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"A History of the Anglican Church—Part XXVI:

An Essay on the Role of Christian Lawyers and Judges within the Secular State"©

By

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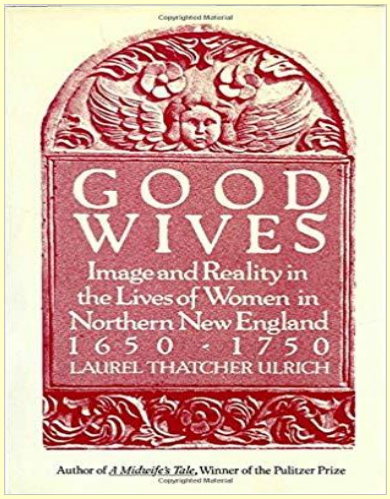
"GOOD WIVES" – A Book Report

Section Two: Jael (Judges 5:24-31, "The Song of Deborah")



By
Laurel Thatcher Ulrich

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The ideas expressed in this Apostolate Paper are wholly those of the author, and subject to modification as a result of on-going research into this subject matter. This paper is currently being revised and edited, but this version is submitted for the purpose of sharing Christian scholarship with clergy, the legal profession, and the general public.

PREFACE

The organized Christian church of the Twenty-First Century is in crisis and at a crossroad. Christianity as a whole is in flux. And I believe that Christian lawyers and judges are on the frontlines of the conflict and changes which are today challenging both the Christian church and the Christian religion. Christian lawyers and judges have the power to influence and shape the social, economic,

political, and legal landscape in a way that will allow Christianity and other faith-based institutions to evangelize the world for the betterment of all human beings. I write this essay, and a series of future essays, in an effort to persuade the American legal profession to rethink and reconsider one of its most critical and important jurisprudential foundations: the Christian religion. To this end, I hereby present the forty-second essay in this series: "A History of the Anglican Church—Part XXVI," Section Three.

INTRODUCTION[1]

The Bible speaks on the divine strength of women who fulfil traditional female roles. My favorite is that of Queen Esther, of whom one of my favorite paternal aunts was named. Miriam, the sister of Moses, is another one of my favorite biblical characters—she followed the baby Moses down the Nile River, and she reported to her parents that Pharaoh's daughter had safely rescued him. And so, too, did I take interest in the prophetess Deborah in the Book of Judges, from which comes the story of Jael. For one of my big sisters is named Deborah! And like Miriam, one day my sister Deborah watched over my safety as I swam and floated down the Suwannee River;-- and this same big sister, while watching over my safety and discharging her sisterly love towards me, rescued me twice from drowning when I was a child, once in the Suwannee River, and on a second occasion at Daytona Beach, Florida! I took interest in other powerful female figures of the Bible. There was Mary, the mother of Jesus, and there was also Mary Magdalene, a follower of Jesus. And of course there were women who were with the mighty Apostles of Christ, -- all of these women doing the Lord's work in *traditional roles for women*. Lastly, I took great interest, too, in St. Monica the mother of St. Augustine of Hippo; her relationship to St. Augustine as recounted in his *Confessions* was reminiscent of my very own relationship to my dear mother, who was -- like St. Monica—also a devout Christian woman.

[1] This paper is presented in honor of the preeminent historian **Dr. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn (A.B., Queens College, C.U.N.Y.; M.A., George Washington University; Ph.D., Howard University).** Dr. Penn was a pioneering professor of women's history at Morgan State University. "Her book *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* was a ground-breaking work that recovered the histories of black women in the women's suffrage movement in the United States." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosalyn_Terborg-Penn During the academic year 1987-88, Dr. Penn taught me world history courses 101 and 102, and during the fall of 1988, the advanced history course titled "History of the African Diaspora." Dr. Penn introduced me to the Afrocentric viewpoint of world history, including Pan Africanism. She remained a dear life-long friend and consultant throughout my professional career as a lawyer.

The Bible teaches us, and indeed the traditional catechism of the universal church teaches us, that God has ordained women to fulfill traditional roles which gives them divine strength—a *divine strength* that is diminished by every step downward from wifehood and motherhood, into non-traditional roles and functions that often place women into executive functions above men. Dr. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *Good Wives'* third and final lesson is that women, while fulfilling traditional female roles, are most powerful if they obey God, rely upon God's strength, and lean not upon their own understanding.

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We now turn to Dr. Ulrich's last section of the book *Good Wives*, which it titled "Jael," because it uses the bible story of Jael, which is found in the Book of Judges, in order to highlight the strength, courage, and triumph of women who find themselves in very difficult circumstances such as war, captivity, and slavery.

The story of Jael is that of a traditional, feminine woman who performed bravely and heroically during wartime, by driving a stake through the temple of her nation's enemy, Sisera. According to the Puritans of colonial New England, Jael had temporarily stepped outside of her traditional female role, and performed the duties of a deputy husband, and had stood heroically and courageously for her nation. In the Old Testament, Jael is called "blessed above all women," and so when colonial New England women acted similarly to Jael, during times of war against the Native Americans or the French, they were highly praised as heroines throughout New England.

