers in Churches of Christ), published in 2001, it was discovered that *"while other religious groups have been struggling in recent years over the role of women in their community of faith, ministers in Churches of Christ have remained uniform in their belief on the role of women in the church. Nine of ten ministers felt that the pulpit was out of bounds for a woman."* One minister, the survey said, *"summarized the view of many when he wrote, 'I believe the role of women in public worship is cut and dry according to the scriptures. An emphatic no must be stamped on a policy such as this. They have an important role in the life blood of the church, yet that role does not extend to the pulpit.'"*

While the attitude toward women in the progressive wing of the white Church of Christ seems to be changing, if even slowly, there is hardly any movement in the African American Church of Christ. Except in private conversations, barely a word is heard on the subject. If the subject is discussed in an open forum, it is always assigned to one of the "Chiefs" of the brotherhood so that nobody dares to question the traditional view. If anyone thinks about expressing a different view, he will be "marked" and subsequently "withdrawn from."

Perhaps the bottom line is fear, as expressed by one respondent to the survey: *"I don't know how many churches would be ready to accommodate female leadership. My biggest concern is that the women will do everything, and the men and their leadership and participation will disappear."*

“Daddy, Why Can’t I Do That?”

During a revival at the College Church of Christ in Fresno, California, in 1998, I listened to a rather tragic story about a father who had a son and a daughter. I don’t recall their names. I will simply call the little boy Jimmy, and the little girl Joy. Jimmy was eight years old, and Joy was nine. As the brethren were preparing to begin the worship service, one of the deacons approached the little boy and asked him if he wanted to usher and help serve the Lord’s Supper. Jimmy smiled and said, “*Yes sir.*” As he left the side of his father to go with the deacon, the little girl tugged at her father’s arm and said, “*Daddy, why can’t I do that?*” Her father was surprised by Joy’s question and he looked at her and said, “*Little girls don’t do that.*” He thought that would end the matter, but she persisted, “*But daddy, I can do that. Why does Jimmy get to do it?*” Unable to give his nine-year-old daughter an answer that was either logical or scriptural, he just sternly looked at her and said, “*Little girls just don’t do that and that settles it.*” When the service had ended, they returned to their house. It was time for dinner. Still puzzled by her father’s answer and feeling a sense of jealousy toward her eight-year-old brother, when their father asked Jimmy to offer thanks for the food, Joy began crying. She said, “*Daddy why does Jimmy always get to do that? I know how to pray. I can pass out the attendance cards at church and the other things. Why can’t I do it? Jimmy gets to do it all the time.*”

Joy could talk and walk and was taught to say her prayers at night, but was never asked to give thanks for the family meal. Joy never received satisfactory answers to her questions. So, when she was old enough to move out and chart her own course in life, she left the Church of Christ to join a fellowship where she could “*do that.*”

The Contradictions

"Slavery is what you want for others that you would never accept for yourself."

Women are allowed to pray in unison with men, read responsively, and in unison with men, and lead singing from their seats, as long as a man (signifying his authority) stands up front. Women sing alone and together, on certain lyrics, or the chorus of several songs, while men remain silent. As these songs are sung, women praise God, pray to Him, and give thanks to Him, while men, including the leader, remain silent.

Until the late fifties and early sixties, few congregations allowed "group singing" in which women led songs. Now they conduct the groups and in a few instances, dare to call them choirs. The group singing is generally restricted to an afternoon service, and if preaching takes place, it must be separated from the group singing by a "dismissal prayer." God is dismissed, the audience remains, and the group singing begins. Women conduct choral groups at lectureships and at special afternoon services, and sometimes before or after the morning or evening service, especially during gospel meetings. Women sing solos, but only after the "official worship" service has ended with a dismissal prayer.

Women usher at funerals conducted by the Church of Christ. They stand in the pulpit, give remarks, sing solos and more often than not, ask the congregation of women and men to join in the chorus. They recite poems, quote scriptures all in honor of a dead body. However, in the absence of a dead body, they are not permitted to give remarks (not even make announcements), sing solos, lead a congregational hymn, usher, read a scripture, or comment on one that has been read in honor of their risen Lord.

For years there was a general attitude among men that:

“The ideal woman is one who must see as little as possible, hear as little as possible, and say as little as possible.”

The slave master observed, “We can control our slaves as long as we keep them dependent on us for their food, clothes and shelter. Men have said, “We can keep women under subjection if we make them dependent on us for their food, clothes and shelter.

“I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over a man.” I Timothy 2:12

Who among us really believes that passing out attendance cards, showing people to their seats, passing the collection baskets and communion trays, reading the scriptures, or praying in the public assembly of the church is usurping authority over anybody? In any other area of society, we would argue for the equality of women-equal pay for equal work. People, regardless of their race or gender, should have the right to vote, and to hold any position for which they are professionally qualified—that is, it would seem, everywhere but in the Church of Christ.

My first wife, Ann, was a graduate of Southwestern Christian College and a straight “A” Bible student. She often wrote sermons for the young men to preach. In my absence on Wednesday night during my tenure as Minister of the Ridgewood Church of Christ in Toledo, Ohio, in the 1970’s, George Burns, one of the brethren asked the members if they objected to her teaching the class. After all, she had been a better Bible student than her famous husband. Nobody objected and Ann taught the class. Upon my return the following week, everybody was bragging about the class and how well she had taught. One sister said to me, “Brother Rose, I hate to tell you this, but your wife is a better teacher than you are!”

As I look back on those years and think about all of the knowledge, wisdom, and ability with which Ann was blessed, it troubles me that she was denied the opportunity to use it because she happened to be a woman- a gender that she did not choose. I often wonder how much stronger we all might have

been if she could have freely used her gifts in the church that she loved so much.

