





THE COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL  
MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

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# HOPE LIVES TILL WE HAVE FACES

Jason G. Duesing | Editor  
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Sixty years ago C. S. Lewis published his last work of fiction—one that he considered “far and away the best that I have written.”<sup>1</sup> *Till We Have Faces* is Lewis’ retelling of the ancient myth of Cupid and Psyche, though with his own spin. He tells the story from the perspective of Psyche’s older sister Orual, who has grown jealous of her sister, as Psyche was taken away by the gods and received blessing and benefit from them. Yet, when Orual attempts to see the gods or the palace where Psyche lives, she can’t, and this sets her on a long term struggle against the gods. Lewis is using Orual as a picture of the struggling unbeliever who cannot believe in that which is invisible. Near the end of the story she comes to see that she cannot see the gods until she believes. For, as she says, “How can [the gods] meet us face to face till we have faces?”

Belief, trust, and even hope in the unseen is at the core of the Christian life, as Hebrews 11:1 reminds us, “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” And 1 Cor-

1 C. S. Lewis to Mrs. Anne Scott, 26 August 1960 in *Letters of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966, 1988), 492.

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inthians 13:12 adds, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” 1 John 3:2 says, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.” We see in part now but won’t see fully till we have faces. Until that time, as the Apostle Peter reminds, we have been given a living hope to sustain us, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet 1:3).

Writing at the end of his life to “cheer and strengthen” Christians undergoing trials, Peter begins his first letter reminding them that they have a living hope in a God who, in his mercy, has saved them and will strengthen and sustain them to the end, no matter what may come.<sup>2</sup> And this is our reminder as well. In days of financial uncertainty, political turmoil, international danger, the Apostle Peter reminds us who God is, what he has done, and what he will do. He says that we have been “born again to a living hope through the resurrection.” Paige Patterson explains that “Hope for the early believer was the opposite of fear of the future.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the hope we are to have in the world is alive to us, first, through our regeneration. Harkening back to the words of Christ to Nicodemus, “you must be born again,” Peter uses this phrase here and in verse 23 to anchor our hope in the work of Christ on our behalf in salvation. Second, this hope is given to us through the resurrection. As A. T. Robertson said, “Hope rose up with Christ from the dead.”<sup>4</sup> As sure as the grave is empty, our hope is sure. Our hope is alive as Jesus.

With the reminder of the living hope that is ours in Christ Jesus despite the changing culture around us, this issue of *JBMW* begins with six essays. First, Dorothy Kelley Patterson, professor of Theology in Women’s Studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, writes on the contribution of Charles Ryrie (1925-2016) to complementarian studies through his book *The Role of Women in the Church*; Jim Hamilton, father of four and professor of Biblical Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, gives counsel to parents “Don’t Play Travel Ball: Stay in the Rec League”; Candi Finch, assistant professor of Theology in Women’s Studies at Southwestern Seminary, reflects on “David Bowie, Glam Rock, and Gender Rebellion”; David Schrock, pastor of Preaching and Theology at Occoquan Bible Church in Woodbridge, Virginia, offers a helpful study on a biblical theology of gender roles. David A. Croteau, professor of New Testament and Greek at Columbia International University, in Columbia, South Carolina, looks at Ephesians 5:26 and asks “Are husbands responsible for the spiritual maturation of their wives?” The final essay by T. Dale Johnson, assistant professor of Biblical Counseling at Southwestern Seminary, provides a timely review of the biblical development of marriage as a portrait of the Gospel.

This issue also contains five in-depth studies largely focused, like many of the essays, on the theme of marriage and family. Bruce A Ware, professor of Christian Theology at Southern Seminary, shares a poignant piece, “God as Father, God the Father, and Human Fathers.” Next, William M. Marsh, assistant professor of Theological Studies at Cedarville University, examines the command to “put on the new self” in Colossians 3 and its implications for husbands and wives. Matthew C. Millsap, assistant professor of Christian Studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri, sheds light on the ways advances in technology are used for evil in such a way that outpaces a family’s

2 A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1960), 75.

3 Paige Patterson, *The Pilgrim Priesthood* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 31.

4 Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 81.

preparedness to resist and to flee. Jason S. DeRouchie, associate professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota examines Deuteronomy 22:5 and transgenderism, and John Delhousaye, associate professor of New Testament at Phoenix Seminary in Phoenix, Arizona takes a closer look at Mark 10:1-12 and the meaning of marriage.

