

When I became an adult I gave up childish ways

Within the last fifty years or so the Apostle St. Paul has sometime been seen as a misogynist, having an aversion to women. It's true that in his *Letter to the Corinthians* among its closing instructions he advises women to remain silent during church but at an earlier place in the same letter he requires that a woman who prays (aloud) or prophesies in church should veil her head. So which is it? Silent or vocal? That they should be veiled is of course still the custom, even the fashion, in Middle Eastern regions today.

Regarding his attitude toward women, what we *do* know is it was a business-woman named Lydia, a Gentile already interested in Judaism, who, having heard Paul preach, helped him introduce the Gospel into Europe. Also, there was Priscilla along with her husband (business people) whose home served as a place of worship in Corinth – and who even travelled with Paul to churches in other cities. Also: in letters authentically written by Paul warm regards are sent to a Mary, a Junia, a Tryphosa, a Julia and somebody's sister. And it seems that Paul's greatest *Letter to the Romans* was carried to Rome by a deaconess names Phoebe. So, as Paul's biographer A. N. Wilson concludes: *In none of this does one detect the misogyny for which Paul is so unjustly famed.*

What about his attitude toward children? Indirectly we get the impression he preferred that *kids* should be seen and not heard. I assume that from his famous remark in that same *Letter to the Corinthians*, remembering his own childhood: *When I was a child I used to babble as a child, think and reason childishly . . .*

So often we think of children as cute, playful, full of wonder, closer to nature. Child psychologists are more objective; they have to deal with less attractive childhood behaviors - that many an adult carries over into their grown up years. They may be physically twenty, thirty, fifty, seventy years old but their emotional age remains at about four. Scientists list the following signs of what they call emotional immaturity: *emotional escalations, blaming, telling lies or fibs, name-calling, impulsivity, need for attention, bullying, declaring "I'm better than you", using a tantrum defensively, being unwilling to see, acknowledge or learn from mistakes.*

As I observe the daily news I see constant displays of such adult emotional immaturity – even applauded! Even institutionalized. I don't think anybody has a monopoly on such conduct; it's spread across every social spectrum you can name. But as *adult* childishness, such behavior can be lethal, making "history" what James Joyce called *a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.*

St. Paul saw that two thousand years ago – when he wrote: *When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became an adult, I put aside childish ways.* He would have us stop seeing each other *indistinctly, as in a distorted mirror; no longer see each other partially* but candidly, graciously, *face to face* - so that all human behavior may reflect a maturity, a sanity expressive of *faith [trust, fidelity], hope and – the greatest of all – love.*

