

A Celebration of True Femininity and Reconciliation Between the Genders.

Adaptation of a talk given by Pastor Ron Brookman at the Celebration of New Beginnings at the Greenhills Conference Centre, Saturday night, 9/08/08

080808 has indeed been a day of new beginnings! A door has been opened to move towards a greater fulfilment of the Church's destiny in our nation, and therefore to a more glorious fulfilment of Australia's destiny! It's important to realise that we haven't just prayed for it and proclaimed it. We've experienced it over the last 2 days!

Meeting in the Great Hall of the Parliament yesterday, the very heart of our great nation, we entered a new level of worship which in unprecedented ways lifted us into the Heavenly places.

The Spectacle of Worship

It was not just the prayers of repentance that we prayed, nor the songs of worship which we sang, or the speeches, or the passages of Scripture which were read. We touched it in the unique way we celebrated the sacrament of Communion, where we renewed Covenant with the Lord, recognising Australia as under the Sovereignty of God, and entrusting her to Him. As powerful as all these aspects of our worship were, I believe we encountered a new dimension in the tenor in which we celebrated and wove all those wonderful things together. The colour, the dance, the flags, the banners, the pageantry, the symbolism, the extravagance, the foretasting of the Heavenly Marriage Supper of the Lamb in the Banquet meal, gave every aspect of our worship new, more penetrating significance.

At one stage yesterday while we were in prayer, making petition for an area of darkness and injustice in our nation, I opened my eyes to behold dancers gloriously clothed as 4 cherubim, at the edge of the Great Hall, wafting their wings in unison, as if lifting our prayers up into Heaven and ushering them to the heart of God's Throne room of Grace. At another point my heart exploded in utterances of thanksgiving and exaltation, as dancers unfurled huge rolls of red satin from east to west and from north to south, to mark the Great Hall with a huge cross, from perimeter to perimeter. Yesterday our worship, intercession and proclamation achieved a richer significance and deeper anointing through the images of Heaven and the creative symbolism reflecting Jesus' work and Lordship. I believe that worship incorporating such Heavenly imagery has not been experienced in Australia before. How fitting in the very heart of our Governance!

Restoration

A lost, yet powerful dimension of Christian heritage was restored to the Church yesterday. The Reformation tended to strip away the rich imagery of the Roman and Eastern Churches, so evident in their cathedrals today. Icons, artistic masterpieces, rich architecture, lavish use of gold, lavish vestments of rich colour were employed to enable suffering saints caught in the struggles and persecutions of this world, to glimpse the eternal and Heavenly reward which awaited them.

The Book of Revelation is filled with such imagery and symbolism, to bring hope to a persecuted church. As was stressed yesterday, the Kingdom of God has already come onto the earth, albeit in hidden fashion. Our task to help shape the nation with Godly values by making the way for Kingdom values to impact every powerful institution and culture in Australia, will inevitably bring conflict. Indeed persecution has already begun. Is it any wonder then, that our Risen Lord would have His Kingdom, which He has ascended to prepare, to be glimpsed, not only in our heart, but displayed and symbolised in our worship, the interface of Heaven and earth?

Honouring Hilary

Yesterday our worship and work was filled with such prophetic blessing! We need to acknowledge Hilary Moroney, her faithfulness in prayer, her receiving of the vision, her unrelenting tenacity in fighting against great odds to bring it to fruition, and her

leadership which has opened a new door for the Church and for Australia on 080808! The Presence of God and the power of His love, evident in a way many of us had not experienced before, reflected the feminine sensitivity, gentleness and pondering of Hilary's heart. Her feminine leadership revealed aspects of God's heart which the masculine heart often fails to perceive. Unfortunately Hilary received much opposition and a vote of no confidence from many leaders of the church when she approached for support. I think it is safe to say that the reason for this was that the symbolism, pageantry and extravagance she espoused was distinctly feminine, causing many men to think her vision to be too risky, not sufficiently ordered too out there!

True Femininity

Women bring to the Church a dimension which few men can, because women have been created by God to be particularly sensitive to matters of the heart. Men are better at matters of the head. God has created women to be more receptive to the spiritual world around us and to the hidden glories and glimpses of Heaven beyond. The gentleness of spirit of Godly femininity enables women, in the main, to be more intuitive than men. Their heart's receptivity makes them more alert to spiritual things, their capacity to treasure good gifts and to ponder in their hearts enables the Lord to reveal hidden mysteries to them.

