

# JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

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FROM THE COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

VOL. 3 No. 4

## The impact of feminism

AN INTERVIEW WITH *WORLD* MAGAZINE EDITOR, MARVIN OLASKY

INTERVIEW BY DAVID WEGENER

**M**ARVIN OLASKY IS A PROFESSOR OF Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, editor of *World* magazine, and a Senior Fellow of The Acton Institute. He played a key role in the debate over gender-neutral Bible translation and is a strong supporter of CBMW.

me to resign from the communist party. For my graduate work, I had to have a good reading knowledge of a foreign language. I chose Russian since I had studied it at Yale in

order to be able to cozy up to my Soviet Big Brothers. One night, through a strange providence of God, I was reading the New Testament in Russian in my room. I had never read the Bible before and as I did so, I kept saying to myself, "Why this is true, and that's true, and that..." and so forth. God also used my reading of the sermons of John Cotton, Thomas Hooker and Cotton Mather for an Early American Literature course, to draw me to Himself.

I was courting and marrying Susan during this time. She was from a very liberal Methodist background and hadn't gone to church for a number of years, but we were both

coming to a better understanding of the gospel. After we  
*see Olasky on p. 3*



MARVIN OLASKY

JBMW: Tell us your background and how you became a Christian.

I grew up Jewish in Massachusetts, barmitzvahed at 13, atheist at 14.

Through my atheism, I moved further and further to the political left, so that I had become a Marxist by the time I graduated from Yale University in 1971. After graduation, I worked for the Boston Globe and also joined the Communist party. Then I went to graduate school at the University of Michigan in 1973.

During all this time I was fairly convinced and content in my atheism and communism, but God, for His own peculiar reasons, decided not to leave me there. In November of 1973, I came to believe in a God of some kind and this led

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## Gender in Bible translation

HOW FALLACIES DISTORT UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT GENDER PASSAGES

BY VERN POYTHRESS

**H**OW DO WE HANDLE GENDER IN English Bible translation? A special meeting in Colorado Springs on May 27, 1997, convened by Dr. James C. Dobson, produced the "Colorado Springs Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture"<sup>1</sup> (hereafter CSG). Those guidelines criticize some of the practices of existing "gender-inclusive" translations.<sup>2</sup> But other people disagree with the guidelines and defend

gender-inclusive translation. The discussion continues to grow, so that it is difficult to keep track of all its strands.

I propose to focus on a common pattern belonging to quite a few of the passages whose translation is disputed. The disputed passages use a male human being or a word with a male semantic component in order to articulate a general principle. Let us consider some of the disputed translation practices in detail.

### *Translating aner*

In Greek the word *aner* usually has the sense of husband or man (male human being).<sup>3</sup> Until recently, English transla-

*see Gender on p. 5*



1. The revised Guidelines appeared in "Can I Still Trust My Bible?" *World* 12/23 (Oct. 25, 1997), 2-3. I was one of the participants in the Colorado Springs conference, and a signer of the guidelines, but I alone must bear responsibility for what is said in this article.

2. See, e.g., Grant Osborne, "Do Inclusive Language Bibles Distort Scripture? No," *Christianity Today* 41/12 (October 17, 1997): 33-38.

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*The purpose of the Council on Biblical  
Manhood and Womanhood is to set  
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about the complementary differences  
between men and women, created equal  
in the image of God, because these  
teachings are essential  
for obedience to Scripture  
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# From the editors

## In this issue

**Bible translations are back in the news.** The June 5, 1999 edition of *World* magazine broke the news that the International Bible Society, the copyright holder of the NIV, is considering the publication of a new English language “rendition” of the Bible, whatever this rendition might be. It seems clear that this new translation will be very similar to the gender-neutral NIV that was released two years ago.

Appropriately, this issue of JBMW includes an article by Vern Poythress that raises a number of searching questions about this practice of regendering our translations of Scripture, a practice that results in weak English and inaccurate translations. May all Bible-believing evangelicals heed his call that we not “sicken the Bible” so that “the sick person can be more at home with it.”

## Interview with Marvin Olasky.

Marvin Olasky is probably best known to our readership as the editor of *World* magazine. In his interview he makes a number of insightful comments about the impact of feminism on our culture, as well as telling the story of how God drew this Marxist graduate student with Jewish roots to Himself.

## Women's Ministry Focus

Council members Mary Kassian and Rebecca Jones need no introduction to our readers. We have included an excerpt and summary of Mary's book, *The Feminist Gospel*, in this issue. It gives an historical perspective to the current controversies over feminism and the church, a perspective we hope to develop in future issues. In her article, Rebecca does a fine job of clearing up misunderstandings surrounding the concept of submission. Hers is the first in a series focusing on women's ministry.

## Of interest to Pastors

Tim Bayly, the executive director of CBMW, speaks of the blessing of children to a self-absorbed society that has little time for them. I review an excellent little book on family worship by the 19th century Presbyterian pastor, James W. Alexander. Once those little ones are born, parents have the responsibility of raising them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We apologize to our readers for the delays in getting this issue to you.

# Newsbriefs from the world

❑ Issues of gendered language do also appear in other languages, but in a slightly different form. Conservators of the French language, for instance, are seeking to block the introduction of new gender-specific words which would distinguish women professionals. Meanwhile, in America, feminists have removed many of the traditional feminine marked endings (e.g., comedienne, stewardess) in favor of gender-neutral. *The Associated Press* reported (January 9 and July 1, 1998) that French Cabinet women created a stir when they started calling themselves *madame la ministre*. France's language defenders took it as a call to arms demanding that the government put a stop to it. In a letter to President Jacques Chirac, the Academie Française—ever *en garde* against the widening use of English words in France—insisted he order his women ministers to revert to the authorized *madame le ministre*. The difference is the use of the feminine *la* instead of the masculine *le*—French doesn't have a gender-neutral “the.” According to standard French grammar, all nouns are masculine or feminine, without regard to the gender of the person to whom they refer. The academicians feared the trend might lead them to follow “some of our Quebecker friends” who encourage writing *une professeur* for professor or *une auteure* for author, or Belgian authorities who use “sapeuses-pompieres” for women firefighters. The Ministry of Education announced also it will require the use of feminized titles in its department, something the sages at the Academie Française are

fighting to block. New titles will include *inspectrice* along with *inspecteur* (inspector), *doyenne* with *doyen* (dean) and the feminine articles *la* or *une* before neutrally spelled terms like *chef de service* (service chief).

❑ Rockport has established a sure foothold in the US men's shoe market, but a recent ad campaign introduces great gender confusion to magazine readers. The ads feature a photo of the transvestite rupaul, identified as a “drag superstar,” uncharacteristically dressed in a man's business suit and Rockports, with the unsettling quote, “I'm comfortable being a man.”

❑ Boston College feminist professor, Mary Daly, who barred male students from her classes remains out of a job following a judge's ruling. At issue was whether her classes should be listed in next semester's course roster. College officials had refused to include them—citing a school policy of keeping all courses open to both men and women—and the judge said the school was within its rights. Daly, 70, known for works including *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* and *Outercourse*, claims the Jesuit-run school pushed her out when threatened with a lawsuit by a male student. The school says she retired when she was ordered to teach men. The litigation originated last fall, when senior Duane Naquin accused the school of discrimination after being kept out of Daly's course on introductory feminist ethics.

## Interview with Marvin Olasky

*continued from page 1*

got married, we moved to San Diego where I had a one-year teaching contract at San Diego State University. We decided it was time to see what a church was like.

After all this time, the only Christians I knew were the dead ones from 300 years ago whose sermons I had read in graduate school, so we got out the yellow pages, and looked under "Churches". I knew the Baptists were a big denomination and I'd read about baptism in the New Testament. Under Baptists there was Conservative Baptist and, given my political past, I didn't want to have anything to do with liberals. The Conservative Baptist Church of La Mesa was a few blocks from our apartment so that's where we went. We heard sermons every week that were very basic "You must be born again" sermons, but that was actually what we needed.

One day the elderly minister of visitation came over to the apartment and said, "Well, you believe this stuff, don't you?" And I said, "Well, I guess I do." He said, "Well, you should join up." And I said, "Well, I guess I should." And so, right after that we were baptized and joined the church.

Where did you go from there?

After my year at San Diego State, I worked for a group in Long Beach called the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade. It had been big during the 50's but was less significant at this time. I went around the country giving a talk called, "From Judaism to Atheism to Communism to Christ." However, after a few months with that organization I began to be uncomfortable with certain emphases of the group.