More specifically, the story of Jael describes the character of an ideal Christian woman who lived under difficult circumstances, whether as a frontier woman, or as one who suddenly finds herself a wartime captive. Here, Dr. Ulrich describes how the New Englanders applied their Christian faith to difficult circumstances, including wartime captivity, harshness of frontier existence, and domestic service or indentured servitude. The ideal Christian woman was loyal to husband, family, and nation. She fought against their enemies, just as Jael of the Old Testament had fought against the enemies of Israel. This is what a "good wife" does, but the bad woman, on the other hand, is an unprincipled harlot who is prone to making love to the enemy![2]

[2] For this reason, W.E.B. Du Bois spoke forcefully and candidly against African American women who played the harlot: "And such a people must be united… to guard the purity of black women and to reduce that vast army of

All of New England's women were believed to be de facto daughters of the church, but in reality many did not live up to this Christian ideal of womanhood. In order to explore in depth the various factors which led some women astray, Dr. Ulrich devotes two chapters to this topic, to wit, "Viragoes" and "Captives." (Significantly, the word "virago" means a woman who is "domineering, violent, and bad-tempered.") Some viragos were good woman who had fallen into bad times; or acted out of character due to temporary but extenuating circumstances. Other viragos appeared to be incorrigible criminals, and simply prone to commit misfeasors or felonious crimes, such as abortion, infanticide, and acts of violence. The women who became "captives" during wartime was a second set of unique women which Dr. Ulrich researched in *Good Wives*.

Most of the captives were good wives who found themselves separated from their husbands and families, and subjected to trying and difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, less than five percent of these female captives ever escaped and returned to New England. Those female captives whom the Native Americans sold to the French Canadians—in what became a little known but thriving—French-and-Indian slave trade—tended to convert to Roman Catholicism and (or) marry Catholic Frenchman. Fortunately, sexual acts of violence against female New England captives were infrequent, as New Englanders were mostly surprised at the general respect which Native American men showed towards white female captives. On the other hand, New England wartime propagandists did not hesitate to make the Native Americans appear to be savages at every turn, and they frequently recorded Native American assaults upon pregnant white women and children during wartime skirmishes.

Of significance, to be sure, is the perspective and viewpoint of the female New Englanders who endured hardships and who were called upon to exercise the Christian faith under such trying circumstances as captivity during wartime. The harsh realities; the force subjection to enemy foreign culture; and the female concubinage of New England women to French and Indian male captors were difficult ordeals for the New England communities to endure. It is for these very reasons, that Rev. Cotton Mather and other New Englanders hailed the lady Hanna Duston as a heroine, when she escaped her Native American captors after murdering five of them and then cutting off their scalps! The warlike lady heroine was upheld as the biblical Jael of the Old Testament! This is what the New

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black prostitutes that is today marching to hell…" W.E.B. Du Bois, *Writings* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America, 1986), p. 823.

Englanders had hoped all of its daughters would do under similar circumstances: fight and resist the enemy at every turn.

These trying and difficult times for the women of colonial New England were largely unrecorded history with only incomplete records and second-- and third-hand accounts of the historical events. But Dr. Ulrich certainly leaves one to wonder about the psychiatric impact of those trying circumstances upon New England women. But we might, for instance, compare the experiences of these New England female captives to those of female African slaves in North America, for a clearer glimpse into social problems that emerged from war, dislocation, and slavery. Nor is it surprising that Dr. Ulrich notes that most of the women whom she described as "viragoes," that is to say, women who were violent, bad-tempered, domineering, and prone to commit crimes such as infanticide, were also from the lowest socioeconomic sectors of society, including Native American and African women who lived amongst the colonial New Englanders. The women who lived on the margins of New England's social order tended to comprise the class of viragoes whom Dr. Ulrich writes about in *Good Wives*. And although Dr. Ulrich has no data to connect slavery and indentured servitude to being a virago, she does point out the women who committed the most violent crimes or insidious acts such as infanticide, tended to be from the lower socioeconomic orders of society. A problem which the New Englanders faced was this, "How can we inspire our viragoes to conform to the Law of Christ?"

The African American church faced the same question immediately following the end of the U.S. Civil War (1861- 1865): "How can we inspire our Negro viragoes to conform to the Law of Christ?"[3] And today, this question might

[3] See, e.g., Alexander Crummell,"The Black Woman of the South: Her Neglects and Her Needs," *African and America: Addresses and Discourses* (Springfield, MA: Willey & Co., 1981). In this essay, Rev. Crummell, the first man of African descent to graduate from Cambridge University in 1853, and ordained priest in the Anglican Church, describes nature of the impact of captivity and slavery upon African women in North America:

> "The black woman of the South was left perpetually in a state of hereditary darkness and rudeness. Since the day of Phillis Wheatley no Negress in this land (that is, in the South) has been raised above the level of her sex. The lot of the black man on the plantation has been sad and desolate enough; but the fate of the black woman has been awful! Her entire existence from the day she first landed, a naked victim of the slave-trade, has been degradation in its extremist forms.
>
> "In her girlhood all the delicate tenderness of her sex has been rudely outraged. In the field, in the rude cabin, in the press-room, in the factory, she was thrown into the companionship of coarse and ignorant men. No chance was given her for delicate reserve or tender modesty. From her childhood she was the doomed victim of the grossest passions. All the virtues of her sex were utterly ignored. If the instinct of chastity asserted itself, then she had to fight like a tigress for the ownership and possession of her own person; and, ofttimes, had to suffer pains and lacerations for her virtuous self-assertion. When she reached maturity all the tender instincts of her womanhood were ruthlessly violated. At the age of marriage—

still be fairly asked? "Black single-parent homes headed by women still demonstrate how relevant the feminization of poverty is. Black women often work in low-paying and female-dominated occupations,"[4] and from this basic social structure flows all sorts of social evils, including the decline in African American marriage and rise in divorces, the increase in black childhood poverty, the rise in black-male incarceration, the rise in black teenage-pregnancy, and the intergenerational recycling of black poverty. More to the point, the disturbing and troubling relations between black men (as potential husbands) and black women (and potential wives) are little studied with scientific precision or with the objective of restoring these relationships to a normative Christian standard for marriage. Perhaps the most intriguing scientific study on this subject is A.L. Reynolds III's *Do Black Women Hate Black Men*, in which he documents several acts of insane, inexplicable acts of intentional malfeasance, misfeasance, and violence by African American women against their African American boyfriends, fiancés, and husbands—none of whom fit the negative stereotypes of black males, and all of whom were educated professionals or descent, responsible blue-collar workers. Reynold's study even documents interviews with these black male victims who stopped dating African American women following their very negative experiences with them. Finally, Reynold's study unfortunately describes

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> always prematurely anticipated under slavery—she was mated, as the stock of the plantation were mated, not to be the companion of a loved and chosen husband, but to be the breeder of human cattle, for the field or the auction block. With that mate she went out, morning after morning to toil, as a common field-hand. As it was his, so likewise was it her lot to wield the heavy hoe, or to follow the plow, or to gather in the crops. She was a 'hewer of wood and a drawer of water.' She was a common field-hand. She had to keep her place in the gang from morn till eve, under the burden of a heavy task, or under the stimulus or the fear of a cruel lash. She was a picker of cotton. She labored at the sugar mill and in the tobacco factory. When, through weariness or sickness, she has fallen behind her allotted task then came, as punishment, the fearful stripes upon her shrining, lacerated flesh.
>
> "Her home life was of the most degrading nature. She lived in the rudest huts, and partook of the coarsest food, and dressed in the scantiest garb, and slept, in multitudinous cabins, upon the hardest boards!
>
> "Thus she continued a beast of burden down to the period of those maternal anxieties which, in ordinary civilized life, give repose, quite, and care to the expectant mothers. But, under the slave system, few such relaxations were allowed. And so it came to pass that little children were ushered into this world under conditions which many cattle raisers would not suffer for their flocks or herds. Thus he became the mother of children. But even then there was for her no surety-ship of motherhood, or training, or control. Her own offspring were not her own. She and husband and children were all property of others. All these sacred ties were constantly snapped and cruelly sundered. This year she had one husband; and next year, through some auction sale, she might be separated from him and mated to another. There was no sanctity of family, no binding tie of marriage, none of the fine felicities and the endearing affections of home….
>
> "So, too, with slavery. The eighteen years of freedom have not obliterated all its deadly marks from either the souls or bodies of the black woman. The conditions of life, indeed, have been modified since emancipation; but it still maintains that the black woman is the Pariah woman of this land!"

[4] "The African-American family structure," Wikipedia on-line.

black female viragoes—or what the colonial New Englanders might have called "witches"—*without any reference* to Christian standards or the African American Church! Like most secular scholars within the African American community, Reynolds' *Do Black Women Hate Black Men* makes no pathway into this discussion for African American pastors and churches. Nor does Reynold's study acknowledge a goal for turning or returning those African American viragoes to the body of Christ (i.e., to the African American church)—as the colonial New Englanders had already done during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And Reynold's omission of the African American church is not only typical and common, but it is also very tragic given the fact that the Christian experience has much to teach upon this subject.

For the colonial New Englander, the devastating problems of war, captivity, and the enslavement of New England's white females were temporary. But American slavery was certainly not "temporary" for the African American female slave or even freedwoman. [We should acknowledge here Gerder Lerner's classic work, *Black Women in White America* (1972), and its rich analysis of the black female experience through first-hand accounts of very prominent women such as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Mahalia Jackson]. And yet, I submit, that the Puritan ideal of family and of Christian womanhood (i.e., "daughters of Zion") provides the same remedy (or similar remedies) which every African American pastor and church should today promote among African American viragoes. For instance, the Puritans of colonial New England sought to recapture their troubled women, their women who went astray, and those women who had failed to conform to the "Law of Christ."[5] In the *Good Wives*, Dr. Ulrich speaks quite candidly and lucidly of this conversion process:

> When Hannah Duston sat in Cotton Mather's church on that morning in 1697, she heard herself simultaneously praised as a deliverer of Zion and admonished as a religious laggard. 'You are not now the Slaves of Indians, as you were a few Dayes ago,' Mather told the captives, 'but if you continue Unhumbled, in your Sins, You will be the Slaves of Devils.' … Quietly, like hundreds of other women before her, this fierce virago submitted to the law of Christ.[6]

[5] The Law of Christ is to "love ye one another" (John 15:12); to do justice and judgement (Genesis 18:18-19; Proverbs 21: 1-3); to judge not according to appearance but to judge righteous judgments (John 7:24); and to do justice, judgment, and equity (Proverbs 1:2-3).