My sister, Sylvia, by any standard, is an unusually gifted woman. She, like her eleven brothers and sisters, grew up in the Church of Christ. She attended Southwestern Christian College and Harding University, and returned to Southwestern to teach. She wrote and composed "Songs of Faith", a hymnbook that was designed for the Church of Christ. In some circles, she could not teach the music she wrote. After wrestling with her own conscience, she left to use her gifts in a freer fellowship.

Blacks/Whites—Men/Women

*“First, truth is ridiculed
Second, it is violently opposed.
Finally, it is accepted as self-evident*

--Arthur Schopenhauer¹

The Bible, like the Constitution of the United States, is a living document and must be interpreted in relation to the facts at the time it is being interpreted. It was written by and addressed to people whose language we do not speak, whose culture we do not know, and at a time in which we did not live. It must, therefore, be understood in its cultural and historical context. R.N. Hogan used to say, *“To understand the Bible, you’ve got to know who’s talking, when they’re talking, who they’re talking to, and what they’re talking about.”*

The issue of women and their role in the church must be understood in the cultural and historical context of the current times. Like slavery and racial segregation, the scriptures that are used to assign them a place that is separate, apart and inferior to men, must be revisited and interpreted in relation to the facts at the time they are being interpreted.

When Thomas Jefferson, the architect of the Declaration of Independence, wrote, *“We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, and are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, and among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,”* he himself was a slave owner. In fact, the first thirteen presidents of the New Republic owned slaves. Jefferson really meant; all white men are created equal, and all white men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, and all white men have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

For two hundred and forty-four years of slavery and another one hundred years of racial segregation, whites used the scriptures to justify the assigning of blacks to a place in society that was separate, apart, and inferior to whites based solely on race. Now, we are using the scriptures to justify our assigning women to roles in the church that are separate, apart and inferior to men based solely on gender. Race and gender are consequences of birth, and are inherently neither inferior nor superior—just different.

The Constitution of the United States was adopted to protect the rights that Thomas Jefferson said were neither derived from nor granted by the State, but given to us by our Creator. The Constitution, however, was always interpreted in relation to the facts at the time it was being interpreted. In the mid-1800's a slave named Dred Scott escaped from his master's plantation, much like Onesimus in the Bible, and ran away to freedom in the North. He was captured and returned to his former master. And on March 6, 1857, the Supreme Court looked at the Constitution and concluded,

*"No black man has any rights that
any white man is bound to respect."*

(Chief Justice Roger Taney)

In 1875, a black man named Homer Plessy boarded a train in Louisiana and sat on a seat in the car that had been reserved for whites only, and when he refused the order of the conductor to move, he was thrown off the train. He sued the State of Louisiana, and the Supreme Court looked at the Constitution and ruled:

"Separate but equal is the law of the land."

(Justice Henry Brown)

The justices interpreted the Constitution in relation to the facts at the time it was being interpreted. And for the next seventy-nine years the emphasis was on the separate and never the equal. The Constitution had not changed but the facts had.

In 1954 a little black seven-year-old girl named Linda Brown, was denied the right to attend an all white public school, in Topeka, Kansas. Her parents sued the Topeka Board of Education, and the highest Court in the land looked at the same Constitution that the Supreme Court Justices looked at in 1857 and 1875 and concluded in 1954 that

“Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,”
(Chief Justice Earl Warren)

and ordered that public schools across the South be desegregated with all deliberate speed. The Constitution had not changed, but the facts had. Therefore, it was interpreted in relation to the facts at the time. So it must be with the scriptures. They do not change. However, they must always be interpreted in relation to the facts at the time they are being interpreted.

To assume that the instruction that Paul gave to one congregation which was experiencing a specific problem at a given time in their history was valid and binding for all congregations for all times, even though they did not have the same problem, is like saying that everybody in my house should take a penicillin shot because that is what the doctor prescribed for me when I had the flu three years ago, notwithstanding the fact that nobody else in my family had the flu. We must, therefore, consider the cultural and historical context of these scriptures. To take them out of their context is to make them a pre-text to our preconceived notions about their meaning and application. We seem to have a mindset to find all these things in the New Testament, which were never in the New Testament until we invented them...then they were found in the New Testament.

During the days of slavery, whites didn't read the Bible first and discover that they had to enslave blacks. They enslaved blacks and then went to the Bible to find justification for slavery. Similarly, men, through the years dominated and exploited women, assigned them a place in the church that was separate, apart and inferior, and then looked for scriptures in the Bible to justify their domination.

When the inquisitive lawyer asked Jesus what he might do to inherit eternal life, Jesus responded, “*What is written in the law?*” And he answered, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thy self.*” Jesus agreed and added, “*This do, and thou shalt live.*” Luke 10:27-28

Unfortunately, we have complicated these simple requirements by creating a brotherhood based on doctrinal conformity, which has enslaved us all. What was given to us by Jesus to set us free now enslaves us. What was meant to bring us all together is tearing us all apart. What was intended to save us is now destroying us. We have placed our fellowship with each other, based on doctrinal conformity, and rooted in racism and sexism, above our relationship to each other based on our spiritual heritage conceived in love. After all,

“In the family of Christ, there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us all are equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.” Galatians 3:28—The Message

In every aspect of life, it has been proven that women have the ability to learn and develop the skills to do what men can do. They are attorneys and accountants, bankers, and brain surgeons, candlestick makers and undertakers. They are owners and chief executive officers of multi-national corporations and they are successful politicians. Women have proven records of excellence in every area where physical strength is not necessarily required. Should the church be the exception? If so, why?

In the April-June 2000 edition of the *Revivalist*, David Lipscomb, an influential pioneer preacher in the Church of Christ, and the man for whom David Lipscomb University is named, is quoted as saying,

No one as a Christian...has the right to say to another ‘thou shalt not’ because he is of a different race, social or political status...Jesus Christ permeates Himself in the

least and despised of His disciples, and as we treat them, we treat Him... to object to any child of God participating in the services on the account of his race, color, social and civil state, is to object to Jesus Christ and to cast Him from our association. It is a fearful thing to do.

