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WOMEN IN MINISTRY (SOMETHING I LEARNED AT MCPC) BY ELIZABETH COON

Recently I read a book called *Women in the Church*, by Stanley Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo for my Practical Urban Theology class at MCPC. This book and the conclusion I came to upon finishing it bring to light how differently I think from a year and a half ago, when I first started school. When I chose Messiah College, I knew that the theological tenets were different from my own, but I felt firm enough in my own beliefs that I expected no great challenge. In my second semester, I registered for Encountering the Bible. Throughout the course, I

was introduced to ideas and concepts that threatened the perspectives that were familiar to me. Knowing that I had to develop my own belief system rather than rely on my parents, I of course tried to remain as open-minded as possible. My positions on certain debatable issues within the church changed drastically, although each concession I made to the admittedly more liberal ideas discussed in class was granted through a slow process of serious consideration and prayer. My beliefs concerning the interpretation of certain Scriptures changed slightly, but more importantly, I came to understand more clearly that the writers of the Bible were not perfect, and while not surrendering the divine inspiration of

Scripture, there were human elements that needed to be accounted for in the interpretation of Scripture, including the patriarchy that is evident in both the Old and New Testament.

Growing up in a conservative family with roots in the Independent Baptist denomination, I never had a female pastor. It just was never a possibility. My dad has always been the head of the household, but my parents' marriage has been a partnership. I never hear my father raise his voice to my mother, nor have I ever heard them argue. Every decision that confronts my family is dealt with jointly.

Stanley Grenz states in the preface to *Women in the Church*, "Evident within what may have appeared to

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TOP FIVE STUDY SPOTS IN PHILADELPHIA:

1. *MUGSHOTS COFFEE BAR AND JUICE SHOP (2106 FAIRMOUNT AVENUE)*
2. *LAST DROP COFFEEHOUSE (1300 PINE STREET)*
3. *TBAR (117 S 12TH STREET)*
4. *QUIET DINING ROOM (2016 N. BROAD STREET)*
5. *TEMPLE LIBRARY (OFF OF BERKS MALL)*

REMEMBER WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN BY SARAH BOWMAN

As editor of the Broad Street Journal, I am grateful to the many students who have contributed their pens to this publication. I have witnessed growth in each writer, as their experiences in Philadelphia brought new insights into events expressed through

opinions, news articles and photography submissions.

As the semester ends with study groups and caffeine highs, I encourage students of Philadelphia to keep writing down what they have encountered in this city, whether for personal satisfaction or for various publications. Many have

learned, laughed and lived your articles and photos. Continue to share that.

With this said, I toast to another semester of rubbing shoulders with the various wonders of city life. But mostly I want to recognize the written words that will come from the hearts and minds of those MCPC students living and learning in the semesters to come.

Specifically, I would like to thank for their contributions: *Samantha Moore, Melissa McKrell, Elizabeth Thompson, Charley Wilkinson, Peter Corning, Brad Mensch, R. Cody Wanner, Elizabeth Coon, Cody Miller, and Victoria Brossy*. You kept this thing going.

MINISTRY

be the male-dominated contexts of home and church was an obvious, unquestioned partnership of male and female that assumed the value and equality of all persons in Christ" (7).

Women in the Church introduced names to the positions in the modern debate on the topic. The *complementarian* view is that of my childhood: men and women are equal partners in the church and the home; they simply fulfill different roles, and the male role happens to be that of the leader. Proponents of this view often cite 1 Corinthians 11:3, "The head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." Grenz suggests an interpretation other than the obvious one that man automatically has authority over woman. "...Paul appeals to differences in the creation of male and female in order to emphasize that woman, who was created different from man, can therefore worship as a woman, without needing to

imitate man" (112). The Encountering the Bible course introduced me to prominent women church leaders in the New Testament, such as Priscilla and Lydia. As I evaluated their involvement and how it has been interpreted in the contemporary female ordination debate, it became apparent that the *complementarian* view I had always agreed with no longer fit my understanding of Scripture or of the nature of God.

I now consider myself on the *egalitarian* side of the debate, which says that women and men are equal in the eyes of God and are equally called to serve him in any capacity, including pastoral ministry. I must admit that while I say I agree with the *egalitarian* side (because I cannot refute the evidence), my heart is not in it. I do not see anything whatsoever wrong with the *complementarian* viewpoint, probably because of the wonderful example set by my parents. The arguments that Stanley Grenz and others present in books like *Women in the Church* are convincing, but alone, they

would not change my mind.

Instead, my journey from a staunch *complementarian* to a slightly uncomfortable *egalitarian* is an illustration of the new understanding I have of the practical side of theology. No matter how much female involvement in the early church was demonstrated, I still felt that, even in a world of equality, someone has to lead, and God had designated the man as that leader. All the arguments in the world prompted one response from me: "We can't understand everything that God does. This is the way it is." While I still respond that way to some issues, female ordination is no longer one of them.

The most successful argument I discovered in reading *Women in the Church* was an inadvertent one concerning the sincerity of those women who felt called to pastoral ministry. Thousands of women have surrendered to the call of God in their lives. Who am I to say that every one of them is mistaken in her call? Who am I to say that women who say they are called to pastoral ministry

are insincere? I cannot.

The ordination of women in the church is not an issue of social equality. It is, however, being utilized to break down millennia of patriarchy, which has been defended as Scriptural. In the first chapter of our MCPC theology textbook, *The Shape of Practical Theology*, author Ray Anderson states, "To use the Word against the work of God seemed dangerously close to the practice of those who crucified Jesus because he was judged to have violated the law of the sabbath by healing on the sabbath" (Anderson 13). Is this not the same situation? Practical theology says that to take only Scripture and nothing else as the standard for Christian behavior is to deny that Christ can and will do more to reveal himself. We must be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves in our interpretations of Scripture and what God seems to be doing in the contemporary church (Matt 10:16).

CHRISTMAS AT DENNY'S BY CODY MILLER

I have not heard Denison Witmer's Christmas album. I have heard "Life before Aesthetics," though. That's track # 2 on his new CD, *Carry the Weight*. It's a fun little ditty – or, at least it sounds fun, a swirling blend of chill strumming and hippy-like draws. Embedded in the lyrics, however, is a lyrical, perhaps brooding, nostalgia, a consistent trademark of Witmer (... "Life before aesthetics was a nail hole in a wall, a

borrowed comforter"). I've also heard a song called "Chestnut Hill," a winsome crooning to a lover on a cold, cold night – a former lover, but it maintains its sweetness. And yes, it's Philadelphia's Chestnut Hill. I've also seen Witmer sing live relatively recently. After a series of unfortunate events. Literally, not the book series-including a lot of rain and broken trolleys, we realized we were in exactly the right place. Lyrics

like "White is not surrender, despite what you've been told; It's clouds of hope" cannot meet irritation without convincing it to be forgiving. I have not listened to Denison Witmer's Christmas album because he has not made one... yet. He only has a Christmas song. I'm sorry for getting your hopes up; mine were up at one point as well. If we look at some themes in Denny's however, motifs of nostalgia, of hopefulness, of an appreciation for the reality of love, it seems pretty clear that

if Denison did have an unknown, unreleased Christmas compilation, it would be quality. Totes qual.



"Venison Witmer" Caricature by MCPC students Jason James and Mel McKrell