Following the essays and studies, this issue contains a sermon, “Ordered Love: An Exposition of 1 Peter 3:1-7,” by CBMW President, Owen Strachan. The *Journal* concludes, finally, with several reviews by Louis Markos, Jeremy M. Kimble, Brian Neil Peterson, Megan Hill, Scott Corbin, and Craig Hurst. This issue marks a transition point for *JBMW* as it signals the conclusion of David Schrock’s reliable and industrious tenure as assistant editor. We are thankful for his faithful service and rejoice in his new ministry assignment that while the responsibilities therewith necessitate his stepping down from his formal role with the *Journal*, we remain thankful this will not remove his involvement entirely as evidenced by his contribution to this issue. As a testimony to the size of David’s contribution, it is my joy to introduce to readers of the *Journal* two new assistant editors who have started their time of service with this issue. Jeremy M. Kimble is assistant professor of Theological Studies at Cedarville University serving there after completing the PhD from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary writing on ecclesiology. Candi Finch is assistant professor of theology in Women’s Studies at Southwestern Seminary where she also completed her PhD writing on feminist theology. Please join me in thanking David and welcoming Jeremy and Candi.

At the end of C. S. Lewis’s novel, *Till We Have Faces*, the main character who has undergone her struggle of faith in the unseen comes to a telling conclusion. She says, “I now know, Lord, why you utter no answer. You yourself are the answer.”<sup>5</sup> Even though we cannot see God, we love him, for he has given us living hope through his Word and Spirit. In days of financial uncertainty, political turmoil, international danger, we need this reminder of who God is, what he has done, and what he will do. Just as prophets of old living in a land of darkness were stabilized by their eager hope to see the advent of Messiah, so we in these days of lengthening cultural shadows should seek with the same eager hope, the return of the Messiah. 1 Corinthians 13:12 reminds us, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” We see what we need to see now, knowing that one day soon we will see Jesus. In this we can trust, for hope lives till we have faces.

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5 C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (London: Harcourt, 1956), 308.

# CHARLES RYRIE (1926-2016) AND *THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH*

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Dorothy Kelley Patterson | Professor of Theology in Women's Studies  
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## FOREWORD

For more than half a century I have been intrigued by the legendary theologian Charles Caldwell Ryrie.<sup>1</sup> As a young adult, I was drawn to his writings because of his clarity and depth. Ryrie has always wielded his pen in an incisive but winsome way, drawing his readers into a private classroom full of biblical knowledge to be unleashed and philosophical conundrums to be considered. He is one of the few theologians who is equally at home and adept at explaining the breadth of theological issues while pursuing a depth of understanding that appeals both to the young novice who is only beginning her spiritual journey and to the seasoned scholar who still looks for something new under the sun!

Ryrie's *Basic Theology* remains my standard text in the courses I teach on understanding the foundational underpinnings of Scripture and faith, and the volume also has a place in the resources I keep close to my desk for ready reference to bring clarity to a student question or to my own wrestlings with how best to frame a discussion on issues of theological debate. Of course, the *Ryrie Study Bible* was the forerunner in what has been a steady stream of study tools that surround the text of Scripture with brief annotations and explanations—a desk volume for both pastors and laity who seek better understanding of the truths of Scripture. His works have been translated into twenty languages and are scattered around the world in theological training centers as well as in the hands of those who struggle to understand God's Word without the benefit of large personal theological libraries or formal training.

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<sup>1</sup> This foreword by Dorothy Patterson first appeared in the second edition of Charles Ryrie's *The Role of Women in the Church* (Nashville: B& H, 2011), xi-xiv, and is kindly reprinted here with the publisher's permission. Dr. Dorothy Patterson penned the addendum after Dr. Ryrie's passing on February 16, 2016.

With this background in mind, let me draw your attention to the volume that has meant the most to me—not only in enlightening me on the difficult questions burning in my own heart but the most divisive issue that has come to the forefront of Christendom in the decades completing the last century and moving into the 21st century in which we now live and work. That question is this: What can a woman do in the church of God? Are women needed or wanted in the service of Christ and His kingdom? Again, Ryrie finds himself in the role of a prophetic scholar engaging in cutting-edge debate over a question that really had not been asked when he first penned this work as his doctoral dissertation in the mid-twentieth century, nor was the issue really of importance when Moody Publishers first issued his monograph on the subject. Yet the volume did catch my eye as I was moving toward the university and trying to determine my own course of study. Not only did I read and meditate upon every word of the volume in its first edition—a well-worn copy I still cherish until today, but also I have returned again and again to pour over its pages and find answers to my own questions and help for my personal struggles as well as being rewarded with answers for questions asked of me—whether on the speaking circuit for women’s events or in the theological classroom, where I have taught women for more than four decades.