If David Lipscomb had said,

No one as a Christian...has the right to say to others, 'thou shalt not' because they happen to be of a different race or gender, social and political status...Jesus Christ permeates Himself in the least and despised of His disciples, and as we treat them, we treat Him... to object to any child of God participating in the services on the account of race or gender, color, social, and civil status, is to object to Jesus Christ and to cast Him from our association,

with his commanding influence and national status, perhaps we would be further along in our recognition of the rights of women and would have benefited greatly from their knowledge, wisdom and experience.

Endnote

1* *I quote Schopenhauer here with a feeling of irony, since he is famous for his essay "Against Women," where he reveals his deep misogyny. Like Jefferson, Mr. Schopenhauer was ahead of his time in ways even he could not fathom.

The Scriptures

“And I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy.” Joel 2:28

In Acts 2:14, Peter told his audience in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, what you see and hear is the fulfillment of Joel’s prophesy. *“This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”* God’s Spirit was not only to fall on men, but on women, servants and handmaidens, and they (men and women, servants and handmaidens) would prophesy (tell the mind or counsel of God). It is true that all of the Apostles were men. They were also all Jews. Does that mean that Gentiles, Blacks, Indians, and other non-Jews are precluded from teaching and preaching?

I will therefore that men pray everywhere lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the women learn in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. I Timothy 2:8-14

Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things, and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven.

In his book, *I Permit Not A Woman To Remain Shackled*, Robert Rowland said,

It is clear that women prayed and prophesied in the public assembly of the Corinthian Church. If they were required to pray with their heads covered to honor their heads, men who were their heads had to be present. Since it is obvious that the women prayed and prophesied in the Church at Corinth, and Timothy was told by Paul to advise women to keep silence in the churches, these instructions, which appear contradictory, were given to two different groups at two different times. Both incidents must be interpreted in relation to the facts at the time they are being interpreted. Circumstances often determine the solution to problems.

During my early experience as a Christian, I recall how women always wore hats to church, and those whom nature had blessed with long hair, proudly wore it. They wore their dresses long and more often than not the hem reached the calf of their legs. Men never wore long hair, even though all of the pictures that we saw of Jesus depicted him with long, straight hair. A woman with her head covered and sporting a long dress was "adorned with modest apparel" and others were frowned upon. Even lipstick was considered improper.

What was modest or immodest was always determined by the customs and traditions of the country or village where the subject was discussed. Evangelists R.N. Hogan, Levi Kennedy, and J.S. Winston went to the bush country in Africa several years ago to carry the Christian faith via the American brand of Church of Christ doctrine. The women in the area never wore anything above their waist, leaving their breasts bare. After their conversion, they obviously had to be taught how to "adorn themselves with modest apparel." So, upon their return to America, the evangelists asked their congregations to make and donate blouses for their new converts. They did, and when the new African Christian women received them, they graciously thanked their American

“Christian” benefactors and cut two holes in the blouses and wore them proudly. In their culture, it was immodest for women to have their breasts covered. In the not too distant past, women used to unashamedly breast feed their children while sitting in the worship service, and nobody thought anything about it. Earrings, necklaces, lipstick and expensive jewelry were all “of the world”. Seldom do you find women in the church now with a hat on and without flashing jewelry. I Timothy 2 remains in the Bible, but it is interpreted in relation to the facts at the time it is being interpreted. The facts have simply changed. Paul did not define modesty; the culture, customs, and traditions of the times did. When is it allowable to take a passage out of its original context and apply that passage to a situation that is totally foreign to its original setting? Who decides that it’s okay, and by what criteria?

When we take a solution to a particular problem at a particular time and make it a general rule of conduct, we only create more and bigger problems. When Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all and give to the poor, he was prescribing what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., calls individual surgery. He was not making a universal diagnosis. To assume that what was necessary to correct a particular situation at a particular congregation is necessary for all congregations even though they don’t have the same problem, is like saying that all rich people must “sell all and give to the poor that they may have treasure in Heaven,” even though they never had the same conversation with Jesus, nor do they love their possessions more than they love Jesus.

“There is no reasonable explanation (biblical or otherwise) for assigning women roles that are separate, apart and inferior to men in or outside of the church.”

When the Apostle Paul tells Timothy that the women are to remain silent in the church, and then he accepts the idea that women could speak, pray and prophesy in the Church at Corinth (I Corinthians 11:2-16), it’s obvious that what women were permitted to do was dictated by place, time and circumstances. Paul was prescribing congregational surgery. He was not making a

universal church diagnosis. The doctor who gives me penicillin shots when I have the flu, does not give other members of my household penicillin shots who do not have the flu. And the best doctor would not suggest that I continue to take the shots when I no longer have the flu. He keeps records of my visits and the shots that I received only for reference. And at another time and place, he might even prescribe another medication for the same ailment.

"I thank God that I was not born a slave, a wanderer or a woman."--Orthodox Jewish Prayer

In his sermon, "In His Image", Dale Pauls told the Stamford congregation of the Church of Christ in Stamford, Connecticut, in 1998 that when Paul wrote I Corinthians 14:33-35 and I Timothy 2:9-15, he was under the shadow of Rome where the father had authority of life and death over his wife, his children and his slaves. It reflected a fallen world in which no respectable woman could speak in public. Paul was calling his readers to live as Disciples of Christ in the leadership pattern of his day as he does when he repeatedly tells slaves to obey their masters. He is asking them to live in such a way that the gospel could be heard. The gospel alone can undo the fall of humankind. Paul is guiding Christians in the setting in which they live. He is not making a first century setting mandatory for all time. In I Corinthians 11:1-10, Paul talks about how things were in the old world; a world of slavery and male dominance. Then in verse eleven he says, *"In the Lord, however, the woman is not independent of the man, nor is the man independent of the woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman, but everything comes from God"*. NIV

Pauls told his congregation that

...this is about the new life in Christ where there's neither slave nor free, Jew nor Greek and male nor female, and the degree of implementation possible in the first century church. We must always make the distinction between what the New Testament says about the new life

in Christ, and the degree of implementation possible at that time. Just as we can no longer use 'slaves obey your masters', we can no longer use I Corinthians 14 or I Timothy 2 to silence women in the church; not if we are to be consistent. It is not only important that we know what Paul thinks, but how he thinks.