During this time, I was studying Romans and reading John Calvin, J.I. Packer, Francis Schaeffer, and Louis Berkhof. This is what helped me develop a Christian view of the world. I left the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade and eventually got a good job working at the Dupont Company in Delaware, writing speeches for the corporate executives.

We moved to Austin in 1983, where I became a professor at the University of Texas in the Journalism Department. We have four children—the first three were born to us and the fourth we adopted—and they are all great blessings to us.

I've been writing a lot of books in the process. One was a history of abortion in America. Another that has gotten more attention is, *The Tragedy of American Compassion*, which is a history of fighting poverty in America. It was published in 1992, but really caught on in 1995 after Newt Gingrich read it and started talking about it a lot and telling all the congressmen to read it. I took a leave of absence in 1995-96 and spent time in Washington and giving talks on welfare reform around the country. God blessed this work and it all came to fruition in August 1996, when President Clinton, under duress, signed the Welfare Reform bill. It has been an enormous success. The welfare rolls have decreased by about 40-50%, and lots of people have found jobs, realizing God's purpose in their lives.

I have a new book out called, *The American Leadership Tradition: Moral Vision from Washington to Clinton*. It gives chapter-biographies of 13 American leaders, mostly presidents. There has been more division over this book than just about any other, because it asserts that private actions have public consequences, and shows this historically in the lives of a number of leaders. There was a review in the New York Times and twice the reviewer said that I "lacked a sophisticated public theology."

I gather this means I think the Ten Commandments are commandments, not suggestions. In a way, this is true. I lack a sophisticated public theology. I was baptized in the Conservative Baptist Church of La Mesa, which certainly lacks a sophisticated public theology. When it comes to Bible translations, I lack a sophisticated public theology. I think the Bible is God's Word and you should translate it accurately, and that is unsophisticated. So all through my life I see my "lack of a sophisticated public theology."

Where do you see the influence of feminism in our culture?

In the 1950s, people were moving to the suburbs. You also had the introduction of a number of labor-saving devices in the home. Add to this the fact that the federal government was expanding its social welfare programs. Previously this work had been done by community and church-based organizations, staffed largely by female volunteers. Now it was being done by government-paid professionals and consequently many of these organizations shriveled up and died. One result was a lot of lonely women, removed from their roots, who didn't have a productive way to spend their time.

Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique* out of this context. The average housewife, she said, feels trapped, bored, and unhappy. Her answer was for women to join the work force. This they have done, with dire consequences for society as a whole.

Now many women believe they have to justify staying at home rather than being out in the work place. They have been taught that anyone can raise their kids, so they put them in day care. And you can always find a convenient study to say it's not going to make any difference. We have the expectation that government should make possible any choice we as parents make. Certainly, feminism has led to great sexual irresponsibility. We have aborted 38 million unborn children since *Roe v. Wade*. Those are victims of feminism. Children have been marginalized. You have to have quality time with children, but you can't plan quality time. Sometimes it comes out of the blue. So the only way to have quality time with children is to have quantity time.

Of course, feminism has led to increased poverty among women. No-fault divorce is one of the early products of feminism, but it's been largely to the advantage of men—just like abortion. Abortion and no-fault divorce have given men the green light to be irresponsible and have impoverished many women.

The time crunch that many women feel is a result of feminism. Women feel very guilty unless they're doing all these things.

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MARVIN OLASKY

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MARVIN OLASKY

From my study of the history of poverty-fighting in America, I found that it was basically women who ran the charitable enterprises. Men were involved, but it was essentially women who had the time to volunteer. They had the opportunity to do that and it was deemed a vitally important social function. And now they don't have the time because so many of them work.

There has also been a loss of community. We see that in neighborhoods, where's no one there during the day. But we also see it in families. I do most of the traveling in our family, but sometimes Susan has to be away. When she's not here there is a certain social glue that's lost. We're more like a pack of wolves. When women are removed from their families for long periods of time the family is weakened. And when families become unglued, the culture becomes unglued.

How has feminism impacted our understanding of compassion?

It has contributed to a change in our understanding of compassion. Compassion is tough, it's not wimpy at all. We used to regard showing compassion for someone as suffering with them, as coming alongside them and working with them. Now we view it as feeling sorry for them. This change in understanding has had tremendously negative results. Showing compassion used to be demonstrated by coming alongside the poor and trying to communicate God's purpose for them, helping them develop a work ethic and realize that God has given us six days in which we are to do our work. Now we sit around and feel each other's pain—and maybe we'll write a check. Showing compassion is actually very hard work.

How has feminism influenced the church?

Feminism has influenced our understanding of compassion. We need to return to the older understanding of that term. It has also impacted our practice of church discipline—or lack of practice, as the case may be.

The whole question of society and the church comes in here. God does not forbid women to be leaders in society, generally speaking, but when that occurs it's usually because of the abdication of men. As in the situation of Deborah and Barak, there's a certain shame attached to it. I would vote for a woman for the presidency, in some situations, but again, there's a certain shame attached. Why don't you have a man who's able to step forward? God's Word says very plainly that an elder is to be a man; he is to be the husband of one wife. It's harder when there are women who are CEO's of companies and so forth. Still, it comes down to the question of "Do we trust God and do we believe that He has wisdom that we don't have?"

This leads right into the whole question of the language of the Scriptures. Feminists want to rewrite the Bible so that it won't say that an elder must be the husband of one wife. Right now our English translations clearly say this, but if the feminists have their way, our translations of Scripture won't. So future generations will scratch their heads and say, "Gee, how can anyone be so silly as to

believe that only men could be elders?" That's just one of the dangers you encounter once you start rewriting Scripture and misquoting God.

What are some of the issues that evangelical Christians will be facing in the next few decades?

The influence of feminism will continue to be very large. Some of the radical impulses of late 60's-70's feminism have been tamed, but feminism, in its basic liberal form, has become mainstream. I see this in my students. The women expect to go out and work and they regard child-bearing as secondary. They expect to take any leadership position offered to them, whether in society or in the church.

Then there is the whole question of marriage. Is marriage between one man and one woman? The Vermont legislature evidently is poised to approve of so-called homosexual marriages. This will be very hard to fight. If two men may properly be joined in marriage (or two women), where will we stop? Why not two women joined in marriage with one man? Why not foursomes or fivesomes?

I think the whole question of cloning is going to be important. What do we define as human life? How does that continue? Down the road—and this sounds almost like science-fiction—one can even see a certain merger of humans with computers in some way. That's still a long way off but you can see it coming, unless God decides to tear down this Tower of Babel.

People have much easier access to pornography these days. In the 50's and 60's one used to have to go to the bad neighborhoods to gain access to this stuff. Then you had to go to the corner drugstore. Now it's just a few computer keys away; people will find it increasingly difficult to say "no" to pornography. Again, this is all God's grace that we say "no" at all, but it's harder when it becomes so easy to access.

There is also the issue of tolerance. For some, it is our key virtue—except when it comes to tolerating smoking or something like that. Christians are going to be looked upon as intolerant people. I can see a time coming when the free-speech rights of Christians will be removed whenever we exhibit intolerance, such as intolerance towards homosexuality. That's going to be an interesting constitutional question.



The June 5, 1999 issue of *World* featured several articles on the issue of gender-neutral Bible translation and the International Bible Society's exploration of regendered language Bible publishing in the English language.

The articles may be read at [www.worldmag.com/issue/06-](http://www.worldmag.com/issue/06-05-99)

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## Gender in Bible translation

*continued from page 1*

tions included the male semantic component in translation. But the new gender-inclusive translations show some changes.

In Acts 1:21 Peter discusses the replacement of Judas: "Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men (*aner*) who have been with us..." (*New International Version* [NIV] 1984). But in the *New International Version Inclusive Language Edition* (NIVI 1996) and in the *New Living Translation* (NLT 1996) "men" becomes "one of those" (NIVI) or "someone else" (NLT). The change is theologically significant because it no longer conveys in English the Greek evidence that Peter did not think that a woman could be an apostle. In Acts 20:30 Paul warns the elders at Ephesus about false teachers: "Even from your own number men (*aner*) will arise and distort the truth..." (NIV). Indirectly Paul indicates that the elders were all men. This theologically significant detail drops out in the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV 1993), NIVI, and NLT.