Consider Zechariah and Mary in the first chapter of Luke. The angel Gabriel appeared to both to speak of Heavenly realities about to be revealed on the earth, involving each of them. Zechariah was "gripped with fear" and when the angel told him of the immanent conception and birth of John, his son, who would be a forerunner in the spirit and power of Elijah, to make a people prepared for the Lord, He asked Gabriel how he could know this for certain. The male rational, and need to be in control, clicked in immediately, questioning. That's not necessarily bad, but by contrast, when Gabriel appeared to 14 year old Mary, 6 months later she was "very perplexed," yet pondered in her heart what was happening, what kind of utterance she was hearing. Rather than demanding knowledge Mary inquired how this could *be*. Her very language acknowledged it would happen. Her faith was ready to hear how the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and she readily submitted.

These incidents reflect the masculine *rational* and feminine *intuitive* qualities in relation to the unseen. I hasten to say that they complement each other and that both are necessary in the church. But God created them to work together in an equal complementarity. Consider Gen 1: 27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Gender Complementarity

When God made man He made him *male and female* in His image. It is only as both genders stand together in equal and mutually honouring relationship, that we reflect God's image to the world and to the powers and principalities. When God made Eve to be a *helper* for Adam he didn't make her subservient to, or less than, him. In fact the Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:18 for *helper* is a rarely used derivative which in most other references, such as Psalm 121, refers to the Lord's help, as opposed to that from men. Eve's help was to bring special insight to Adam from the Lord. Certainly, at the Fall, her insight was stymied, as was Adam's capacity to reason. But interestingly, in Christ, who redeemed us from the Fall, there is neither male nor female:

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:26-29

The one new *man* which Christ forms to be His *bride*, even in the contrasting gender images, perfectly unites both genders, clearly making them equal, bestowing on each corresponding dignity, authenticity and glory, to reflect His. He restores the original dynamic of the complementary, trusting, helping relationship, which the curse of the Fall stole, causing woman to yearn for her husband, yet be frustrated by his rule over her. In

the church, in the here and now, as we put on Christ, Paul exhorts us to recognise no divisions between the genders, but to give equal honour to each, equal place to each, equal respect to each. This surely means to recognise the different giftings and persuasions which the Lord has formed in each gender, to let each inform the other, working together to reflect His glory on the face of the earth.

Gender Equality

This does not preclude the Godly order of male headship. Ephesians 5:21 instructs us to be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. It is in mutual submission that we revere Christ and so reflect His servant glory. Whereas wives are to be subject to their husbands, so are husbands to their wives, to the point of laying down their lives for them! Jesus told us that lordship in His Kingdom is contrary to that in the world. The one who is head, who leads, is to be servant. (Luke 22:26) The one who reasons is to give earnest consideration to the one who intuits, and vice versa.

This is further substantiated in 1 Peter 3:3-9. Women's beauty is not to be merely external, reflected in clothing, jewellery, make up and hair style, but revealed through the hidden person of the heart, the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, *which is so precious to the Lord*. Her hidden depths search out the hidden truths of God and His unseen Kingdom, and the very gentleness of her demeanour mysteriously reveals them, bringing such joy to God! Her submission to her husband reveals something of the church's submission to her Lord, Jesus, as Sarah's was to Abraham. But likewise, her husband, in the same submissive way, is to live with his wife, protecting her as one who is physically weaker, and honouring her *as a fellow heir of the grace of life*. The word *fellow* stresses *equal*! The word *honour* means to esteem, to trust, to learn from, to take note of. The husband's prayers will not be answered merely because he honoured his wife, but precisely because his prayers are joint, are informed by her insight, and strengthened through her faith.

In the next verse Peter exhorts all to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kind hearted, and humble in spirit, a veritable mixture of the strengths of both the masculine and the feminine. This can only come from a mutual learning from, and enriching by one another. I believe this exhortation is not only for husbands and wives but for the whole church, for the relationships between *all* sisters and brothers. We need each other! We need to be enriched by one another's gifts and insights. It is only as brother and sister mutually submit to one another, and honour each other that male and female stand in right relationship together. This powerfully and beautifully reflects how we were first made by the Lord, to reflect His image clearly to the world.