Dale Pauls was right when he told his church, "We admit all the time that Jesus was addressing a particular issue in a particular set of circumstances at a particular time. We don't wash one another's feet, even though it was a direct command of Jesus. 'Do as I have done'. We do not greet each other with a holy kiss.' We don't practice 'laying on of hands'. We do not 'call upon the elders to anoint with oil'. We do not fast. We're not concerned with women's hair coverings. We're not concerned with whether they braid their hair or whether they wear pants or expensive clothes. We have always argued, and rightly so, that many of the things that were said and done were dictated by time, place and circumstances.

In his book, *The Twisted Scriptures*, Carl Ketcherside suggested that to assume that what was absolutely necessary in correcting a particular problem is normative for daily living and survival is like insisting that one should throw away food and live on penicillin shots because this was prescribed when one had pneumonia. If all the members of the household are awakened at 3:00 a.m. to rush one member to the hospital with a ruptured appendix, we do not conclude that they must all get up at 3:00 a.m. every morning to prove that they are still members of the same family.

The whole notion of subordination; for somebody to be up, somebody else must be down; the whole notion of asking who is the greatest, or who lords it over whom is a natural consequence of living in a fallen world where trust and harmony had been broken. But Christ came to undo the fall; to create a new humanity; a new people; a creation where Grace reigns; where there is neither Jew

nor Greek; slave nor free, male nor female, where the greatest of all is the servant of all; a new people where the first will be last and the last will be first. A new people where they will not be judged by the consequences of birth, but by spiritual rebirth—not by the categories of race and gender—accidents of their physical birth, but by the quality of their spiritual rebirth,

Pauls told his church.

We must see the Apostle Paul's letters, as we must see all New Testament scriptures, in the totality of their original cultural and historical setting. Disjointed verses taken out of context, then woven together and explained by (our own) interpretation, is our justification for what we believe and practice. But the time comes when truth calls and integrity must answer. Dale Pauls instructs us, *"If God wants women silent in the churches forever, he also wants submissive slaves forever."* He points out:

"We must always be consistent. We must always take care to distinguish between what the New Testament says about the new life in Christ (neither slave nor free, male nor female) and the degree of implementation possible in the first century church. Just as we would no longer use the teaching 'slaves obey your master' (Colossians 3:22), to defend slavery, we must no longer use I Corinthians 14 or I Timothy 2 to silence women in the church—not if we would be consistent. Churches that still operate on principles of male dominance are going to have the same ethical, moral and spiritual credibility that pro-slavery churches would have today."

We're not concerned with women's hair covering or care whether they braid their hair or wear expensive jewelry. Why does the Church of Christ ask women to accept a subordinate role in the church when in education, business and politics, we insist on equality of men and women. Our position on the issue of women and their role in the church is at best contradictory. Pauls again:

Women teach men all the time in the songs that they sing, the poems that they compose, the books that they write. They are allowed to make announcements when they are seated, but not when they're standing. They often lead singing from their seats. Women can address a Christian group as long as the "official" worship service has ended by a dismissal prayer. "If she is seated she can. If she stands, she can't. If she's in the pulpit, she can't. If she's in the pew, she can. If she writes it she can teach it. If she speaks it, she cannot.

While we say that God cannot be worshipped with men's hands, and God dwells not in temples made by hands, and "the church is not the building", women freely sing, pray and lead singing if the church meets in a living room, but they cannot if the church meets in the church building. Where are the biblical distinctions between what women can do from the pulpit and from the pew, when they are seated and when they are standing? Where are the biblical distinctions between what women can write and what they can speak?

In *Women In Ministry—God's Dilemma or Ours*, Sylvia Rose wrote,

"God has established definite and distinct roles for men and women. These roles are defined mostly within a marriage and therefore address husbands and wives, and not just males and females...Therefore, when Paul says, the head of the woman is the man (I Corinthians 11:3), he is stating the order that God has established in marriage and not giving all men authority over all women. It is this misconception that feeds much of the distorted dialogue on women and their role in the church. For if men feel that all women are subject to them and their authority, regardless of their relationship with them, they will be less inclined to accept a woman in a position wherein she might exceed them."

In her commentary on I Timothy 2:12, she added,

“Paul’s desire was to teach a wife’s responsibility to her husband and not to all men. Therefore, he used the term woman, singular, and not women, plural. The relationship expressed in verses 11-12 is not that of women being inferior to men, but a wife in her proper relationship to the husband.”

Nine years ago, in *Restoration Review*, Dr. Leroy Garrett wrote,

If the Church of Christ is to be saved, it must cease to be male dominated... women are members, of course, and their presence has always been crucial, but they are left out of the corporate worship of the church... we leave our women out, and that is a sin!

We must come to terms with the one line in scripture that must be the arbiter for this entire question: There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28)

If that passage means anything it means that gender is not to be made a test of fellowship or ministry, such as, ‘she can’t do that because she is a woman.’ Paul himself may have sometimes fallen short of that ideal of perfect equality, due to the pressures of custom, as in the case of slavery, which he tolerated, and which is forbidden in the same passage, ‘there is neither bond nor free.’ If socioeconomic conditions had been different, Paul might not have said what he did about women and slaves, tolerating their unequal treatment... He almost certainly would not say to the 20th century church what he did to the first century church about women and slaves (and Jews!). But still he laid down the principle that applies to all generations because it so reflects the mind of Christ. In the Church of Christ, there is to be no distinction between slaves and free men, Jews and Gentiles, men and women.