Male marking also drops out in some other places. "A wise man" (*aner*) building his house on the rock becomes "a person who builds..." (NLT Mat. 7:24). In Acts 11:20 "men" (*aner*) who brought the gospel to Antioch become "believers" (NLT).

Some people would claim that *aner* sometimes means "person" or "people" without a male semantic component. But it is evident that "man, male human being" is the "default sense" of *aner*. Other senses may possibly occur in specialized contexts. But the burden of proof is on those who claim that in a particular context *aner* has lost all its male semantic component. After all, another Greek word *anthropos* is available that can be used in referring to situations involving both sexes. It is linguistically improbable that we would find *aner* moving toward near synonymy with *anthropos*, leaving Greek with no obvious, convenient term to use when one wants to specify that one is talking about male human beings.

What is common to all the verses cited above? They all involve situations where males are examples of larger principles. For example, the wise man building a house in Matthew 7:24, represents anyone, male or female, who takes to heart Jesus' teaching. The men who spread the gospel to Antioch provide an example for anyone who spreads the gospel. In all these cases, the gender-inclusive changes eliminate male marking, but retain the general principle that the specific example embodies.

3. CSG A4 says, "Hebrew *'ish* should ordinarily be translated 'man' and 'men,' and Greek *aner* should almost always be so translated.

4. F. Brown, S.R. Driver, C.A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951) 36a. Such idiomatic usages are one reason why the word "ordinarily" appears in the CSG.

5. William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, 5th ed. (New York: Harper-Collins, 1995), 123.

6. CSG A3 says, "'Man' should ordinarily be used to designate the human race, for example in Genesis 1: 26-27; 5:2; Ezekiel 29:11; and John 2:25."

7. See examples from the secular press in Wayne Grudem, *What's Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?* (Libertyville: CBMW, 1997), 20-21.

### Translating 'ish

Next, consider the translation of *'ish*. It almost always means "man." It can be used in idiomatic constructions with the sense "each one" (e.g., 1 Chron. 16:3, Job 42:11). The main problem is that gender-inclusive translations eliminate male marking in other passages where they have no lexicographical warrant.

Consider Psalm 1:1, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers" (NIV). NRSV, NIVI, and NLT change it to read, "Blessed are those who..." or a similar phrasing. The change from singular to plural produces a description that is "less specific..., less easy to visualize." Moreover, with the singular, the reader tends to picture a single man standing against a multitude of wicked people, sinners, and mockers.

In addition, Psalm 1:1 starts with the picture of a person who happens to be male. The native speaker of Hebrew reads *ha'ish*, "the man." Nothing in the immediate context overturns the instinct to assign tentatively the meaning "the man," and to think first of all of a male human being rather than a female. The native speaker knows, in the back of his mind, that a masculine rather than a feminine term is likely to be used in a context where the author wants to talk about a sample human being from within a group composed of both sexes. The sex of the sample person may or may not be germane to the point that the author wishes to make. That is, the reader must determine from the larger context whether the sex of the sample person functions to qualify the range of application of the sentence (in Deut. 22:13 and Prov. 6:27 it does; in Ps. 1:1 it does not). The native speaker therefore holds open the range of application.

After reading Psalm 1, sensitive readers know that it offers the "man" as a representative, an ideal, for men and women. The principle applies to many. But the starting point is the picture of one, and that one is male. The semantic component as well as grammatical gender is present for the original readers.

The gender-inclusive translations simply eliminate this semantic component. They contain a formulation that expresses the general principle of equity, and that is part of the point. But they drop one aspect of the meaning, by not expressing the subtle interplay between a male representative on the one hand, and a general principle applying to both men and women on the other.

### "Man" for the human race

Consider now the use of "man" to designate the human race.<sup>6</sup> While such a use still exists in English, there are distinct advantages to using it in Bible translation.<sup>7</sup> Genesis 1-5 in its use of words and names links the naming of man, woman, and the race with the headship of Adam. The Hebrew word *'adam* is both the name of Adam and the word used for the race in Genesis 1:26, 27, and 5:1.

The word "man" in English, used to designate the human race, is not an absolutely exact equivalent to *'adam* in Genesis 1:26 and 5:2. But I cannot find anything better. We cannot capture everything in translation. Moreover, I

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VERN POYTHRESS

*The American  
religious public  
has become  
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with other  
affairs.  
So a translator  
may try  
to include  
the extra  
information  
in the text  
explicitly,  
in order to  
make it easy  
for them*

VERN POYTHRESS

think it is easy to overestimate the alleged problems with using “man” with this meaning. For the most part, it is not that people do not understand such a meaning, but that they do not like it.

Neither would they like what Genesis 1-2 and 5:2 do in the original Hebrew—for more or less the same reasons. In both Hebrew and English a term with male connotations designates the whole human race. This usage resonates literarily with the context in Genesis 5:2 and the context in Genesis 3, in which Adam is representative of humanity. His obedience or disobedience has consequences for all his descendants, as Paul states in Romans 5:12-21. It is therefore fitting that his name should match the name for the human race in Genesis 1:26-27 and 5:2. Gender-inclusive translations, while preserving the main point, leave out the connotation of a male representative by translating Genesis 1:26-27 with “humankind,” “human beings,” or “people” instead of “man.”<sup>8</sup>

#### *Generic “he”*

Now we come to the largest problem, affecting thousands of verses. How do we treat generic “he” in English?<sup>9</sup> Matthew 16:24-26 says, “Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?’” (NIV)

The verses contain several occurrences of generic “he,” referring back to “anyone.” Some people find this usage distasteful, so the NIVI eliminates it: “Those who would come after me must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their lives will lose them, but those who lose their lives for me will find them. What good will it be for you to gain the whole world, yet forfeit your soul? Or what can you give in exchange for your soul?” Singulars are converted to plurals, third person “he” becomes second person “you.”

Changes like these are not exceptional. Because generic singular is a convenient and frequent usage in the Bible, the NRSV, NIVI, and NLT end up using “they” and “you” in a large number of passages where earlier translations had generic singular “he/his/him.” In still other instances, the new translations adopt passive rather than active constructions, or substitute descriptive nouns for pronouns in order to avoid using “he.”

Now, let us be clear. The gender-inclusive translations still achieve a rough approximation of the meaning of the original when they change the pronouns. But it is an

8. But, commendably, they may include a footnote with some explanation of the connection with Adam.

9. CSG A1 and A2 advise us, “1. The generic use of ‘he, him, his, himself’ should be employed to translate generic third-person masculine singular pronouns in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. However, substantial participles such as *ho pistueōn* can often be rendered in inclusive ways, such as ‘the one who believes’ rather than ‘he who believes.’” 2. Person and number should be retained in translation so that singulars are not changed to plurals and third-person statements are not changed to second- or first-person statements, with only rare exceptions required in unusual cases.”

approximation. When we look at finer nuances, shifts from singular to plural and from third person to first or second person result in subtle alterations.

It is often claimed that no harm is done, since the original meaning of the text is still implied, directly or indirectly, in the translation. A statement about a plurality using “they” still implies an application to each individual (“he”) *within* the group. Conversely, a statement about a single sample member using “he” implies truths concerning the plurality of all members of the group. Similarly, readers can infer a general truth from something that explicitly addresses “you.”

#### *Explicit and implicated meaning*

But in reality the people who argue this way have already conceded that the meaning has subtly changed in their translation. An *explicit* semantic content in the original has to be *inferred* in the translation, while what was only *inferable* from the semantics in the original becomes *explicit* in the translation. The shift from direct statement to inference is significant. It is a subtle change in meaning. To appreciate this difference fully, biblical scholars have to shift their point of view somewhat. Many biblical scholars spend most of their time thinking and writing about the theological value and interpretive implications of the passages they study. Their goal is to make *explicit* the many implications of the text. If two wordings leave the theological implications the same, they are equivalent from the scholar’s point of view.

But literary stylists and linguists studying discourse focus on other aspects of the text. They would note that subtle differences exist between explicit and implicated information, direct and indirect address, active and passive constructions, second person and third person discourse. These produce subtle nuances in the meaning-texture of the total act of communication. Translation into another language never succeeds in conveying absolutely all of such nuances. But the faithful translator endeavors to do so as far as possible.

Translators console themselves by saying that “all translation is interpretation.” They are right. The most accurate translation can only be accomplished when we thoroughly understand the meaning of the original, including all its nuances in all their dimensions. Only then are we ready to produce a translation that conveys not only the main meaning but all the nuances of the original.