What is the uniqueness of this volume as one of scores of treatises written on the subject? Certainly Ryrie would have been labeled a well-reasoned complementarian before that term ever entered the marketplace of ideas, and yet this volume is not written as an apologetic for either complementarianism or egalitarianism. Rather it is a masterpiece of blending both historical records with biblical exegesis to present a well-reasoned biblical answer to the burning question from this generation and those to come.

The volume is set apart primarily because of its thoroughly digested reasoning and study that comes forth in a very concise and balanced presentation of the hope that is within every woman’s heart, i.e., that indeed there is a place of service for each of us in the kingdom of Christ. Moreover, the Lord has clearly set the boundaries and opportunities for that service in the words of Holy Scripture; and He has overshadowed the outworkings of these guidelines in historical examples that reaffirm and clarify what Scripture is saying. Ryrie refuses to bow to historical revisionism or to adjust history or to dismiss words of church leaders who spoke carelessly or from personal prejudice. However, he does put what is recorded in history in perspective and context. The consistency is amazing when evaluating the parts in light of the whole. Nowhere is there a clearer presentation of the sayings of the ancient Church Fathers on this subject set within a framework that is concise, while allowing the overview of the whole as well as the minute examination of the many passages that make up the parts.

This volume has remained on my reading list and on the bibliography of virtually every course I teach in women’s studies. I encouraged my students to look for the volume even when it was out of print. Now I rejoice to know that this timeless work of Charles Ryrie will be available for use as a text in colleges and seminaries across the world as well as available to lay women and men seeking answers to difficult questions and even to pastors and scholars who want to see a clearly defined and tersely stated response to this challenging question before the evangelical world and all Christendom.

## **ADDENDUM**

There have been few men or women who have impacted me personally as did the great theologian and Bible teacher Charles Ryrie! As I have wrestled with challenging texts of Scripture and examined the

legacy to be found in the annals of church history, I have continued to come back to the clear presentation of biblical truth by Charles Ryrie. He has been my teacher through the pages of his books; he has been my instructor through lectures and sermons in the marketplace of ideas; he has been my mentor in answering my questions with patience and precision; he has been my counselor when addressing divisive issues within the church from the perspective of being in the minority group and even rejected by my colleagues. I grieve the loss of this great and godly patriarch who has now joined the heavenly court; yet I will not cease to be grateful for his influence on my life. May God grant that I be a faithful steward of all he invested in me over these decades.

# DON'T PLAY TRAVEL BALL: STAY IN THE REC LEAGUE<sup>1</sup>

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Jim Hamilton | Professor of Biblical Theology  
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I have friends I respect whose kids have played (and some who do play) travel ball, and I mean no offense to them by this post. Nor am I categorically condemning their decisions and choices. I am offering these thoughts for parents who are considering whether to put their kids on a “competitive” team, or a “travel-ball” team, or a “tournament” team, or whatever it may be called in your sport and locale.

Don't get me wrong: I love competition. I love excellence. And I want to provide the best competitive opportunities I can for my own kids.

I played two years of major college baseball at the University of Arkansas, and I've been coaching my sons in baseball and basketball for the last 7 years or so. These reflections grow out of my own experience playing and coaching and watching other families. My thoughts will be mainly applied to baseball, but I think they are valid for basketball, volleyball, soccer, lacrosse, swimming, and whatever else.

Here are 10 reasons I think you should keep your kid in the rec league rather than quitting it for travel ball. These are presented in the order in which I suspect most dads think about them, not in the order of importance I would rank them (#6 would be #1, and #4 would be #2).

## 1. KIDS SHOULD PLAY NOT WORK.

Growing up I loved baseball. I wanted to play all the time, until I got to college and had to do so.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay first appeared at <http://jimhamilton.info/2016/02/09/dont-play-travel-ball-stay-in-the-rec-league/>

When I walked on and made the Razorbacks, the sport I loved to play became a year-round job. A job is not a game. We practiced *a lot*, doing as much as the NCAA allowed, all year long, in season and out.