[6] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1991), pp. 234-235.

Today, by and large the African American viragoes of North America are not only ignored, but they are actually enabled, emboldened, encouraged, and told by a small but wealthy group of wielders of American power and influence, not to conform to the "Law of Christ" and not to become good wives for African American men! The African American viragoes are thus "Jaels," but they are "Jaels" fighting on behalf of wealthy, unscrupulous pimps! The African American church, however, unlike their white colonial New England brothers, does not call its viragoes back to Christ! Within the African American experience, few leaders have had the courage of Cotton Mather to tell the viragoes of Black American to return from their wicked ways and to conform to the "Law of Christ." W.E.B. Du Bois has been one of the rare exceptions. Dr. Du Bois spoke forcefully and candidly against the viragoes of Black America, stating: "And such a people must be united… to guard the purity of black women and to reduce that vast army of black prostitutes that is today marching to hell…"[7] And today's African American church must do likewise, like Cotton Mather and W.E.B. Du Bois, the church must invite the viragoes of American to return home..

And today's American church, in general, must do likewise for all of America's viragoes. All American women much be considered to be de facto members of the church, and capable of turning the Law of Christ. The nation's women need a revival in order to return to the natural order of Christian home, motherhood and marriage. All of this requires a special and thoughtful program for Christian women and womanhood in the United States. And if the Church fails to perform this task, then it will have aided and abetted in America's deterioration which is the result of the decline of sexual morality, heterosexual gender relations, and family.

SUMMARY

This essay is in essence a "book report" on Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's classic work, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*. Dr. Ulrich sets forth the proposition that Christian virtue governed the custom of women throughout the American colonial period. The woman was held to a separate and subordinate status; but her status also followed the status of her husband, with whom her entire identity was fused in order to form an entity known as "one person" before the law.

[7] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Writings* (New York, N.Y.: The Library of America, 1986), p. 823.

The chief role was that of housewife, and it was indeed a revered honor for a woman to have the reputation of being a "good wife." The "good wife" was revered as the "virtuous woman" whose "price is far above rubies," as stated in Proverbs 31, and as exemplified in the lives of noble and virtuous women found throughout the Bible. The Puritans of colonial New England strictly construed the Bible and considered it to be authoritative, operative law. For this reason, almost every aspect of the customs and duties which were imposed upon New England's women came from some source in the Bible. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's groundbreaking work, *Good Wives*, describes three of the Bible's influential characters—Bathsheba, Eve, and Jael—in order to explain precisely how the lives and examples of the Bible's female heroines and role-models were used to fashion and shape the culture, custom, and duties of New England and English women.

What resulted in New England and in colonial America was a well-organized, morally wholesome, and refined social order which held American women in very high esteem. Writing on this same subject several decades after 1750, the French sociologist Alexis de Tocqueville would attribute the greatness of the young United States of America to the "superiority of their women." See Appendix A, Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy In America*. Well-defined gender roles, based upon family welfare and high moral standards, served well the New England Puritans and the colonial American communities. A striking contrast, for instance, can be displayed from the impact of the institution of chattel slavery upon the African American community, such that the validity of the Puritan standard of sex, gender, and morality has stood the test of time.

In this section, we specifically look at the story of Jael, the ancient Hebrew heroine found in the Book of Judges, as an exemplification of a woman who is "blessed above all women" and who is a daughter of Zion (i.e., the church). In colonial New England, all female inhabitants were expected to strive to live up to these noble ideals of womanhood.

Part XXVI. Anglican Church: "Puritanism and the Status of Women in Colonial New England (1600-1750)" –- Section Three: *Jael*

In this final installment within this series, we look at various "non-traditional" roles of the women of colonial New England. Here, Dr. Ulrich acknowledges that as a rule, and under normal circumstances, women were expected to remain feminine, lady-like, and subordinate to men. However, during times involving exigent circumstances, such as colonial emergencies, natural

disasters, and warfare with the Indians or the French, these colonial New England women were required to assume traditional male roles, including resisting and fighting the enemy by any means necessary. Already colonial women were serving as "deputy husbands"—just one step below their husbands, while fulfilling traditional male tasks and duties-- during normal circumstances. The key aspect of performing as "deputy husbands" is that, although women were performing tasks that were traditionally reserved to men, they were performing these tasks in service and assistance to their husbands and families. As Dr. Ulrich makes clear, American women were generally freer than their European counterparts and were permitted to fulfill "masculine" or "manly" tasks and duties, because what Americans valued most was the subordinate relationship of American women to American men, rather than which specific duties and tasks American women performed. For this reason, as Dr. Ulrich points out, "[b]y 1698 the most famous woman in New England was Hannah Dunston of Haverhill," because during her captivity to the Native Americans, she killed and scalped five of captors and escaped; and all of this made her a national heroine throughout New England. Here, the central theme that Dr. Ulrich presses is the fact that American women could even perform the role of a vicious warrior, for so long as she remained within a subordinate role in service to her race, clan, and colony!