But the motto, “all translation is interpretation,” is turned into another meaning if we then use it as a blanket justification for rewriting the text in the way that an interpretive commentary would do. An interpretive commentary expounds the implications of a text, and makes explicit what the text leaves implicit. Such has not generally been the job of mainstream translation. But the American religious public has become lazy about the Bible and busy with other affairs. So a translator may try to include the extra information in the text explicitly, in order to make it easy for them. He paraphrases. He explains metaphors in ordinary prose. He expands tightly packed theological exposition. By doing so, he provides a commentary through which he hopes to help readers to understand the

Bible better. But when he labels his commentary "The Bible" and "translation," he has blurred the line between translation and commentary in an unfortunate way.

Whatever we think of the result, we must remain clear about the meaning of the original. That meaning includes not only "basic content," but nuances arising from style, focus, emphasis, allusion, metaphorical color, literary form, thematic structure, rhythm, tone, register, literary density of information, directness and indirectness, explicitness and implication, and intertextual connections, to mention a few complex dimensions of the whole. In translating generic singulars, something is lost or changed through pluralization, shifts in person, and passivization.<sup>10</sup>

### *Distortions in meaning*

In addition the changes introduce possibilities for distortion and misunderstanding. John 14:23 in the NIV reads, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." The NRSV reads, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them."

The NRSV substitutes plurals for the generic singulars found in Greek and in the NIV. But this results in an unintended ambiguity in the product. The last clause, "make our home with them," has a plurality of people, "them," combined with a single dwelling place, "our home." Conceivably, it might mean that the Father and the Son make a home with each person. But it might also mean that the Father and the Son make a single home with the plurality of people *together*. That is, they come and dwell with the church corporately. This latter interpretation is closer to the surface or more "obvious" than the first, since it responds to the difference between the singular "our home" and the plural "them." Such a thought of corporate dwelling is genuinely biblical (see 1 Cor. 3:10-15, Eph. 2:22). But it is not the thought found in the Greek text of John 14:23. Both the Greek and the NIV picture the Father and the Son making a dwelling with *each* person, not with the church corporately.

I have heard people observe in response that American Christians are far too individualizing. The danger, they say, is not of missing an individualizing note, but of missing the corporate dimension of NT Christianity. I would agree with this assessment of American Christianity as a whole. But I would not agree with the intended conclusion, namely that we can safely reduce the individualizing aspect of *these particular texts*. In the context of doing translation, this sort of argument is an embarrassment. Readers' problems with *other* texts and with *other* teachings of the Bible must not become an excuse for a loose attitude toward translating *these* texts.

10. I am not equating generic singulars belonging to different languages. The structures are different. I am simply observing that as a matter of fact, in the cases about which we are talking, there is considerable overlap between the meaning-functions of generic singulars in two languages.

11. See, e.g., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), 831.

12. Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, 123.

13. *Ibid.*, 122-23.

14. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 831.

Moreover, not all English-speaking readers are the same. The translator does not have the luxury of addressing different groups according to their different problems. Even if he did, it would be paternalistic for him to decide what he thinks is "good for them" and then alter nuances of the biblical text accordingly.

### *The situation in English*

In 1999 generic "he" no longer occurs as frequently as it once did. Writers have tried to find work-arounds. But generic "he" still occurs in the secular press. Sensitive writers in our day still use generic "he" on occasion because they find that that is sometimes what they want to say, and they would lose nuances by adjusting to plurals or first or second person.<sup>11</sup> In the fourth edition (1990) of the book *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser eliminated many of the generic masculines that occurred in earlier editions of his book. But, in the fifth edition (1995), he also says, "Where the male pronoun remains in this edition I felt it was the only clean solution."<sup>12</sup> Of third person plurals Zinsser says, "I don't like plurals; they weaken writing because they are less specific than the singular, less easy to visualize... A style that converts every 'he' into a 'they' will quickly turn to mush."<sup>13</sup>

Now, in the context of Bible translation one ought not to tolerate these losses as long as a way exists of avoiding them, namely by using generic "he." Translation differs markedly from original writing. Modern writers have authority over their own meanings, and can alter them if they choose. They can rephrase or restructure what they are saying in order to eliminate all generic masculines. They can convert their styles to "mush" if they like. But the translator does not have the same authority to introduce subtle alterations in the meaning of the biblical text.

### *A male representative in generic "he"*

Now what is the significance of the use of generic "he"? "He" is used generically, that is, to speak of a sample individual to whom a general principle applies. The general principle typically applies to both men and women. In this sense, "he" encompasses both men and women; it is inclusive. But is it truly "gender neutral"? That is, does there remain no connotation of "male" deriving from the masculine gender? Reality is more complicated. *The American Heritage Dictionary* perceptively comments:

If he were truly a gender-neutral form, we would expect that it could be used to refer to the members of any group containing both men and women. But in fact the English masculine form is an odd choice when it refers to a female member of such a group. There is something plainly disconcerting about sentences such as, "Each of the stars of *It Happened One Night* [i.e., Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert] won an Academy Award for his performance." In this case, the use of his forces the reader to envision a single male who stands as the representative member of the group, a picture that is at odds with the image that comes to mind when we picture the stars of *It Happened One Night*. Thus he is not really a gender-neutral pronoun, rather, it refers to a male who is to be taken as the representative member of the group referred to by its antecedent. The traditional usage, then, is not simply a grammatical convention; it also suggests a particular pattern of thought.<sup>14</sup>

*continued on p. 12*

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VERN POYTHRESS

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# The history of feminism and the church

AN EXCERPT AND SUMMARY FROM *THE FEMINIST GOSPEL*, BY MARY KASSIAN

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt and summary of Mary Kassian's book, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1992). God willing, we hope to include further excerpts from Mary's work in upcoming issues of JBMW.

## Early Feminism

In the 1790s and early 1800s, a flurry of books on the rights of women and the equality of the sexes signaled the beginning of the "first wave" of feminism. Then, in 1848 one hundred American women gathered at a convention in Seneca Falls, New York to ratify a "Declaration of Sentiments" regarding the basic natural rights of women. The "Declaration", drafted primarily by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, catalogued 15 grievances. They complained that women did not have the right to vote, were barred from "profitable employment", were excluded from universities and the professions of theology, medicine and law, and were obligated to obey their husbands.

The women's movement gained momentum over the next few decades. Doors opened to higher education and many professions. Laws were passed which protected the economic and property-owning rights of married women. In 1920 American women obtained the right to vote. By 1930, they were entering the work force in greater numbers.

But then, for reasons that are difficult to pinpoint, the movement stalled. Perhaps it was because of the war, perhaps it was because the dream attained did not bring the satisfaction it promised, but within one generation, many women ceased to pursue the professional ends they had previously sought and returned home. The fervor of the 1920s and 30s was lost. The public cry for women's equality became dormant.

## Breaking the Silence

French philosopher Simone deBeauvoir broke the silence about women's issues and began the rejuvenation of the movement. Her book, *The Second Sex*, was published in 1949 and translated into English in 1953. She was trained in philosophy and was the companion of Jean-Paul Sartre. They shared a common philosophy known today as existentialism. It is based on the concept that the individual is entirely free, and must therefore accept commitment and full responsibility for his acts and decisions in an uncertain and purposeless world. Her model for male-female interaction is based upon this existentialist philosophy.

Her primary thesis was that women are second-class citizens in today's world. Man is the measure of woman. He is the absolute, the essential. "She is the incidental, the

inessential ... the other." This inequality was found in every area of society: Economics, industry, politics, education and language. The domain of women was that of "Kitchen, Church and Children." Women had been suppressed, named and defined by men. They had been robbed of their autonomy. They needed to realize that they are autonomous and must accept responsibility to shape their own destiny.

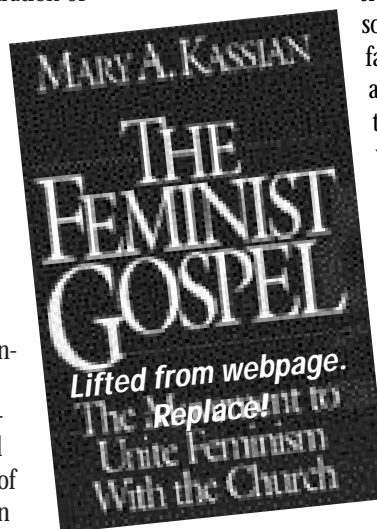
How can they do this? Women must rebel against male superiority and refuse to succumb to their traditional roles of wife, mother and sweetheart. They need to band together and organize themselves. All forms of socialism that liberate women from their families must be pursued. The state should assume responsibility for her maternal functions that restrict her participation in the work-force. Marriage should be a free agreement that the spouses may break at will. Maternity must be voluntary. Abortion and contraception must be readily and legally available. Pregnancy leaves should be paid for by the state, which would assume charge of the children.