What I want for the Church of Christ down the road is that there will be no social, racial, or sexual lines drawn. None whatever. Liberties and ministries will be shared equally and indiscriminately, according to their gifts and talents. We must overcome the mentality that half (or more) of the church is to be subservient to the other half. All because of gender! Christ has made us one and we are all equal-and half of us are not more equal than the other half. We must obey Christ rather than men.

It's all about male dominance. Nobody objects to a woman being appointed to and chairing a Kitchen Committee, the Clean-up Committee, making or purchasing the baptismal garments, washing, and storing them; preparing the communion trays, polishing the furniture, etc. As Sylvia points out, these roles have traditionally been given to women. They are, in fact, expected to play them. It is only when women are given roles with perceived power over men that they are met with resistance.

Behold, I Show You A Parable

Dr. Richard Barclay, Minister of the Cashmere Gardens Church of Christ in Houston, Texas says, "the word parable means to throw alongside." In a parable we throw that which is familiar alongside that which is unfamiliar so that the unfamiliar can become familiar. And the sense of a parable is, if you can see and understand that, you ought to be able to see and understand this.

Now the parable is this: Once upon a time there was a church whose membership was composed of whites and blacks. 80% of the members were black and 20% of them were white. All of the positions of authority were held by the whites. The minister, elders, and the deacons were all white. Those in positions of perceived power-the decision makers, were all white; the song leaders, the announcers and the ushers were white. Although blacks gave 85% of the money, they could not count it, deposit it, or account for it. They were required to put it in, but they had no input as to what happened to what they had put in. One of the black members was an accountant at the local bank, and was responsible for millions of dollars, but at the white controlled church, he could not count the \$2000.00 average offering that was raised on Sunday mornings, or the \$450.00, which was received at the evening worship service.

The black members could pass the collection basket and communion trays to their right and left, and when necessary, over the back of the seat, and might be permitted to pass it across the aisle, but they were not allowed to give it to the first person. The black members could receive the Lord's Supper, but could never administer it. Only whites could do that. Despite the black members being more educated and far better readers, they sat embarrassed while the white members, however illiterate they

were, stumbled through the Bible to read the scriptures. For only the white members were allowed to read.

The black members would place announcements in the bulletin, and in fact, a black member laid out and printed the bulletin; but blacks could not publicly read from the bulletin they printed; only the white members could do that.

However fervently they prayed at home, the black members could not offer the public prayer unless there were no white members present. The presence of even one white member would disqualify all of the black members from praying in the public worship and in Bible study.

The black members could, and more often than the white members, did publicly confess their sins. They told of how they mistreated their families, lied or stole, cheated on their wives or husbands. They were allowed to tell about how bad they had been to God, but they could not tell how good God had been to them. Only the white members could do that. In fact, at any time they chose, the white members were free to open the Bible, read a scripture and speak about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit or simply testify about an experience they may have had the previous week with God, but none of the black members were permitted to testify in the public worship.

The black members were allowed to teach, but only teach other blacks. And if a white member entered the room, the black member had to stop teaching, surrender his right to do so to the white member; however unqualified or unprepared the white member was.

The black members could not usher, even though the job merely called for the seating of the people as they entered the sanctuary, and giving them a bulletin and an envelope. Only whites could do that—that is, unless there was a dead body in the church building. Ushering at a funeral was not considered a position of “authority”, and so blacks could stand at the door, direct people to their seats, pass out programs and fans, if necessary. The black members were allowed to read the scripture, quote a poem, sing a solo and even stand in the pulpit that was usually

reserved for whites only, and speak in honor of the dead body lying before them, but they were never allowed to speak in public worship in honor of the risen Christ. Only the white members could do that.

In that church where 80% of the members were black and 20% were white the black members could buy the bread and grape juice, the symbols of the Lord's broken body and shed blood. They could (before any of the white members entered the building) prepare the communion table, and might even stand silently beside it and whisper a prayer of thanksgiving, but they could not serve it to the members who would assemble later for worship—only the white members could administer the Lord's Supper. The black members could clean up the table and prepare it for the next time, of course.

The black members could work and earn money with which to buy food. They could prepare, cook and serve it in the fellowship hall of the church, and even tell the white members when it was time for them to eat it, and in most instances, tell them where to sit; but the black members could not give thanks for the food they bought, prepared, cooked and served; only the white members were allowed to offer the prayer of thanksgiving. If they gathered at a private home or at a restaurant, blacks were never asked to offer the prayer of thanksgiving—only whites were asked to pray.

The point is if it was wrong for whites (who did not choose their color) to assign blacks (who did not choose their color) roles, separate and apart from whites based on race, it is equally wrong for men (who did not choose their gender) to assign roles to women (who did not choose their sex) based on gender. Just as whites have no right to discriminate against blacks because of something for which neither is responsible, men have no right to discriminate against women because of something for which they are not responsible.

Robert H. Rowland observed, "*It is only through selective reading of the scriptures that we keep women out of the public life and ministries of the church.*" And even so, our interpretation of those scriptures is often clouded by our preoccupation with male dominance.

When the women in the Church of Christ grow weary of their inferior status, they will rise up and change it. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. noted during his struggle against racial segregation in public transportation and public accommodations in the 1960's, *"the oppressor never voluntarily gives up power. The oppressed must strike the first blow—so it is with women. And once they make up their minds, it will only be a matter of time. After all, male privilege is based on the man's ability to keep women in "their place".*

Conclusion

In my life time, I expect to see an accelerated change in the attitude of the Church of Christ toward women, facilitated by social and political pressures, and the courage of a few honest preachers, and 'Bible students, much like the changes which gave birth to the civil rights movement and the second emancipation of African Americans. The voices of women will be heard from the pew and pulpit. And those churches that resist will be left to wither and die on the vine of their own irrelevance.