Dr. Ulrich uses the following bible verses to show how the story of Jael reflected the development of American ideals of Christian womanhood in colonial New England:

Judges: 5:24-31, "The Song of Deborah"

Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be, blessed shall she be above women in the tent.

He asked water, and she gave him milk; she brought forth butter in a lordly dish.

She put her hand to the nail, and her right hand to the workmen's hammer; and with the hammer she smote Sisera, she smote off his head, when she had pierced and stricken through his temples.

At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

> The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?
>
> Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself,
>
> Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needlework, of divers colours of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?
>
> So let all thine enemies perish, O LORD: but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might. And the land had rest forty years.

First and foremost, Dr. Ulrich relies on the story of Jael's heroism in the Book of Judges, because Jael's horrific act of taking hold of hammer and nail, and piercing the nail through the skull of Sisera, an enemy of Israel, elevated her to the status of being "blessed above women." Several observations may be drawn from this Scripture; the first is that the daughters of the church have a duty to resist temptation, evil, and the enemies of the church. This Jael did when he smote Sisera. Secondly, women in general ought to remain fiercely loyal to their husbands, family, clan, race, tribe, and nation. This loyalty can be displayed through taking heroic risks in self-defense of the family, as did the biblical heroine Jael. In *Good Wives*, Dr. Ulrich points out that the New England clergyman such as Cotton Mather had certainly embraced the idea of the female heroine during time of warfare. In this case, Rev. Mather recognized the heroic deeds of a woman named Hannah Duston, who had killed at least five of her Native American captors, before heroically escaping. Ms. Duston's actions were highly appraised as heroic, virtuous, and noble throughout all New England. Hannah Duston thus became a model example for other New England women to follow. Dr. Ulrich points out that what made Hannah Duston's example so powerful was not so much that she had temporarily assumed a "man's role" and turned into a fierce warrior in defense of her homeland, but that she relied largely upon the set of traditional female skills which she had learned while growing up in New England. The key idea, here, was that women are most powerful when they play their traditional part: this is how the biblical figure Jael had been able to lure Sisera into her trap; she cooked for him, fed him, and lured him to sleep; and then, after he fell asleep, she

smote off his head! This was the example which the New England divines impressed upon New England women—not that they should turn themselves into masculine men, but that they should rely solely upon their unique feminine power in order to perform godly, Christian and heroic deeds. The New England Calvinists believed that God used the "feminine strength of a weak woman" in order to display his omnipotent power and eternal will. This is how the Calvinists interpreted the story of Jael, and this was the standard with which they judged the heroic deeds of women such as Hannah Duston.

9. Blessed Above Women

In colonial New England, a woman who fought against the enemy and who resisted them by any means necessary on behalf of her countrymen was believed to be divinely "blessed above women." A woman was believed to be doing Lord's work whenever, if ever, she found herself in a situation in which she was forced to confront a sworn enemy of her nation. In *Good Wives*, Dr. Ulrich highlights several examples—the stories of Hannah Dunston, Mary Rowlandson, Ann Backett, Hannah Swarton, and Elizabeth Heart—who became captives of the Native Americans or the Frenchmen, and who had performed heroic deeds. Boston's pastor Cotton Mather considered these women to be "a defender of Zion," because they had resisted their enemies. "The ability to assume male roles temporarily and then shrink back into submissiveness has been a traditional female quality—especially in wartime."[8] Indeed, "some women learned to shoot in these first French and Indian wars."[9] "These stories fit well with the notion of women as deputy husbands able to step into a void created by male absence and fulfill male responsibilities without in any sense altering the prescribed female roles."[10] Under these circumstances, the godly, heroic New England woman either took up weapons in order to forcefully defend against enemy assault, or she performed as a "godly captive" who "proved her strength by surviving, then gave the credit to God."[11] These female heroines were believed to be acting heroically through the power of God; for it was God who has used the weaker vessels (i.e. women) in order to perform his power and providence. Hence, whenever the New Englanders memorialized their praise for these women, "the purpose of the narrative was not to extol the military potential of women. On the contrary, the effectiveness of the

[8] Ibid., p. 170.
[9] Ibid., p. 178.
[10] Ibid., pp. 178-179.
[11] Ibid., p. 180.

narrative rests on an awareness of role contradiction. Because Jael was womanly in the traditional sense—and remained so—her ability to kill Sisera testified all the more powerfully to God's part in her triumph. Her faithfulness was a mirror held up to a flagging Israel."[12] For this reason, traditional womanhood was ennobled and strengthened by the power of God, and through the converting of women into men or through assuming that women could actually fulfill the roles of "men" within society under normal circumstances.[13] Colonial New England's Christian heroines were heroic precisely because they were traditional women who had performed "masculine" deeds through the power and aid of God.