That's fine for an 18 year old on the cusp of adulthood, but there's no reason to put a 7–14 year old through that kind of rigor.

After my first year of it in college, I found that what had been so fun because I had the opportunity to look forward to it in the off season, or even on days between practice or games, began to feel like a dreaded obligation that consumed a significant portion of every day.

The daily grind not only sapped the joy of the game, it was physically punishing. My arm hurt all the time, and I wasn't a pitcher. The journey the Lord had me on led to me being cut from the team after I did not play summer ball following my sophomore year. I had played non-stop from the summer before my freshman year, through fall ball, winter weights, the spring season, then summer ball before it started all over in my sophomore year. I needed a break, and I wanted to be a counselor at a Christian camp that summer (Kanakuk).

The gods of baseball punished me for my lack of devotion. I was sad when the team cut me from the roster, but I was also relieved. I had my schedule back. So much time was freed up by not having to go to practice. I could now study what I wanted to study, and my classes were no longer determined by baseball practice. I could rest.

I've heard of travel ball teams that play 60 games in a summer—for kids under 10!—and then they practice at least once a week through the winter.

I've also heard more than one parent tell me that after a few years of travel ball, in some cases only one year of it, their son decided he didn't want to play baseball anymore. I never felt that way until I got to college, but looking at the demands of travel ball, I totally understand how the kid feels.

That's why I'm writing this post. I want your son to love baseball, to have the opportunity to be a kid, and to play the game as a kid. Baseball should be a fun game for him not a demanding job.

Keep him in rec ball, where he won't get burnt out because he's a kid facing the demands of a profession.

## **2. YOUR KID ISN'T GOING PRO (AND THAT'S A GOOD THING).**

The percentages are outrageous. So many kids grow up dreaming, so few put on a big league uniform. No one should expect to make the show.

I grew up wanting to be a major league baseball player, and I'm so glad I never even got drafted. I spent my 20s laying the foundation for what I'm doing with the rest of my life, not bouncing around in the minor leagues. I got an education, got married, we started having children, and now I get to coach my kids.

If I was in the big leagues, my summers (and falls and springs) would be dominated by an unrelenting schedule leaving no opportunity to coach my kids' teams. Travel is not glamorous but grueling. How does a big leaguer have a family? And at best a professional athlete might play into his late 30s or early 40s, then what?

I submit that even with all the excitement of the game, and the money and fame that come with it, the life of a professional athlete is not one to be envied.

Don't sacrifice your son's childhood on the altar of the hope that he's the next Derek Jeter.<sup>2</sup> Have fun with sports, and use it to build character, not dream-castles in the skies.

Give your kid the chance to be a great person and cultivate that through sports.

### **3. IF YOUR KID DOES GO PRO, REC BALL IS THE LIKELIER PATH.**

On the off-chance that your kid is a freak athlete with the arm strength, foot speed, power, stamina, and character, who gets all the right breaks at just the right time, chances are he'll rise up through the ranks of rec ball rather than being groomed on the travel ball circuit.

Small towns breed professional athletes, and the reason seems to be that kids in small towns aren't over-coached, over-organized, and over-specialized by the travel ball opportunities found in larger cities.<sup>3</sup> Small town kids grow up playing lots of sports not getting burnt out playing the same one all year round.

### **4. YOUR FAMILY DOESN'T NEED TRAVEL BALL.**

This is the one your wife wants you to care about. And you should. Your marriage matters a lot more than some sport your kid plays. What will travel ball mean for your marriage? What will travel ball mean for your other kids? If you're coaching your 12 year old's travel ball team, what does that mean for the rec league opportunities your 7 year old has? Do you want to miss the younger kid's games and practices?

If you are traveling every weekend, or most of them, for a Friday, Saturday, Sunday tournament, what happens to non-sport family time? If you're exalting baseball over all these other things, are you serving a false god, an idol, that is going to use you and then throw you away?

Is the travel ball opportunity your 7–14 year old kid has more important than Friday nights and Saturday mornings at home with the family? Is it more important than being at church on Sunday morning? (on which more below).

### **5. YOUR WALLET WILL THANK YOU.**

I don't even want to think about how much parents pay for their 7–14 year old kids to travel to tournaments, to stay in hotels, to pay the tournament entry fees, and whatever else all this costs. I am confident that there are better ways to steward those thousands of dollars.

