

Men, Women, Modesty and Culture.

(Methods and the Distinction of the Sexes)

Question 1—*What should we think of the argument that the Bible is always interpreted and, therefore, cannot be relied upon to teach objective truth?*

Answer—Scripture possesses an independent authority, being formally the infallible Word of God, John 10:35; leading the most faithful amongst early Christians to search them to determine whether or not the words of the apostle Paul were in conformity to them, Acts 17:11. This, they could only do with any sense of purpose if they understood that the Holy Scriptures were, and are, objectively the Word of God and bearing a meaning which could be ascertained by all who made proper use of them, 2 Pet. 1:20. This objective truth, described as the analogy, or proportion, of faith, Rom. 12:6; is both knowable and transmissible as the apostle clearly notes, Heb. 5:12-6:2. However, it is important that Jesus Himself declares that only those who have been regenerated can perceive this objective truth together with its understanding, John 8:47. It was this which the synod of Jerusalem isolated and declared to be binding upon New Testament Gentile believers, Acts 15:28. This objective interpretation, being transmitted by a non-canonical epistle lacking the character of Holy Scripture, Acts 15:30-32; was used to strengthen the faith of the churches receiving it, Acts 15:41; and carries in it a dogmatical, or commanding, character, Acts 16:4, 5. So, while the Holy Scriptures possess a primary authority, creeds, and confessions, possess a subordinate pedagogy, being the material principles of the Church's witness, or testimony, 1 Cor. 14:19.

Question 2—*What, then, should be thought the case of slavery when the Bible was used to argue and defend this trafficking?*

Answer—While it was common, especially amongst nineteenth century Southern expositors, to find Biblical support for slavery, this should not dampen our belief that Scripture holds forth objective truth. Three things should be kept in mind:

First, the Bible does recognize and regulate slavery as lawful in some instances, Lev. 25:38-46; however, the kind of slavery that is mentioned in the Bible is due to economic hardship and the need for a certain portion of temporal security, Ex. 21:2-6.

Second, the Bible explicitly prohibits slavery based upon man-stealing, or kidnapping, Ex. 21:16. Thus, when some Israelitish kings tried to established slavery based upon force, 1 Kings 9:15; it comes to no good for those involved, 1 Kings 11:6; 12:18. In the New Testament, men-stealers are numbered amongst the worst of sinners, 1 Tim. 1:10.

Third, the peculiar Southern defense of slavery, based upon race, was supported largely based upon a questionable reading of Genesis 9:24-27. It is notable that this interpretation was strongly opposed by Reformed Presbyterians, in the early nineteenth century.

Question 3—*What standards should we adopt for pressing our arguments in these matters?*

Answer—In arguing on these matters, we must take care that we ground the *substance* of our arguments in one or more of three possible sources of divine authority within special revelation: 1.) Scripture precepts, Ex. 19:8; these include the summary of the moral law found in the Ten Commandments, Deut. 4:13; together with all other explicit judgments and statutes, Neh. 10:29. 2.) Good and necessary consequences derived from such precepts, as when Jesus argues deductively from Exodus 3:6 to conclude the resurrection of the dead, Matt. 22:32. 3.) Approved examples, Luke 6:40; thus, the apostles often encourage following the pattern of the saints, 1 Cor. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:10; Heb. 6:12.

Question 4—*Wherein should we find further refinement for our conclusions, especially in matters commonly called circumstantial?*

Answer—Once we have established the substantial matters pertaining to our various subjects at hand, the *circumstantial*s may be refined by appeals to several things: 1.) Christian prudence, Eph. 5:15; whereby the wise foresee the consequences of their actions and the actions of others, Prov. 14:15; 22:3. It consists of a knowledge of things good and bad and neutral, and involves memory, intelligence and foresight, Prov. 13:16. 2.) The light of nature, Prov. 20:27; whereby both the conscience testifies, 1 Cor. 2:11; Luke 1:34; and the very fabric of the creation is made to teach and enforce the principles of natural morality, Rom. 2:14, 15. 3.) The general rules of Scripture, Rom. 13:13; whereby all things are given their proper categories and order, Col. 2:5.

Question 5—*What does the Bible say about the distinction of the sexes?*

Answer—If we consider the creation account, Gen. 1:27, we shall find three things which are reiterated throughout the Scriptures: 1.) God created man, Ps. 100:3; by which we may understand mankind, because in the creation of the man the creation of the woman was assured, Gen. 2:22, 23; 5:2. 2.) God created man in His own image, Gen. 1:26; by which we should perceive the Son, who is the image of the invisible God, Heb. 1:3. This entails a concreated standard of conduct because the creation of persons involves relations and relations imply conduct, Eph. 2:10. 3.) God created man with two sexes, Gen. 5:1, 2; by which we understand that sex options are binary and limited by the nature of the creation of man, as affirmed by Jesus Christ Himself, Matt. 19:4. The Hebrew words used (in Genesis 1:27) for “male” (זָכָר) and “female” (אִשָּׁה) not only make clear that this binary sexual division is the divine intention but they do so with reference to the organs differencing the sexes, Gen. 34:25; Jer. 31:22.

Question 6—*What should we think about gender dysphoria?*

Answer—We can and should agree with the apologists for normalizing this phenomenon who say, “Definitionally, sex is about chromosomes; gender is about cultural practices.” However, Christians must affirm that the latter should flow naturally from the former, Gen. 1:27; 2:24; for these things were “knit together” (תָּסַבְּגוּ; “weave together”) when God fashioned men and women in the womb, and it is natural for the soul (נַפְשׁוֹ; the *anima*, or innermost being) of that person to recognize it as such, cf. Ps. 139:13. Gender dysphoria or, as it was formerly called “gender identity disorder” involves at its core an unnatural hatred, emanating from the soul (ψυχή) of the person, against his own body, Eph. 5:29. Thus, when the biological sex does not follow a natural path giving proper cultural expression, it is held to be an abomination (תוֹעֵבָה; a word which imports being an idolater making the person detestable and disgusting to God) before the LORD, Deut. 22:5. This also is why sexual actions which result from “gender identity disorder” are classified as unnatural in the catalog of their Scriptural condemnation, Lev. 18:23; Rom. 1:26, 27.