10. Viragoes

Dr. Ulrich next turns to a very important topic that is seldom discussed within modern academia or even within modern-day discourses of domestic relations law and policy: troubled women. Colonial New England had its share of troubled and disturbed women. Dr. Ulrich calls them "viragoes," which means "domineering, violent, and bad tempered women." Combing through the court records of colonial New England, Dr. Ulrich discovered and classified the actions of these viragoes as "authoritarian violence," "disorderly violence," "defensive violence," and "demonstrative violence." Dr. Ulrich writes:

> In colonial America the first two types of violence were seen positively as well as negatively. The essential question was not whether the master had the right to strike the servant or the woman to drive off the pig, but whether the violence uses was excessive and whether other, more peaceful means had been available….[14]
>
> In contrast, anti-social violence signaled the aggressor's alienation from the community. Murder or suicide destroyed the social bond rather than simply trying to contain or enlarge it…. [15]
>
> Though wife-beating was technically illegal, it too was at least tacitly condoned by the society…. Did the wife provoke the husband?[16]

[12] Ibid., p. 169.
[13] Ibid., pp. 167-183.
[14] Ibid., p. 186.
[15] Ibid., p. 187.
[16] Ibid.

> In litigation the issue was not the right of the superior to use force, but the appropriateness of its administration.[17]
>
> Most assaults upon women seem to have been provoked by some sort of overt challenge to male authority—a widow questioned her son's distribution of resources, a wife refused to feed the pigs or fetch a scythe from the field or she undermined her husband in front of his friends.[18]

Also very disturbing in colonial New England was the "crime of infanticide" and abortion.[19] "In New England, women convicted of infanticide were almost always servants, women on the fringes of society, often Irish, Indian, or Black, the very persons who would have been most likely to have been beaten and abused themselves."[20] Finally, Dr. Ulrich ends her chapter on the "viragoes" by telling of the crime of infanticide committed by one Elizabeth Emerson. Ms. Emerson's grotesque crime was described in court filings, and although she claimed that her dead children were born unalive, the jury rejected her testimony and convicted her of the crime of infanticide.[21]

11. Captives

Life in captivity amongst the Native Americans or the Frenchmen was an important chapter in the colonial New Englander's Christian walk of faith. "Between 1689 and 1730," writes Dr. Ulrich, "nearly three hundred women, men, and children were taken captive from northern New England…. Captivity thus became a ritualistic journey of salvation, a passage through suffering and despair toward saving faith."[22] This captivity is best and rightfully described as "forced contact with enemy culture."[23] "Males resisted; females adapted. Still, escape was an uncommon feat for either sex. Only eight percent of males as compared to two percent of females managed to get away…." [24] In the case of the New Englanders who were captured by the French, during the French and Indian Wars, the cardinal sin amongst the Calvinists was embracing Roman Catholicism and marrying a

[17] Ibid., p. 187.
[18] Ibid., p. 188.
[19] Ibid., p. 196 ("In the context of contemporary attitudes toward childbearing, infanticide was not just a cover-up for sexual misbehavior, it signaled a rejection of the entire social and human order.")
[20] Ibid., p. 196.
[21] Ibid., pp. 196-201.
[22] Ibid., p. 202.
[23] Ibid., p. 202.
[24] Ibid., pp. 204-205.

papist. Young New England female captives were most likely to embrace Catholicism and to marry a Frenchman; the New England males were less likely to embrace French society and culture, but some of them, particularly the younger males, did so. Again, from the perspective of Puritan divines such as Cotton Mather, those women who refused to convert to Catholicism and who managed to escape or returned home to New England, or who died in captivity without succumbing to spiritual or carnal temptation, were the "daughters of Zion" and "blessed above all women."

12. Daughters of Zion

Finally, Dr. Ulrich ends her book *Good Wives* by turning to role of women the life of the New England church. They were indeed considered to be, first and foremost, "the Daughters of Zion;" and the New England church was the house of God whereby the "fierce virago submitted to the law of Christ."[25] Female influence within the church was profound and often decisive. And not only did women greatly influence the development of the New England church, their love for this church is unquestionable:

> Just as church membership gave women independent status, religious teaching often ratified traditional female values, supporting old wives in their guardianship of sexual mores, elevating charity over commerce and neighborliness over trade, but, above all, transforming weakness into gentleness, obscurity into humility, changing worldly handicaps into spiritual strengths. Women may not have interpreted religion in exactly the same way as ministers, but they cared about the churches…. Men signed petitions, wrote the appeals, and cast the votes, but women frequently supplied the energy which established new congregations and parishes in the outlying areas of older towns. The same pattern was repeated over and over again in New England….[26] Women had a vested interest in the establishment of churches….[27] For some women, affiliation with a church may have had more social than religious significance, but for others, religion provided a way of ordering the most basic experiences of human life.[28]

[25] Ibid., p. 235.
[26] Ibid., p 216.
[27] Ibid., p. 219.
[28] Ibid., p. 226.

Thus women did not at all believe themselves to have been disenfranchised within the church of colonial New England. To be sure, they understood that there were certain formal roles within the church which they could not fill, but their ability to influence church culture and program was virtually unlimited.