Hilary's leadership to bring about this wonderful celebration and covenanting, from first glimpsing the vision, to guiding her team to grasp the reality, has been undergirded with the wisdom and support of men. She has subjected her dreams and visions to brothers who have helped give them form, shape and language to submit to the Parliamentary authorities and to church leaders. It is only as Hilary has been willing to receive the Spirit's brazen visions and challenges, subject them to sisters and brothers, prune off the bits discerned to be her fertile imagination, and called men to come along side her in the establishment and execution of a plan, that the unseen glory of Heaven has taken shape on earth, in this extravaganza this weekend. It has truly been the ingenuity of the Godly feminine working with the sanctified masculine... the way that the Church is meant to operate.

The Sword Between the Sexes

Until now 2 powerful worldly forces have been at work in the Church holding back such glorious and Godly co-operation. These are 2 destructive forces which have Greek names. Mysogyny is the dishonouring of women. Mysandry is the dishonouring of men. Each was unleashed to the world at the Fall, and each has been powerfully at work ever since. Mysogyny has occurred as men have not trusted women, have despised them, and used their superior strength, physically, financially and positionally, against them. This has been as true in the church as it has been in the world. Men have abandoned women, abused them sexually, emotionally and physically. We have humiliated them, belittled them and ridiculed their sensitivity and insight. We have seen them predominantly as sexual objects to satisfy our libido. In the church we have so often relegated them to the

kitchen or the Sunday school, and have ignored, belittled, ridiculed and joked about their spiritual giftings, and anointing for leadership. So often men have not trusted women or taken the time to hear their heart's cry, or share their vision, then laboured with them, in the to and fro with which all healthy relationships are worked out, to bring to birth new manifestations of God's Kingdom on earth. And of course men have also sexually abused women and girls within God's earthbound community, the church.

Similarly mysandry has operated, as women, in their hurt have lashed back at men, seeking to manipulate, seduce, control, rebel against or belittle them.

Both undermine the unity of the Spirit and the ethos of Christ's Kingdom on earth, and thus the clear reflection of God's image and glory through the Church to the world and the principalities. Christ calls His Redeemed Community, as male and female, not to be separated by differences, but to so see themselves as one. He calls us to mutually honour each another, to recognise the gifts which both genders distinctly bring, to work together in love, trust, and mutual honour. In so complementing one another we become one new man, the Bride of Christ!

The Gathering's Response

Following this exhortation the gathered men and women took time to reflect about then repent of judgements made against the other gender. Pastor Peter Walker, an indigenous leader at the gathering, called the men to come forward to confess ways in which they had dishonoured women. The men repented aloud of the manner in which we have used and exploited women, despising their intercessory gifts, belittling them, abandoning them as fathers, husbands, boy friends, brothers, pastors. Then, from their seats, the women took time to confess their judgements of, and actions against men.

There was a period of silence to recognise the deep pain that much of this abuse has caused, to allow the Holy Spirit to minister into the wounds, then to pray for healing. It was stressed that because this is no light thing, but so deeply entrenched, the process of healing and restoration will take time.

With the Cross between us, we then spoke forgiveness, women to men, then men to women. Finally we blessed each other by speaking out the blessings each gender had been, and is, to the other.

Such a spirit of celebration and release filled the hall! Finally, Peter Walker turned to 2 Kings 2:19-22. After Elijah had been ushered into heaven, the men of Israel recognised that, though the situation of the city was pleasant, the water was bad and the land unfruitful. Elisha's first act under the double anointing of Elijah, was to command them to bring a jar filled with salt, which he then took to the spring, where he cast it in, to purify the waters. No longer would they bring death and unfruitfulness to the land. Peter reflected how the division in the church between men and women has produced unfruitfulness. It has put to death many ministries which women might have brought to enrich the church and extend her mission. As a symbol and sealing of the night's repentance and the new beginning which it heralded, we poured salt over the Cross, between the men and the women. We proclaimed a new spring of life, that the waters which flowed from Canberra 080808 would indeed herald a new day for Australia and the church, as the relationship between men and women is healed through the gospel and its proclamation.