You may be betting on the kid getting a scholarship. I'm betting you would be better off saving your money to help him with college expenses. Consider D1 baseball: each team is allowed a maximum of 11.7 scholarships, and those scholarships can be divided up between players.<sup>4</sup> The roster includes 35 players, 27 of whom can receive scholarship money.<sup>5</sup>

When I was playing at Arkansas, none of my teammates had a full ride from the baseball program. Not one. The only kind of baseball scholarship D1 programs offer is a partial one. That means that

2 <http://www.nuvo.net/GuestVoices/archives/2014/03/18/your-kid-and-my-kid-are-not-playing-in-the-pros>

3 <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703556604575502033444964138>

4 <http://www.athleticscholarships.net/baseballscholarships.htm>

5 <http://www.varsityedge.com/nei/varsity.nsf/main/2011+D1+Baseball+recruiting+changes>

even if your kid is the best thing since Babe Ruth, if he goes off to play major college baseball, the baseball team isn't paying all the expenses. And given the number of kids playing and the number of available spots, even a partial baseball scholarship is terribly unlikely.

## **6. YOU SHOULD BE IN CHURCH.**

As a follower of Jesus, this consideration is the most important one for me.

I talked to a dad who was committed to having his family in church even when they were on the road—and he said they traveled as a family as often as they could—for tournaments. That's commendable, but I suspect that those tournaments don't always start the Sunday games at times that make finding a worship service possible.

More important than that, you and your family don't need a summer long break from the life and fellowship of your local church. Christians need to be gathering with the same group of people every week to worship the risen Lord Jesus, to hear his word, and to fellowship with each other.

Kids need to see that Jesus and his church are more important to their parents even than baseball. Jesus is God not baseball.

You need the church, and the church needs you.

If you're a non-Christian reading this post, don't you want to live for something more than baseball? I would urge you to consider how trustworthy Jesus is, how he can reconcile you to God, how he has paid for your sin, and how his Spirit can enable you to love others and enjoy life with them in a gathering of people joined together at a local church. Baseball can't raise the dead, but Jesus will do just that when he returns to make this world into the new heavens and new earth.

If you're in Louisville, come check us out at [www.KenwoodBaptistChurch.com](http://www.KenwoodBaptistChurch.com).

## **7. BETTER TO PLAY MORE THAN ONE SPORT.**

I've alluded to this somewhat above. Kids need to play more than one sport so their rotator cuffs can recover, so their elbows can rest, so they don't have to have Tommy John<sup>6</sup> surgery at 17.<sup>7</sup> They need to run and jump and exercise other muscles than the ones required by baseball. They don't need to have baseball practice every week all year long, and you don't need to be their taxi for that every week all year long either.

## **8. DON'T DILUTE THE TALENT POOL IN THE REC LEAGUE.**

Part of the argument for travel ball is the appeal of better competition. As more and more kids get involved in travel ball, the best players are taken out of the rec league. It's a vicious cycle. The best coaches and the best players stop playing rec ball in favor of travel ball, leading to fewer teams and a lower level of competition in the rec league.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.si.com/edge/2015/07/30/examining-tommy-john-surgery-youth-baseball-mlb>

<sup>7</sup> <http://ftw.usatoday.com/2015/07/john-smoltz-warns-young-players-about-tommy-john-surgery-in-hall-of-fame-acceptance-speech>

**9. DON'T CAUSE THE REC LEAGUE TO DRY UP.**

This is related to the previous: the best players leave the rec league for travel ball, and then the mediocre players get tempted to do so, and then all the kids get burnt out and stop playing baseball. Thus the rec league dries up. Was it really worth it?

**10. DON'T GET SEDUCED.**

As I've talked to people about this dilemma, one friend proposed this to me: he said that I should start my own travel ball team, and I should commit myself to being "low-key" about it. Sound familiar? It did to me. Several dads had told me that they were leaving rec ball for a "low-key" travel ball team, or that they were adding a "low-key" travel ball team on top of the rec ball their son was playing.

But my friend who suggested that I do this also told me what was going to happen: he said I needed to understand that the other travel ball teams weren't going to be low-key, so we would get pummeled at tournaments and probably lose every game. That would inevitably awaken the competitive impulse, leading to more practices, more effort expended, and the gradual creep to a higher key. He said he had seen it happen. Dads get into it for a little better competition not meaning for it to take over their lives, and the next thing they know their schedule and wallet are dominated by travel ball.