The male New England pastor could not be successful without the churches' women; for he needed to be a politician amongst the women, and particularly those who could wield influence through their powerful husbands. "Women could not control salaries, but they could control reputation, and of course they could use the same weapons in attacking ministers as they used in promoting churches—their influence with their husbands."[29] "Conflict between ministers and influential matrons is at least one ingredient in prolonged and acrimonious church controversies" within the seventeenth-century New England church.[30] "Contempt for—or, perhaps more accurately, fear of- female power is a crucial element" in gender conflict within the New England church.[31] This may also explain the reasons for the witch trials during the colonial era, specifically the outbreak of demons and the Witchcraft Outbreak of 1692.[32] In colonial New England, women who forcefully challenged male authority or traditional female roles were deemed to be under Satan's influence and considered as witches. Indeed, all of colonial New England's women we expected to carry themselves as daughters of the church.

CONCLUSION

In colonial New England, traditional roles for women could be modified or changed, depending upon the circumstances. In fact, American women during the colonial era were allowed to do just about anything that was required in order to assist their husbands. For so long as they remained subordinate to their husbands, and did not usurp authority over men in general, American women were allowed to perform just about any duty or task within society. Nor were they considered to be less feminine simply because she performed "masculine" functions. For example, during threat of imminent danger or wartime, American women who learned to shoot a rifle in preparation for an ensuring attack from an enemy, such as from the nearby Native American tribes or from the French, were certainly not looked upon with disapproval. As a consequence, as Alexis de Tocqueville lucidly explained in

[29] Ibid., p. 220.
[30] Ibid., p. 220.
[31] Ibid., pp. 220-221.
[32] Ibid., p. 221.

Democracy in America, American women enjoyed more freedom than most women in the world and exercised wide latitude within their restricted roles as women. See Appendix A. This rule held true with regards to the church of colonial New England as well. The women of colonial New England both loved and served the church, even though certain leadership roles and duties were restricted to men. All New England women were at least de facto members of the publically-financed Congregational churches of New England. As daughters of these New England churches, they were considered to be the daughters of Zion. And like the biblical character Jael, the women of colonial New England were expected to resist the enemies of the various New England colonies. In *Good Wives*, Dr. Ulrich points to several examples of courageous women who were either captured by enemy combatants or found themselves in very trying and difficult circumstances. Like Jael of the Old Testament, these New Englander women displayed character and perseverance. According to New England clergymen such as Cotton Mather, the heroic resistance of these women against the sworn enemies of colonies had not been the result of their taking on more masculine roles, or acting more masculine. Instead, this heroic resistance had occurred only because God had chosen to use the weak things of the world to bring to nothing the wisdom and strength of the mighty powerful. Colonial New Englanders such as Cotton Mather believed that God uses women mightily whenever they remain within their traditional roles! Hence, the colonial New Englanders believed that traditional womanhood was most powerful and strong because God used femininity to fulfill his ultimate purpose and providence in the world.

And so, I end this series on *Good Wives* as I began it, by stating uneqivocably that the United States of America is in dire need of "good wives"—not women who stab their brothers and husbands in the back, or who usurp authority over them in the workplace and in church leadership, but women who—like the biblical character Jael—will fight for God and church. Like the biblical figure Jael, who is the proverbial "good wife" symbol for the third section of Dr. Ulrich's *Good Wives*, American women such as Rose Kennedy, Barbara Bush, and Coretta Scott King – as good wives and good mothers-- should be symbols of American achievement and the perfection of American ideals! This last section of Dr. Ulrich's book *Good Wives* clearly makes this very point: women who fulfill traditional roles as "good wives" are most blessed, because God favors the obedient and gives great strength to those who are helpless and considered to be to the weak things of the world. Indeed, in colonial New England, the woman who was revered as a "Good Wife" and who had attained the title of "Honoured Mother" in her old age, had reached the pinnacle of divine perfection. There was nothing more noble in the eyes of God or man.

THE END

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APPENDIX A

Chapter XII, "How the Americans Understand the Equality of the Sexes"

Democracy In America (1836)

By

Alexis de Tocqueville

HOW THE AMERICANS UNDERSTAND THE EQUALITY OF THE SEXES

I have shown how democracy destroys or modifies the different inequalities that originate in society; but is this all, or does it not ultimately affect that great inequality of man and woman which has seemed, up to the present day, to be eternally based in human nature? I believe that the social changes that bring nearer to the same level the father and son, the master and servant, and, in general, superiors and inferiors will raise woman and make her more and more the equal of man. But here, more than ever, I feel the necessity of making myself clearly understood; for there is no subject on which the coarse and lawless fancies of our age have taken a freer range.

"There are people in Europe who, confounding together the different characteristics of the sexes, would make man and woman into beings not only equal but alike. They would give to both the same functions, impose on both the same duties, and grant to both the same rights; they would mix them in all things--their occupations, their pleasures, their business. It may readily be conceived that by thus attempting to make one sex equal to the other, both are degraded, and from so preposterous a medley of the works of nature nothing could ever result but weak men and disorderly women.