## Americanizing DeBeauvoir

Because of its existentialist and philosophical terminology, *The Second Sex* made little initial impression in North America, at least until Betty Friedan popularized and Americanized it in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). Together these two works form the basis for the modern feminist movement.

Friedan wrote of millions of women "kissing their husbands goodbye in front of the picture window, depositing their station wagonsful of children at school, and smiling as they ran the new electric waxer over the spotless kitchen floor. They baked their own bread, sewed their own and their children's clothes, kept their new washing machines and dryers running all day. They changed the sheets on the beds twice a week instead of once, took the rug-hooking class in adult education, and pitied their poor frustrated mothers, who had dreamed of having a career. Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions. They gloried in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: 'Occupation: housewife.'"

Women had been trying to conform themselves to this idealized picture, but the reality of their daily lives left them feeling empty and dissatisfied. Friedan called this the "trapped housewife syndrome" and maintained that it was quite common.





Women had an identity problem. They had no purpose. The only way they could escape this dilemma was through education and work. Women must make a life-time commitment to a field of thought and to a work of serious importance to society. They must seek to shape the world in tangible ways. To do this, everything will need restructuring: Professions, marriage, the family, the home. Women must become like men. They needed to take control of their own lives, name themselves and set their own destiny.

### **Beginnings of Christian Feminism**

While deBeauvoir was writing her book, Katharine Bliss was doing a survey, *The Service and Status of Women in the Church*, for the World Council of Churches. She noted that women were very involved in church, but their involvement was limited to certain activities and they were excluded from leadership and teaching roles. Her report called for a reevaluation of women's role in church. Though it was completed in 1952, her report received little attention before the early sixties.

In 1961 the *Journal of Pastoral Psychology* began a series of articles on "Male and Female." In one of these articles, William Douglas claimed the church was quenching the gifts of women by denying them ordination. Because the church had adopted the patriarchal attitude of the culture of its origin, women could have a call from God, but not from the church. How could the church change? Douglas mentioned two possible courses of action. (1) The church could return to the New Testament belief in the priesthood of all believers and dissolve the clergy-laity distinction, opening ministry to all, both men and women alike. (2) Or the church could maintain its current structure and begin ordaining women. By and large, this second possibility was the course that was followed.

During the 1960s Christian feminists set themselves on a course parallel to that pursued by feminists in secular society. Women needed to be allowed to name themselves. They should be allowed to do everything a man could do, in the same manner and with the same recognized status. Only this would constitute true equality.

Their arguments for role androgyny stressed several points. First, the church fathers had been wrong in their assessment of the nature of women. Aristotle saw woman as a misbegotten or defective male, incapable of reason. Since the human species is characterized by rationality, women are less than fully human. This philosophical background led Thomas Aquinas to conclude that man is the principle and end of woman. She exists for man and not the reverse. She lacks the wisdom required to be a teacher.

But, argued the Christian feminists, advances in psychology, anthropology and genetics had demolished this Aristotelian-Thomistic synthesis. Women are not inferior to men, nor do they have a smaller intellectual capacity. Therefore, they should be ordained.

Second, the Bible, rightly interpreted, teaches the equality of men and women. Feminists appealed to texts such as Genesis 2 and Galatians 3:28. They pointed to Mary learning at the feet of Jesus, to Phoebe being sent out as an ambassador to the churches, to the five daughters of Philip who exercised a prophetic ministry, and to Priscilla who taught and disciplined Apollos. Surely if Scripture endorses these women and their ministries, nothing should prevent women today from teaching and exercising authority, even if it went against longstanding social customs.

### **Beginnings of Feminist Theology**

Society and the church were moving in a more feminine direction. If theology was going to keep pace, it needed to change or risk becoming irrelevant. If women were going to be ordained, they needed a new theology.

Mary Daly answered this call to feminize the discipline of theology. She was a member of the Roman Catholic Church and taught at the Jesuit-run Boston College. In 1968 she published *The Church and the Second Sex*, where she severely criticized the Roman Catholic Church. As the title indicates, Daly relied heavily on the work of deBeauvoir. Yet contrary to the French philosopher, Daly believed the Church was redeemable.

The Church was guilty of (1) causing women's legal oppression and deceiving women into enforced passivity; (2) teaching women's inferiority in its doctrine; (3) harming women through its moral teaching; and (4) excluding women from Church leadership roles.

The traditional doctrine of God had to undergo radical revision. Many Catholics have the vague notion that God is of the male sex. They then extrapolate from this that the male is God. This must be completely rejected. The doctrines of divine omnipotence, immutability and providence would likewise have to be jettisoned, since they discourage women from seeking change. As well, the idea of God as a jealous and vengeful deity would have to go since it helped to sustain and perpetuate androcentric theological teachings.

### *To be continued in future issues*

Mary Kassian has recently authored a workbook, *In My Father's House: Women Relating to God as Father* (Lifeway, 1999).

### **Waldemar Degner, CBMW Board of Reference, with the Lord**

The Rev. Dr. Waldemar Degner, a member of CBMW's Board of Reference since our beginnings, died on November 7, 1998, in Fort Wayne at the age of 73. Dr. Degner was professor emeritus of exegetical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne. He was graduated from Concordia College, St. Paul, Minn., in 1945 and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., in 1950. He continued his education at Washington University in St. Louis, receiving the M.A. in Classics in 1951. He received the Ph.D. in classical languages, literature and philosophy from the University of Chicago. We appreciate his faithful support of CBMW and wish to express our sympathy to his family.

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# Submission: a lot more than giving in

WOMEN'S MINISTRY FOCUS: BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ON RADICALLY HONORING HUSBANDS

BY REBECCA JONES

*The very reason for which God created men and women and the profound physical and spiritual union they experience in marriage is to teach them of Christ. All God's creational structures are to help us grasp His nature.*

REBECCA JONES

**A**S I DROVE MY FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD daughter home from gymnastics, I listened intently to her description of a painful, embarrassing moment. Her emotions weighed not only on my soul, but on the gas pedal. A sick feeling came over me as I saw the flashing lights behind. When the policeman asked me if I had any reason for driving 40 miles an hour in a 30 mile an hour zone, I simply replied, "No sir, I just wasn't paying attention."

When we had finished the formalities of the ticketing process, I drove away (slowly!). My daughter, now truly sobbing due to the increased strain of watching me get a ticket I couldn't afford, began complaining about how unfair the officer had been.

"No," I insisted. "He wasn't unfair. If I was going over the speed limit, he had every right to stop me and give me a ticket."

"But he was so arrogant, so know-it-all," my daughter argued. "And he could have just warned you."

"Well, I've seen worse," I answered.

I didn't resent that policeman, nor did I fear him as a person. I didn't feel either better or worse than he, but he was a policeman and I wasn't. In that situation, I was called to submit myself to his jurisdiction.

## *Cultural Changes*

This situation of legal authority is about the only picture of submission we have left in our society. Though it may not be particularly helpful when we think of a wife submitting to her husband, it does illustrate one principle. Just as the policeman was not "better" than I was, but was simply exercising the authority he had been delegated, so a husband is not "better" than his wife merely because he is in authority. She is no less a worthy human being than he, but authority is a part of his job, his identity and his calling.

I never hear or read the word "submission" any more. I imagine that the average person would give this word a negative connotation. Only wimps submit. The fulfilled person is strong, autonomous, and self-motivated.

When I attended Wellesley College, the feminist movement was gaining momentum. It was unheard of for a woman to announce that her chosen vocation would be marriage and motherhood. Since then, such attitudes about wives and mothers have spread until they are no longer the domain of the radical left, but the common opinions of society-at-large.

In this context even Christian women have difficulty adjusting to the apostle Paul's words to the Ephesians: "Wives, submit to your husbands in all things." Of course, some try to argue that Paul really means a less offensive, tit-for-tat submission, in which each party simply considers the other's needs. To bolster this point of view, some use Ephesians 5:21 which seems to imply a mutual, fifty-fifty submission that might slip unnoticed past the politically correct guardians of our culture.