Dale Pauls told his church, and I agree, that “ *the church is called to transform the world, not to conform to it. We must let the light of knowledge on this subject shine so that we will be seen as the protectors of the rights of women, not the defenders of the claims of men to subjugate, dominate and exploit them.* ”

Change does not come easy, and more often that not it is born of pain and sacrifice. Like the caterpillar which goes through metamorphosis on its way to becoming a butterfly, the church will experience the pain which always comes with change.

In race and gender, we may be as separate as the fingers; but in the air that we breathe, the water that we drink and the blood that we shed, we are one as the hand. By consequence of birth, we are different, but in intellect and ability, we are not. We should, therefore, be given the right to do anything in the church for which God has given us the ability, whatever our race or gender. It's *An Idea Whose Time Has Come.*

Epilogue

“The Hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in a time of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality”—Dante

The Church of Christ has placed itself on the sidelines of the defining issue facing the church in the 21st century. The question of women and their roles in the church is an ethical and moral issue, which will haunt us all. In the 20th century we stood silently by as other Christians led the fight against the evils of racial segregation. We pleaded for more time and tolerance for those who condoned a system of political domination and economic exploitation, based on the illusion of “white supremacy.”

Now in the 21st century, while women are being denied the opportunity to use the ability that God has given them in the work and worship of the church solely because of their gender, we are the last to see it or do anything about it. We have become what William K. Floyd called “*an embalmed society for the preservation of peace and comfort.*”

In; *Between Two Worlds*, Robert Myers wrote in 1966,

Religious groups are very much like humans in their growth. They begin by being born into a big world, which cares little for them and takes scant notice of them. Consequently, they huddle together and formulate their ‘group language’, and get acquainted with a set of group beliefs. This gives them a sense of security. By and by, like growing children, they shed themselves of these feelings and attitudes and discover that they are not alone.

Robert Myers' observation seems to be a perfect description of the church of my childhood, which began in 1906 as a split from the more liberal Christian Church. Like the early explorers of the Western frontier who became settlers, we ended our search for truth when we "*restored the New Testament Church—its doctrine and practice.*" And like the settlers, we have circled the wagons to defend ourselves against all who are not like us. Our exploration for more truth has ended. We have it—all of it. We are no longer Christians only. *We are the only Christians.* But, like the early settlers, once in a while some among us have the courage to question the wagon train masters about those we see in the distance. They are feeding the hungry. Clothing the naked. Visiting the sick and imprisoned, and calling for political, social and economic justice. How, we wonder, would Jesus regard these people who are not like us? Perhaps the answer may be found in Luke 9:49-50. "*Master,*" John said to Jesus, "*we saw a man casting out devils in your name, but as he was not one of us we tried to stop him. Jesus said to him, Don't stop him, for he who is not against you is on your side.*"

There are more than three hundred and fifty denominations of the Christian religion in America. They are *irreversible realities of history*. Despite our best efforts to deny their existence, they are growing by leaps and bounds while our membership steadily declines. They are struggling against the evils of poverty, social, political, economic and judicial injustice, born of racism and sexism, while we are dying on the vine of our own irrelevance. This is the reality, and it is time for us to recognize it.

In, *In Search of Freedom*, Carl L. Etter wrote, and I agree, that

...the message of the Church of Christ is negative in much of its teaching, and offers no constructive program to take the place of that which it condemns... It preaches unity and practices division more paradoxically than any church with which we are familiar...It preaches undenominational Christianity, but in reality is the most denominational of all

denominations. It is neither Protestant nor Catholic, but a group of small, warring sects which are little denominations within a denomination.

I have not presented these ideas as a contestant in an adversarial debate. Debate seeks victory. Dialogue, on the other hand, seeks understanding. Dialogue is always preferable to debate by honest seekers of truth because it's okay to be wrong and admit it. Because "*we have our own history to deal with,*" we bring to any discussion different perspectives. The only unity possible for thinking people is unity in diversity. My wife and I became one, not because we were the same, but because we were different. It was dialogue, not debate which brought us together. It is not an adversarial relationship which keeps our marriage, but one of tolerance and acceptance. We certainly have our differences. More often than we'd like to admit, we have what we call our "*moments of intense fellowship.*" But our disagreements, however stressful, never divide us.

At some point we must acknowledge that we are not the whole family of God, and become satisfied with knowing that "*the Lord knoweth those that are His.*" It is time for us to remove ourselves from the Judgment Seat, and leave it to God, and sit on the Love Seat with Jesus. He welcomes us all there.

We can begin this long and painful process by seeking God's forgiveness for preaching division in the name of unity, and admit that we are a denomination, like all others, who have crucified the Christ afresh, and brought shame and reproach on the Body of Christ. Then we will be free to seek reconciliation with all of those from whom we have been estranged within the Restoration Movement family. As we seek dialogue with them, in a spirit of tolerance, we will be free to accept them in spite of our differences with them. We will accept them because the Love of God constrains us.

If we want to accept people, we will find all the reasons we need in our own hearts. If we want to reject them, we will find all the excuses we need in them.

In *Destiny or Disease*, Logan J. Fox wrote, "*There is a crisis of faith among our people. Our pulpits are filled with men who do not believe what they preach and dare not preach what they believe.*" It is time for us to admit that we are not the Church of the 1st century, and should not seek to be. We should not want to be like the Christians of the 1st century. We are Christians in the 21st century, who are reaching, teaching, and nurturing people through the love of Jesus Christ. Our mission and methods should reflect the message of Jesus—*Love for God, Love for self and Love for others.*

Every man needs to feel loved by God, and accepted and needed by his fellow man. It gives us a sense of security. I need that feeling. That is why I find the words of Jesus so refreshing.