"It is not thus that the Americans understand that species of democratic equality which may be established between the sexes. They admit that as nature has appointed such wide differences between the physical and moral constitution of man and woman, her manifest design was to give a distinct employment to their various faculties; and they hold that improvement does not consist in making beings so dissimilar do pretty nearly the same things, but in causing each of them to fulfill their respective tasks in the best possible manner. The Americans have applied to the sexes the great principle of political economy which governs the manufacturers of our age, by carefully dividing the duties of man from those of woman in order that the great work of society may be the better carried on.

"In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways that are always different. American women never manage the outward concerns of the family or conduct a business or take a part in political life; nor are they, on the other hand, ever compelled to perform the rough labor of the fields or to make any of those laborious efforts which demand the exertion of physical strength. No families are so poor as to form an exception to this rule. If, on the one hand, an American woman cannot escape from the quiet circle of domestic employments, she is never forced, on the other, to go beyond it. Hence it is that the women of America, who often exhibit a masculine strength of understanding and a manly energy, generally preserve great delicacy of personal appearance and always retain the manners of women although they sometimes show that they have the hearts and minds of men.

"Nor have the Americans ever supposed that one consequence of democratic principles is the subversion of marital power or the confusion of the natural authorities in families. They hold that every association must have a head in order to accomplish its object, and that the natural head of the conjugal association is man. They do not therefore deny him the right of directing his partner, and they maintain that in the smaller association of husband and wife as well as in the great social community the object of democracy is to regulate and legalize the powers that are necessary, and not to subvert all power.

"This opinion is not peculiar to one sex and contested by the other; I never observed that the women of America consider conjugal authority as a fortunate usurpation of their rights, or that they thought themselves degraded by submitting to it. It appeared to me, on the contrary, that they attach a sort of pride to the voluntary surrender of their own will and make it their boast to bend themselves to the yoke, not to shake it off. Such, at least, is the feeling expressed by the most virtuous of their sex; the others are silent; and in the United States it is not the practice for a guilty wife to clamor for the rights of women while she is trampling on her own holiest duties.

"It has often been remarked that in Europe a certain degree of contempt lurks even in the flattery which men lavish upon women; although a European frequently affects to be the slave of woman, it may be seen that he never sincerely thinks her his equal. In the United States men seldom compliment women, but they daily show how much they esteem them. They constantly display an entire confidence in the understanding of a wife and a profound respect for her freedom; they have decided that her mind is just as fitted as that of a man to discover the plain truth, and her heart as firm to embrace it; and they have never sought to place her virtue, any more than his, under the shelter of prejudice, ignorance, and fear.

"It would seem in Europe, where man so easily submits to the despotic sway of women, that they are nevertheless deprived of some of the greatest attributes of the human species and considered as seductive but imperfect beings; and (what may well provoke astonishment) women ultimately look upon themselves in the same light and almost consider it as a privilege that they are entitled to show themselves futile, feeble, and timid. The women of America claim no such privileges.

"Again, it may be said that in our morals we have reserved strange immunities to man, so that there is, as it were, one virtue for his use and another for the guidance of his partner, and that, according to the opinion of the public, the very same act may be punished alternately as a crime

or only as a fault. The Americans do not know this iniquitous division of duties and rights; among them the seducer is as much dishonored as his victim.

“It is true that the Americans rarely lavish upon women those eager attentions which are commonly paid them in Europe, but their conduct to women always implies that they suppose them to be virtuous and refined; and such is the respect entertained for the moral freedom of the sex that in the presence of a woman the most guarded language is used lest her ear should be offended by an expression. In America a young unmarried woman may alone and without fear undertake a long journey.

“The legislators of the United States, who have mitigated almost all the penalties of criminal law, still make rape a capital offense, and no crime is visited with more inexorable severity by public opinion. This may be accounted for; as the Americans can conceive nothing more precious than a woman's honor and nothing which ought so much to be respected as her independence, they hold that no punishment is too severe for the man who deprives her of them against her will. In France, where the same offense is visited with far milder penalties, it is frequently difficult to get a verdict from a jury against the prisoner. Is this a consequence of contempt of decency or contempt of women? I cannot but believe that it is a contempt of both.

“Thus the Americans do not think that man and woman have either the duty or the right to perform the same offices, but they show an equal regard for both their respective parts; and though their lot is different, they consider both of them as beings of equal value. They do not give to the courage of woman the same form or the same direction as to that of man, but they never doubt her courage; and if they hold that man and his partner ought not always to exercise their intellect and understanding in the same manner, they at least believe the understanding of the one to be as sound as that of the other, and her intellect to be as clear. Thus, then, while they have allowed the social inferiority of woman to continue, they have done all they could to raise her morally and intellectually to the level of man; and in this respect they appear to me to have excellently understood the true principle of democratic improvement.

“As for myself, I do not hesitate to avow that although the women of the United States are confined within the narrow circle of domestic life, and their situation is in some respects one of extreme dependence, I have nowhere seen woman occupying a loftier position; and if I were asked, now that I am drawing to the close of this work, in which I have spoken of so many important things done by the Americans, to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I should reply: To the superiority of their women.”