But surely we sense the implied colon following that verse, in the context of the whole book. Paul follows the command to "submit one to another" with the *ways* in which we submit, namely wives to husbands, children to parents, slaves to masters (or in our society, employees to bosses). If Paul were only emphasizing a general principle of mutual submission, why should he enumerate specific cases? Had he wanted to illustrate the mutuality of the submission, he would have emphasized both sides of the issue by specifying "Slaves, submit to your masters as masters submit to their slaves. Husbands submit to your wives, as wives submit to their husbands. Parents submit to your children as children submit to their parents." On the contrary, this passage is revoltingly undemocratic.

So how does a Christian woman today live out this notion of submission? What does it entail?

## *Two Principles*

Let's use two Pauline thought patterns to illuminate our discussion of submission. Perhaps if we can train ourselves to think a little more like the apostle Paul, we will understand what this submission should look like.

First of all, Paul gives us the principle of *radical positive obedience*. Some people have described this as *putting off and putting on*. Notice in Ephesians 4:28 that when Paul talks about stealing, he does not stop with the negative command, "Cease stealing." Rather, he tells us that in order to cease stealing, we should use our time working with our hands. Yet even this is not sufficient. The thief is to stop stealing, and to work *in order to have something to give*. So the negative behavior is stealing, the "neutral" behavior is working with one's hands, and the positive behavior is giving away one's belongings to others.

We see Paul use this same principle in relation to speech. It is not sufficient to stop lying, or even to be silent, but one must speak the truth with the *goal of building someone up* (Eph. 4:29). Likewise, we are not to be drunk, but we are to be filled with the spirit so that we can sing songs and spiritual songs under His control *to the edification of Christ's body* (Eph. 5:18-19).

The second Pauline principle that will help us understand submission is the *parallel principle*. Paul makes a strong and specific parallel between Christ's relationship with the church and the husband's relationship to his wife. The very reason for which God created men and women and the profound physical and spiritual union they experience in marriage is to teach them of Christ. All God's creational structures are to help us grasp His nature. He encourages us to learn of Christ and the church by what we know of the marriage relationship and also to apply what we know of Christ's union with his church to our marriages so that we can better understand how to love in the context of that union.

Let's apply these two Pauline ways of thinking to submission.

### **Radical Honor**

Women who actively rebel against their husbands' authority, refusing to accept what God has placed in their lives for protection, are quite obviously not in submission. But, in light of radical positive obedience, it is not sufficient for such women merely to go into neutral. Submission is not a grudging or *laissez-faire* passivity. To obey Christ's command to submit, a wife must attempt to know the heart of her husband, to honor that heart, to come in line with its desires and joys, its instincts and its passions, and to align herself and her children with those desires and passions.

Not only must we wives not belittle our husbands, we must lift them up. Not only should we not refuse our bodies to them, but we are called to give of ourselves with joy. Not only should we not try to "to dominate him", but we should desire to increase his authority and respect in every way possible, whether in the eyes of our neighbors, our children, or our church friends. The famous Proverbs 31 passage shows a woman who uses her great initiative and creativity to control a sphere of influence given her by her husband, in order to bring honor to his name.

### **All Things Under One Head**

A wife's submission to her husband should parallel the church's submission to Christ. The church's job is to learn to bring all things together under one head, even Christ (Eph. 1:10), and to allow her Savior to make her holy (5:26). We are to bring every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). We are to have our minds renewed (Rom 12:2), conforming them to the mind of Christ, our Savior. We are to be washed clean by the water of Christ's word (Eph 5:26). The church is to adopt Christ's heart.

A wife's job in submitting to her husband is far more than simply acquiescing when his will happens to cross hers, or allowing him to make decisions without objecting. A wife is to bring all things together under one head, her husband. In other words, in the sphere of her home, where her husband is head, she is to gather, collect, and submit all those things that are under her supervision (including her children!) to her husband's control.

I have been married for twenty-eight years. As I gradually understand the radical nature of submission, I also understand the depth of my own rebellion. Without the

power and grace of Christ, the church cannot live up to the goal of bringing all things together under one head, that is, under Christ. Without the power and grace of Christ, I will never begin to bring all things in my home together under one head, that is, under my husband. But in my weakness I learn of Christ's strength. As I work at submitting to my husband and coming in line with his heart, even when I don't understand it, I am also helping to bring all things together under Christ. For the man is the head of the woman, Christ is the head of the man, and Christ will then lay all things at the feet of his Father when all things have been brought under his control (1 Cor. 15:21-28).

So what is submission? It is whole-hearted participation in exalting one's husband and in lifting him up to glory and honor under Christ.

Without realizing the Biblical basis for her conclusion, one Wellesley graduate, having come to the brink of a second divorce, said, "I guess my first husband was right. It takes two people to make one success." God gave me to my husband to help him succeed in his task of bringing his family and home under the headship of Christ and in his job of preaching the gospel clearly. As children submit to their parents in the strength of the Lord, as employees submit to their bosses through the amazing power of the gospel, and as wives submit to their husbands, we all grow up together into him who is the head, that is Christ (Eph. 4:15). And we fill the whole universe with the knowledge of the glorious God of the gospel (4:10) who has loved us with an everlasting love.

By radically submitting to our husbands with joy, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christian wives participate not only in the original earthly mandate to fill the earth and to subdue it, but also in that greater heavenly mandate of God's church to show the "manifold wisdom of God... to the rulers and authorities" (Eph. 3:10) and to "attain the whole measure of the fulness of Christ" (4:13) in order to lift him up in glory, to "fill the whole universe" (4:10). How great and high is our calling, and what a selfless Savior we have to show us the way.



*Submission is not a grudging or laissez-faire passivity.  
To obey Christ's command to submit,  
a wife must attempt to know the heart of her husband,  
to honor that heart, to come in line with  
its desires and joys, its instincts and its passions,  
and to align herself and her children with those desires and passions.*

REBECCA JONES

*A wife's job  
in submitting  
to her husband  
is far more  
than simply  
acquiescing  
when his will  
happens to  
cross hers,  
or allowing  
him to make  
decisions  
without  
objecting.*

REBECCA JONES

Does the same thing happen in Hebrew and Greek? Hebrew and Greek have gender systems of their own. The two languages differ from one another as well as from English. But when pronouns refer to human beings, the gender usually lines up with sex. The listener's instincts are to try tentatively to identify the sex of human referents by the gender marking of personal pronouns. Hence, the listener to some extent "pictures" a male figure on the basis of a masculine personal pronoun. The context decides whether the reference is literally to a particular male human being, to a group of males, or to a male as an illustration or sample from a group. Thus, in Hebrew and in Greek as well as in English, the usage "suggests a particular pattern of thought," namely a picture using a male representative.

The larger cultural context of the Bible reinforces these tendencies. Within patriarchal cultures people are comfortable with the idea of taking a male person as a sample, as representative of anyone within a larger group.

Thus we may state as a general observation that, in eliminating generic "he," gender-inclusive translations endeavor to retain the general principle expressed in a verse. But they lose part of the meaning by not expressing the fact that the original uses a male sample, a male representative who embodies or illustrates the principle in operation.

### *The ideological basis for the taboo on generic "he"*

People's reactions vary greatly to the use of generic "he." Some are not aware that they have encountered a "controversial usage." They just read on contentedly. Others are aware but see no problem. Others understand generic "he," but prefer not to use it themselves. Others understand, but with some stumbling or mild irritation. Still others are positively offended. Now that attention has focused on the issue, it seems to some people that generic "he" displays insensitivity.

In all this we must notice one important point: the "problem" with generic "he" is not that it is obscure, but that it has uncomfortable connotations for some people. It connotes things of which the dominant ideology disapproves. People do not misread it as literally excluding women, but view it as insensitive to women.

In other words, the basic problem, though most noticeable in the case of generic "he," is not confined to generic "he." Generic "he" appears as part of a broader cultural pattern. The culture has determined that asymmetrical use of male and female semantic components and semantic connotations is unfair, especially in cases involving the description of mixed groups. The student on whom the professor imposes these standards asks, "Why is it unfair?" The obvious answer is that men and women are equal, and that any practice in language or society that gives asymmetrical attention to the two shows sex discrimination. So might run a typical answer from a college professor.