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

I want to be loved; therefore, I love others

I want to be forgiven; therefore, I forgive others

I want to receive; therefore, I give to others

I want to be heard; therefore, I listen to others

I want to be invited; therefore, I invite others

Etter said,

...the Church of Christ has no place in its fellowship for one who does not conform fully to the status quo. Even though we cast him out of our ecclesiastical circle, we expect him to remain with us and expose his children to our unfair attacks. Every man, woman and child needs a feeling of belonging...the Church of Christ withdraws this essential requirement of the human spirit from those who manifest a tendency to do independent thinking.

I've been there. I know well the wrath of a brotherhood that is steeped in tradition, which makes void the simple commandments of Jesus to love God, ourselves and our fellow man as ourselves.

I want what most of you want—to be a part of a brotherhood that is sound in faith. And one that is equally rooted in love and compassion; one that extends a hand without pointing a finger,

and seeks to reclaim the lost, and make the weak strong. And, in the spirit of Jesus, love the unlovable and forgive the unforgivable. A brotherhood where love is unconditional, and we are all free to take a position without first taking a poll. A brotherhood where our unity is born of the Spirit, not doctrinal conformity.

We certainly don't have to agree on every subject, and we don't. But if there is going to be peace in the valley, the Lion and the Lamb will have to lie down together. The forest fire is an equal opportunity destroyer. And if we continue to make every little disagreement a test of fellowship, we will watch some of our most gifted young preachers, whose independent studies of the scriptures have led them to a different conclusion, leave to pursue their ministerial careers in freer fellowships. These young men love the Church of Christ. They simply want freedom with their commitment—freedom to pursue truth wherever it leads them.

Some of you who have read this book will say to yourself and perhaps to others, "If Floyd Rose feels this way, why doesn't he just go his way and leave us alone." I can't. I love you too much. I want to be with you. God planted me among you. You are family; my brothers and sisters in Christ. You're the church of my childhood. I attended your schools. I ate at your tables. In the early years when we were denied accommodations in the hotels and motels of the south, I slept in your beds. I held your "gospel meetings", and baptized many of you. I want to be with you—all of you. We have a common heritage. You taught me to seek the truth. I do. Now I urge you to do the same and follow it wherever it leads. Should you discover, as I have, that what you hold so dear is not the truth, and you let it go, you will only have let error go—not the truth.

As you reflect on what you have read, an ancient prayer may be appropriate.

From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O God of truth, deliver us.

I want us to love people with the same passion that we condemn them. I want us to see people as Jesus sees them; love them as He loves them and treat them as He treats them. I want us to accept them on the same basis on which He accepts us. Then we will no longer measure our best against their worst, but our best against the best of Jesus; and on His scales we are all found wanting. Because of His grace and mercy, we will find peace even in the midst of our imperfections. I want us to be free to go where God sends us, do what He bids us, and say what He tells us. Our loyalty will be to the Christ, not to the Church of Christ. Will we be criticized? Yes. Will we be stigmatized? Yes. Will we be demonized? Yes. Will we be ostracized? Yes. But remember, Jesus was crucified by people whom He deeply loved, but who hated Him. ***He became their enemy because He told them the truth.*** In the end, however, those who killed Him bowed at His feet.

Jesus always looks beyond what we do to Him to what we can do for Him. Every morning when I am awakened by his love, I thank Him for the liberty wherein He has set me free, and I promise Him that I will never again allow myself to be entangled by the yoke of bondage. I have tearfully asked His forgiveness for every time I sold my spiritual birthright for a mess of brotherhood pottage.

I love Jesus more than life itself, and I am ready to acknowledge for all who wish to know my deep and abiding faith in Him. He takes me through what seems bitter to me today, to get me to what will be better for me tomorrow. So, I live with the faith that whatever comes to me, comes to pass. So, I am resigned to let it come and let it pass.

Therefore,

*When I am troubled on every side, I am not distressed.
When I am perplexed, I am not in despair. When I am
persecuted, I am not forsaken. When I am cast down, I
am not destroyed.*

To your heart from my hand, I have offered you ***An Idea Whose Time Has Come.***

Floyd Rose

About the Author



For thirty years, Floyd Rose was among the most sought after preachers in the Church of Christ. In 1978, at age forty and at the height of his popularity, he was conducting an average of twenty-six gospel meetings a year and featured on Regional and National Lectureships throughout the United States.

To the surprise of his family and friends, in 1979, Rose left the Church of Christ, and with his wife and one other man, Rose founded the Family Baptist Church in Toledo, Ohio. In just over six months, the Family Church grew from three to five hundred members. It was Toledo's fastest growing church, and had become the center of spiritual, political and economic power in Toledo's African American community. Among its guests were Rosa Parks, Stokely Carmichael, Louis Farakhan, and T.D Jakes.

In 1994, two years after the death of his father, Rose returned to the church of his childhood and again his popularity soared. Between April of 1997 and April of 1998, he traveled more than 75,000 miles accepting invitations to preach, lecture and conduct workshops in thirty different cities in as many states.

In spite of his ever increasing popularity, Rose was troubled by what he saw as a parallel between how blacks were treated by a white dominated society and how women are treated in a male dominated church. So, he established the Church of Christ At Pine Hill; a church without walls—without denominational, cultural, class, race or gender walls; a congregation of Christians where women participate in all of the ministries of the church, without restrictions or reservations.

following year, ACC began desegregating its campus.

Well aware that he would be criticized, demonized and ostracized; nonetheless, Rose believes that he is on the right side of history, and in a few years, any church which discriminates against women will have no more ethical and moral credibility than a proslavery church would have today. Rose says, "*Freedom for women to use their gifts in the work and worship of the church, for which God has called and qualified them, is an idea whose time has come.*"

Speeches, Sermons And Lectures

By Floyd Rose

SPEECHES

“An Imaginary Letter From Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”, 1992, Convention Center, Washington, D.C.