Question 7—*What is the importance of identity in this discussion?*

Answer—Identity is the quality of being identical which means that it is the fact of being who or what a person or thing is. According to Scripture, the identity of this or that person is determined by: 1.) Understanding that one is the creation of God, created in His image, Gen. 1:27. 2.) Submitting to the divine knowledge which is coordinate with the divine will, Jer. 1:5. 3.) Recognizing that all men are, by nature, now plunged into sin, Rom. 5:12; and that this is the source of all crises of identity arising from men, Isa. 1:3. 4.) Accepting that this fallen identity is false and productive of all personal dysphoria and can only be corrected through faith in Jesus Christ, Eph. 4:22-24. 5.) Embracing that restored identity in Jesus Christ, which begins with a renovation of nature, Gal. 3:27-29; and comprehends its reintegration with persons in their natural relations, Mark 10:6. For this reason, the culture which best represents a reintegration of sex and culture is that which arises amongst those persons and societies which have experienced the power of divine grace, 1 Cor. 11:1. Our identity should not move from culture to nature but, beginning with Jesus Christ, from our nature flows cultural implications, Rom. 15:2, 3; Phil. 2:4, 5.

Question 8—*Is reality something which is merely subjective or is it something objective?*

Answer—Reality itself is something objective being both the creation of God, Acts 17:24, 28; and also the result of its meaning being determined by the Creator, Rom. 11:36. For this reason, the Bible distinguishes between reality and fiction, Ps. 119:163. Significantly for mankind, the difference between reality and falsehood is knowable, Prov. 13:5; Eph. 4:25. This reality includes a moral reality which is opposed to sin, Ps. 11:7; 19:9; Jas. 4:17. Moreover, because it is possible for a person to know the difference between reality, or truth, and falsehood, Zech. 10:2; those who cling to the latter will be held responsible, Rev. 22:15.

Question 9—*How do moral standards relate to that which is objective and that which is subjective?*

Answer—Moral standards, when rooted in reality, are the places where the objective reality of the divine perception and will meet the subjective passions and thoughts of men, 1 Cor. 6:9-11. These are made necessary because men are by nature bereft of access to the objective, Isa. 55:8, 9; and because, since the fall into sin, men are also by will estranged from what is objective, Eccl. 7:29. Since the fall of mankind, grace is necessary for this restoration of moral standards, Tit. 2:11, 12; wherein the divine interests (which are objective) become the study of men (subjectively), Rom. 12:2. Importantly, it is in this intersection of the objective and subjective wherein men achieve the clearest perception that reality is knowable and understandable, John 7:17.

Question 10—*How does the concept of subordination relate to the distinction of the sexes?*

Answer—Any discussion of subordination must distinguish between nature and persons. There is a natural subordination between the Creator and the creation, *cf.* Rom. 8:20. And, in the creation, there are different kinds of created natures, celestial and terrestrial, of differing superiority and inferiority, 1 Cor. 15:40, 41; and, amongst the terrestrial natures there are also degrees of superiority and inferiority, 1 Cor. 15:39; which is the basis upon which the inferior creatures are made subject to mankind, Gen. 1:28. Subordination does not occur naturally between those things of the *same nature*, *cf.* John 5:17, 18. Therefore, the subordination of the Son to the Father is *personal* not *natural*, John 5:19; 1 Cor. 15:28. Thus, since man and woman are both created possessing the same human nature, Gen. 1:27; 5:1, 2; the subordination of the woman to the man is not *natural* but *personal*, 1 Cor. 11:3. This personal subordination is made necessary in all things lawful when enforced by the principle of priority, 1 Tim. 2:11-13; as is the case with the personal eternal subordination of the Son, John 1:14. However, it may also be voluntary to the extent it is grounded in the consent of the one subordinate, 1 Pet. 3:1; whereas, to the extent it is a matter of priority, it is necessary in all things lawful, 1 Cor. 14:34. Interestingly, the eternal Son, upon assuming the human nature, became subordinate to the Father not only *personally* but *naturally*, Gal. 4:4; which subordination He took upon Himself *voluntarily* in His humiliation, Phil. 2:5-8.

Question 11—*What does subordination have to do with the concern for order?*

Answer—The reality of subordination produces the need for order to be established, Gen. 3:16. This order is to be studied with respect to both natural subordination, 1 Pet. 5:6; and with regard to personal subordination, Heb. 13:17. Indeed, the subordination demanded by nature reinforces that demanded personally, Eph. 5:22, 23. The former is absolute, admitting no challenge from inferior natures, Rom. 9:20; the latter is circumscribed by the former, Acts 5:29; Eph. 6:1. This order is to be observed with respect to all of the interactions of men, whether ecclesiastical, 1 Cor. 14:40; or those civil relations established by God, Rom. 13:1. For the believer, order is the return to both natural and personal subordination, as required by the objective reality established by God, Col. 2:5. Observing matters of order is both a mark of godly humility, Phil. 2:3, 4; Rom. 12:3; as well as a token of love toward both God and man, Rom. 12:10, 11. Most importantly for our purposes, the humility found in keeping order is that same modesty required by God in our behavior, Rom. 13:14.