But is the professor right? The Bible in the original languages shows the very dissymmetries that the professor attacks. The professor implies that the Bible itself is unfair. I side with the Bible and against the professor. Indeed, I side against the whole ideology that he represents.

In short, we are dealing here with an aspect of egalitarian and feminist ideology, pure and simple. As many acknowledge, the rejection of generic "he"

arose historically mostly through the pressure of feminist ideology. What fewer people acknowledge is that this rejection can continue only through the repeated application of ideology when professors and cultural leaders reiterate why certain apparently innocent manners of expression are taboo. *The* basic reason for avoiding generic "he" is that egalitarian ideology says that it is unfair.

### *The ideological clash*

In principle, people possess the ability to understand generic "he." But some do not or *will* not. The basic problem is ideological clash. These problems are symptomatic of deep cultural sickness that has boiled over into elitist standards of linguistic usage. Any culture is sick if it stumbles over a story of a wise man building his house on the rock, or a father warning his "son" about the loose woman. Such a culture is resistive, as *The American Heritage Dictionary* puts it, to "a particular pattern of thought."<sup>15</sup> It resists using a male representative to express a general truth. Many things are needed for its healing. At the center is the gospel of Christ Himself. But if there is sickness here, we do not help the sickness by sickening the Bible a little in order that the sick person can be more at home with it.

The language of the Bible demonstrates again and again the ethical principle that it is all right to use a male figure or a male-marked term as representative of a truth applying to both men and women. In fact, in view of the representative character of Adam as head of the whole human race, of men as heads of their families (Eph. 5:22-33), and of Christ as head of his people, it is singularly appropriate. We need not be embarrassed.

Why not believe that God will use these differences between the Bible's way of talking and that of our modern cultural elite in order subtly to rebuke and reform us, to give us life and healing and peace? Precisely at these points the Bible can enrich us, if we stand

firm rather than simply caving in to what the world says is now the new standard for "offense" and "sensitivity."

### *The slippery slope*

If one disagrees with this reasoning, the following question must be faced. How far will we go with the principle of conforming to cultural sensitivities for the sake of avoiding offense? Should we refrain from calling God our Father because some people have had sinful, oppressive fathers? Should we stop using "He" to refer to God because some people will think that God is literally of the male sex? If we allow these concessions, will not others enter from the wings, seducing us into an indefinite series of mollifications of the Bible for the sake of not "unnecessarily" offending modern readers?

It is better not to overreach in translation, not to try to 'fix' too much, not to claim too quickly that we know what we are doing in making these changes. Let us not be like Uzzah and attempt to steady the ark (2 Sam. 6:6-7).

This article has been adapted from "Gender in Bible Translation: Exploring a Connection with Male Representatives," originally published in the *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (Fall 1998):225-53. Vern Poythress is Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

In short, we are dealing here with an aspect of egalitarian and feminist ideology, pure and simple.... *The* basic reason for avoiding generic "he" is that egalitarian ideology says that it is unfair.

15. *Ibid.*

# A father's role in family worship

A REVIEW OF JAMES W. ALEXANDER'S CLASSIC WORK, *THOUGHTS ON FAMILY WORSHIP*

BY DAVID WEGENER

**F**AMILY WORSHIP HAS FALLEN ON HARD times. It is almost nonexistent in Christian homes today. But there are some signs that it is being recovered, and Alexander's book can help encourage and show the way.

James W. Alexander was the eldest son of Archibald Alexander, the first professor of Princeton Theological Seminary. He attended both Princeton College and Princeton Seminary, later teaching at both institutions. His first love, however, was the pastorate, and he labored in churches in Virginia, New Jersey and New York until his death in 1859.

Alexander gives us several fundamental reasons for engaging in family worship.

## *Family worship is essential for Christian families*

The husband has the duty of providing spiritual leadership for his wife. Since he is to love her as Christ loved the church, the husband must do all he can to prepare his wife for heaven (Eph. 5:23-27). He must teach her the Scriptures and pray with her, pointing her again and again to our risen Savior. Similarly, fathers have a duty to raise their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). How will we do this unless we read and explain the Scriptures to our children and catechize these precious ones whom God has entrusted to our care? Regular family worship is the best way to obey these commands from God. This is not a duty we can abdicate to the church or Christian school; God will hold fathers accountable for how they have instructed their children.

## *Family worship will have a vast influence for our spiritual good*

Nothing will spur a father toward godly, spiritual discipline in his own walk with Christ more than leading his family in worship. In order to teach his wife and children, he will have to study the Scriptures on his own. A godly woman will be encouraged and inspired as she sees her husband take responsibility and lead in family worship. This practice sets a tone of harmony and love in the household and is a source of strength when they go through affliction together. As they pray for each other their mutual love is strengthened. Reading and memorizing Scripture and the catechisms of the church results in incredible development of children, both spiritually and intellectually. What families regard as important is evidenced by the manner in which they spend their time. Therefore, regular family worship shows the children that their parents believe that Jesus Christ is central to all of life. This practice leaves a legacy that will benefit thousands in generations to come.

## *Family worship has been practiced by God's people since the early days*

From the patriarchs to the early Christians, from the Reformers to the Puritans, family worship has been a constant in Christian homes. We can see this in the recorded prayers of Luther in his home which are full of warmth and instruction. The flame of family devotion burned perhaps most brightly in Scotland. When the Church of Scotland adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith, it contained this provision. "God is to be worshipped everywhere, in spirit and in truth; as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself." The Puritans saw the family as a "little church" within the church and the elders held fathers accountable to lead their families in worship. Those who failed in this duty were censured. Throughout church history, periods of renewal in doctrine and devotion have corresponded with a resurgence of family worship. In times of spiritual decline, however, the practice of family worship was irregular or non-existent.

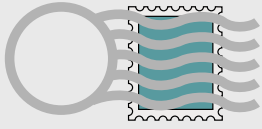
Offering not only exhortations to perform this significant duty, but also practical suggestions in carrying it out, Alexander encourages us to read through the whole Bible with our families. The Scriptures are not only to be read, but also to be explained according to the gifts and abilities of the father. Alexander reminds us that children pick up much more than we assume. Singing psalms and hymns should not be neglected. Music is powerful, and the songs children learn in their youth will often be with them throughout their lives. Much excellent theology can be learned by singing a few carefully chosen hymns.

Similarly, catechisms can be of great influence. They are powerful tools which can teach theological truths even to preschoolers. My own family has derived great benefit from memorizing a *Catechism for Young Children: An Introduction to the Westminster Shorter Catechism*. Finally, prayer for many concerns, both great and small, is an essential part of family worship. Our children should learn early in life to depend on the faithfulness of God to fulfill the promises made to us in His word.

Family worship plays a key role in promoting and sustaining spiritual renewal in the church, because healthy families make healthy churches. Alexander's book is solid food, yet it is easy to read. It is highly recommended if you need encouragement to start the practice of family worship in your home—or if your practice has waned. Fathers who are faithful in this area will reap a great harvest.

James W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847; reprint ed., Morgan PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996.)

*Nothing will spur a father toward godly, spiritual discipline in his own walk with Christ more than leading his family in worship. In order to teach his wife and children, he will have to study the Scriptures on his own.*



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# Shepherd's pie

THE PLACE OF CHILDBIRTH IN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE: RAISING UP A GODLY SEED

...if she has brought up children... 1 Timothy 5:10

BY TIM BAYLY

**P**ASTORS, ELDERS, AND OLDER WOMEN are often asked for counsel concerning birth control and the place of fertility in the Christian home and marriage. Whether in premarital counseling, home visitation, or women's Bible studies, questions are raised concerning God's will in the timing and frequency of childbirth. Such questions are spiritual in nature and present church leaders with a wonderful opportunity to lead Christian husbands and wives into a deeper understanding of the Biblical meaning and purpose of womanhood, manhood, sex, and marriage.



Some time ago my wife, Mary Lee, and I had the pleasure of announcing that Mary Lee was "with child" for the fifth time. The little one then nestling in his mother's womb whom today we know as Taylor Isaiah Bayly was a wonderful gift from God and, along with our other four children, we are grateful to God for His good gift. When we announced this pregnancy, though, undoubtedly there were some who wondered, "Why another one? Aren't four enough? How many are you going to have?"

Though part of the reason Mary Lee and I have children is that we like children, we also believe raising godly offspring is at the heart of God's purpose for marriage. Antediluvian as this may sound to late twentieth century ears, Scripture teaches it and we believe it. Mary Lee and I both come from large families; Mary Lee's mother gave birth to ten children, my mother gave birth to seven. Growing up in a large family is an experience we are each grateful for.