“Dr. King’s Last Will and Testament”, 1996- Mathis Auditorium, Valdosta, Georgia

“Our Dilemma, Our Deliverance, Our Destiny”, Sheraton Westgate Hotel, Toledo, Ohio-1993

“We Want You to Know Sheriff Paulk”, Lowndes County Jail, Valdosta, Georgia-1998

“Can You Count to Four?”, Singles Convention, Orlando, Florida-1995

“The Elephant Trainer”, Rally, Family Baptist Church-1991

“There is a River” Radio Message, WKKO FM-1989

“I Am, I Can, I Will” Radio Message, WKKO FM –1993

“It’s My Time”, Greater Union Baptist Church, Valdosta, Georgia-1998

“Walk In Iron Shoes” Radio Message, WKKO FM – 1991

LECTURES

“True Unity Is Grace Unity”, Abilene Christian University-1998

“Reconciliation”, Rochester College, Rochester, Michigan –1998

“You Don’t Have To Be a Beggar”, Southwestern Christian College, Terrell, Texas, 1976

SERMONS

- “Should I Help?”, Metro Church of Christ, Dallas, Texas-1997
- “The Circle of God’s Law”, Mona Church of Christ, Los Angeles, California-1997
- “The Origin of Confusion”, Family Baptist Church, Toledo, Ohio-1986
- “Paul’s Recipe For Joy”, River Street Church of Christ, Valdosta, Georgia-1996
- “A Strange Lily”, Mona Church of Christ, Los Angeles, California-1997
- “The Value of the Valley”, Dayton, Ohio-1997
- “What Did The Chicken See?”, River Street Church of Christ, Valdosta, Georgia-1996
- “Come Hang With Me”, Jubilee, Nashville, Tennessee-2000
- “The Best is Yet To Be”, Family Baptist Church, Toledo, Ohio-1989
- “What You See is What You Get”, Church At Pine Hill, Valdosta, Georgia-1998
- “Wild Man In the Cemetery; Black Man in the Ghetto”, South Union Church of Christ, Houston, Texas-1994
- “If You Can Take It, You Can Make It”, New Avenue “S” Church of Christ, Riveria Beach, Florida-1995
- “My Purpose, My Potential, My Principles”, Central Church of Christ, Macon, Georgia-1997
- “In Everything Give Thanks”, Hahira Church of Nazarene, Hahira, Georgia-2001
- “The Wages of Sin”, Evansville, Indiana -1997
- “Why Are You Afraid”, Church At Pine Hill, Valdosta, Georgia-1998

“Hands Upon the Table”, Jerusalem Baptist Church, Toledo, Ohio-2001

“What Did They Know That Others Did Not?”, Birmingham, Alabama-1997

“Call Me Mara”, Mona Church of Christ, Los Angeles, California-1996

“Freedom Through Submission”, Duarte Church of Christ, Duarte, California-1997

“How To Get Out Of Debt God’s Way I”

“How To Get Out Of Debt God’s Way II”

“My Response to the Letter of Withdrawal”, Church At Pine Hill, Valdosta, Georgia-2000

“God Has A Way Of Turning Things Around”, Church At Pine Hill, Valdosta, Georgia-2001

Recommended for Further Reading:

I Suffer Not A Woman To Remain Shackled

Robert H. Rowland
3619 Launchwood Dr.
Corona, CA.92881-8784

Twisted Scriptures
Free In Christ
Free To Speak

Cecil and Lea Hook
Publishing Ministry
17196 N. Woodmore Ct.
Beaverton, Oregon 97006-4820

Books and tapes may be ordered from:

F. Rose Ministries
4001 Foxborough Blvd
Valdosta, Georgia 31602
(229)-241-0705
efrose@acninc.net

Other books by Floyd Rose:

Money Without Guilt
Beyond the Thicket

All profits from sales of books and tapes go to
Save Our Children, Inc.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come is timely, insightful and prophetic. It will challenge many, reassure and comfort others. When you finish reading it there is only one conclusion you can reach: No work in the church belongs to men *as men*, nor to women *as women*.

This book is a must reading for every woman in the Church of Christ. Read it and you'll never be the same.



About the Author

For thirty years, Floyd Rose was among the most sought after preachers in the Church of Christ. In 1978, at age forty and at the height of his popularity, he was conducting an average of twenty-six gospel meetings a year and featured on Regional and National Lectureships throughout the United States.

To the surprise of his family and friends, in 1979, Rose left the Church of Christ, and with his wife and one other man, Rose founded the Family Baptist Church in Toledo, Ohio. In just over six months, the Family Church grew from three to five hundred members. It was Toledo's fastest growing church, and had become the center of spiritual, political and economic power in Toledo's African American community. Among its guests were Rosa Parks, Stokely Carmichael, Louis Farakhan, and T.D Jakes.

In 1994, two years after the death of his father, Rose returned to the church of his childhood and again his popularity soared. Between April of 1997 and April of 1998, he traveled more than 75, 000 miles accepting invitations to preach, lecture and conduct workshops in thirty different cities in as many states.

In spite of his ever increasing popularity, Rose was troubled by what he saw as a parallel between how blacks were treated by a white dominated society and how women are treated in a male dominated church. So, he established the Church of Christ At Pine Hill; a church without walls—without denominational, cultural, class, race or gender walls; a congregation of Christians where women participate in all of the ministries of the church, without restrictions or reservations.

Second Printing

• • •

BRENTWOOD CHRISTIAN PRESS
4000 BEALLWOOD AVENUE
COLUMBUS, GA 31904

ISBN 1-55630-442-0



9 781556 304422