Although the size of our families has certainly made us open to having a large family ourselves, personal experience is not the ultimate reason we continue to have children. The truth we return to again and again is that children are a blessing from the Lord.

When a husband and wife are told the pregnancy test came back positive, they're not discovering an accident of nature but an act of God.

Scripture teaches that clouds, fields, orchards, and livestock bear fruit only as God wills it. If He desires to discipline men He withholds these gifts. If He desires to bless, His grace takes the form of rain, corn, grapes, calves.

So also in our homes. When an expectant mother feels the gentle jab of her baby's legs she is feeling a form of God's grace and love.

*Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate."*

*Psalm 127:3-5*

*Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands; you shall be happy, and it shall be well with you. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table. Lo, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord."*

*Psalm 128:1-4*

Now if we accept Scripture's teaching that children are a blessing from God, what would constitute a proper justification for the limitation of these blessings?

Just asking the question takes us a long way toward answering it. If Christians are to seek God's gifts and blessings, our fundamental attitude toward the gift of babies should be to pursue—not reject—them. When the disciples tried to push the children away because Jesus was too important and busy for them, Jesus indignantly rebuked His disciples and welcomed the little ones:

*He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these...." And He took the children in His arms, put His hands on them and blessed them.*

*Mark 10:14b-16*

"But," you might ask, "what about world population trends? Isn't it irresponsible to have more than two children when babies in Africa are starving?"

The truth is, world hunger doesn't derive from a surplus of children. Rather it's the result of a deficit of human love and compassion.

The answer to hunger isn't fewer children. Nor is it right for the well-fed to mandate such a solution to the have-nots of the world. Jesus said, "I was hungry and you fed me;" not, "I was hungry and you made a contribution to Planned Parenthood on my behalf."

Many Americans stop after one or two children voicing concern about world hunger, yet how many of these men and women use the money and time saved by their decision to adopt a special-needs child, or to become foster parents—or even to feed the starving, for that matter?

Not long ago I was part of a wedding service in a Mennonite farm community in central Kansas. The bride was the next to youngest of twelve children. While there, I stayed at the home of another family from their church with eight children. What impressed me about the families I met that weekend was the love I saw between the parents and their children. And during the weekend I heard of a number of children in the church who were foster children or adopted. For instance, the bride's father pointed out a young man seated at the dinner table Sunday after church who was married to one of his daughters. He told me this young man had been taken in by one of the church's families when he was just a boy. When he was all alone a godly family had opened their home to him and he had received their name and love. Another family had just taken in two

foster children. Is it merely an accident that families with eight and twelve children find room, food, and love enough to take in the castoffs?

Sin often disguises itself as virtue, so it's not surprising people often argue, "it's good stewardship to have fewer children." But this makes God's gift out to be sinful and the rejection of Divine grace an act of righteousness. The Scriptural truth is that children are a blessing from God—red and yellow, black and white; they are precious in His sight.

Some people use the scrimping that's often necessary in large families as an argument against them. "Mothers and fathers have a limited supply of energy, patience, and love," they say. "Parents shouldn't have more children than they can care for properly."

But wait a minute: since when have smaller families produced better-adjusted children than the children of larger families? Consider for instance John and Charles Wesley with seventeen siblings; their mother, Susanna, with twenty-four.

Examples like this abound. Family size has no correlation to a child's spiritual health. In fact, the one clear advantage in the whole equation is the unique ability of large families to pass on some of the greatest of human virtues: sharing, helping, listening, being patient, giving up one's individualism for the sake of the group. Yet in America today this storehouse of virtue is being ransacked.

The number of one-child families in the United States has increased 50% over the last two decades. What effect will such a drastic decrease in the size of our families have on the moral development of our children?

Throughout history Christians have acknowledged God's command "be fruitful and multiply" to be binding: for millennia bearing children has been viewed not as a matter of preference but as an act of obedience.

Historically, the Christian church has maintained there are three purposes for marriage. The Westminster Confession reflects this tradition when it teaches marriage to have been ordained by God for:

1. The mutual help of husband and wife.
2. The safeguarding, undergirding, and development of

their moral and spiritual character.

3. The propagation of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

This list is most decidedly not a teaching of man; rather, it is the revealed doctrine of God's Holy Word. God commanded Adam and Eve—and Noah as well—to "be fruitful and multiply." And in Malachi 2:15 we're told in the very plainest possible terms that God instituted marriage because He was seeking a godly offspring. The bearing and raising of children, then, may well be the most neglected method of evangelism today.

Martin Luther faced cultural pressures against child-birth in the church of his day similar to the pressures we feel in our time. Addressing the problem head on, he rebuked those, "who seem to detest giving birth lest the bearing and rearing of children disturb their leisure."

There is no shame in childbearing; not once, not twice, not ten or twenty times. God tells us He seeks a Godly seed from His people. Who are we to deny His desire?

It sounds foolish to justify the arrival of another Bayly, but the thought of a new child causes us to reexamine the basic commitments upon which our lives are built. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Rocking the cradle ought, therefore, to be at the center of the priorities of the People of God.

This Mother's Day poem was written by my father for his wife some years back.

#### *A Psalm of Love*

*Thank you for children  
brought into being  
because we loved.  
God of love  
keep us loving  
so that they  
may grow up whole  
in love's overflow.*

-Joseph Bayly-



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*This issue's  
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#### ***Patriarchy:***

*The clear and  
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In March 1999, the Lancaster Conference of the Mennonite Church invited Tim Bayly and David Scholer of Fuller Seminary to debate the roles of women in the church. You can order a tape of this debate today.

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*Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:*

- Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
- Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.
- Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin.
- The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women.
  - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
- The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women. Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community.
- Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
  - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership.
  - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men.
- In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious or civil—ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin.
- In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries. Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
- With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world.
- We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

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## Quoted & Quotable

If we truly believe that God's Word is holy and inspired, we should place accuracy above ideology. Ministers and commentators are free to exegete Scripture, but no Christian organization is ethically free to alter it purposefully.

Marvin Olasky, commenting on the IBS effort to simultaneously market "Classic NIV" and "New Bible" in *World*, June 5, 1999

There's a lot of reassessment going on, and a lot of rewriting of history. [Today's feminism] drives me nuts. It's not men who are doing this to women; it's women who are doing this to each other, trying to validate the decisions they make by denigrating the decisions of others.

Cokie Roberts, National Public Radio commentator, in her book, *We Are Our Mother's Daughters*

Today, women have legal equality, or so I thought... the language must evolve because after all, grammar is arbitrary thing that for centuries was written by men, and for men.

Segolaine Royal, French President Jacques Chirac's deputy minister for school instruction, defending the changes in gender specific pronouns for French cabinet members. *The Associated Press*, January 9, 1998

In Friedan's time, the problem was that too many people failed to see that while women were women, they were also human, and they were being denied the ability to express and fulfill their human potential outside the home. The modern problem with no name is, I believe, exactly the reverse of the old one: While we now recognize that women are human, we blind ourselves to the fact that we are also women.

Danielle Crittenden, in *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman*

Women can't tell men how to behave—they either inspire or fail to inspire. Today we inspire them by slamming doors on their fingers, pushing them away when they help us with our coats, and then, when they learn their lesson and begin to treat us with equal-opportunity boorishness, we change our minds and seek to enforce by fiat the respect which was once grounded in custom.

Wendy Shalit, in *A Return to Modesty*

There's a time to submit. And I think there's a time to outwit.

Ruth Graham, offering her view of the Southern Baptist Convention's 1998 call for wives to "submit graciously" to their husbands. In *The Charlotte Observer*, October 31, 1998

Many of today's modern action heroes, such as they are, seem less real, more flat, more cartoonish even, than the old idealized [John] Wayne characters. This is partly because of the diminishing influence special effects have on good acting. But it is also due to the fact that when filmmakers want to create really manly, super-heroic characters, they feel they must do so with irony. Men can't really be heroic, say the cynics. So they become parodies. When they want to have it both ways, heroic and vulnerable, it invariably falls flat... And perhaps saddest of all... is that we aren't even prepared to grant the manly their manliness anymore. In his book, *John Wayne's America*, Garry Wills writes, to rave reviews, about the feminine, dainty and homoerotic qualities of the Duke.

Jonah Goldberg in *The Womens Quarterly*, Autumn 1998



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