So I'm writing in the hope that you'll see that rec ball is a better route. It's better to honor God than to win, and it's better for your kid to enjoy the game than for him to play at the highest possible level.<sup>8</sup>

**CONCLUSION**

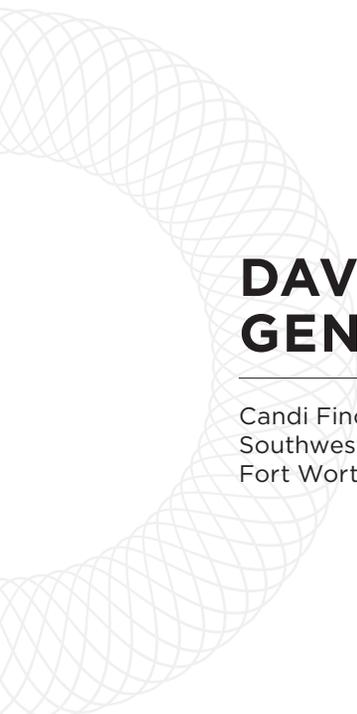
Do I think you are sinning if your kid plays travel ball? Not necessarily, but if your kid is in the 7–14 age range, I will suspect that you might not be pursuing the wisest course. I could be wrong. There may be instances in which it's the right thing, and when a kid gets to be 15 to 16 years old, it's understandable that commitment levels and demands are going to rise and choices are going to have to be made.

But I say be wise. Be a parent. And for the good of rec ball leagues everywhere, for the good of your family, and for the good of your kids, I would urge you to avoid travel ball until the kid is old enough to commit to a more demanding regimen. It seems to me that time comes in the mid to late teens, but that's going to be a judgment call . . .

Bottom line: give your kids a childhood they'll want to replicate with their own children not one they'll react against.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://jimhamilton.info/2011/03/08/better-to-honor-god-than-to-win/>



# DAVID BOWIE, GLAM ROCK, AND GENDER REBELLION

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**A**s many in the world mourn the passing of musical icon and innovator David Bowie, the influence of his 1970s androgynous, Glam Rock alter ego, Ziggy Stardust, lives on in contemporary discussions about gender.

Bowie, who died from cancer on Jan. 10 in New York City at age 69, was a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, whose career in music, film and theater spanned more than four decades.

Even if you are not a child of the '70s or if you would rather just forget the era that brought us lava lamps and bell bottom pants, Christians need to be aware of the social commentary and change during the era of Bowie's emergence.

From Kate Millet's "Sexual Politics" that argued that gender was essentially a cultural construct rather than a biological reality to second wave feminism's mainstreaming of Simone de Beauvoir's claim in "The Second Sex" that one is not born but rather becomes a woman, the concept of gender became a hotly discussed topic.

In fact, before the late 1960s "gender" and "sex" were used as synonymous terms. However, in 1968, psychologist Robert Stoller desired to explain why some people felt they were "trapped in the wrong bodies" so he pioneered the use of the term "sex" to denote biological traits and "gender" to describe the amount of femininity and masculinity a person exhibited. The distinguishing of these two terms has had a disastrous impact.

## GLAM ROCK AS GENDER REBELLION

What does all this have to do with David Bowie? Within the swirling social discussions on gender in

the 1970s, Glam Rock entered the mix, and David Bowie became one of its most acclaimed practitioners. Glam Rock, also called glitter rock, “began in Britain in the early 1970s and celebrated the spectacle of the rock star and concert. Often dappled with glitter, male musicians took the stage in women’s makeup and clothing, adopted theatrical personas, and mounted glamorous musical productions frequently characterized by space-age futurism.”<sup>1</sup>

This style of music and performance was regularly called “gender bending” or “gender rebellion.” The lyrics often touched on taboo topics and pushed the boundaries of sexual norms as seen in Bowie’s song “All the Young Dudes” that became a Glam Rock anthem (he wrote this song for the English rock band Mott the Hoople):

Now Lucy looks sweet  
 ‘cause he dresses like a queen  
 But he can kick like a mule  
 it’s a real mean team....

Feminist scholar Camille Paglia, author of “Sexual Personae,” reflected on the impact of Bowie on her own life: “Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust period in the early 1970s had a staggering influence on me. I had been writing about androgyny in literature and art in my term papers in college and grad school, so Bowie’s daring experiments seemed like the living embodiment of everything I had been thinking about.”<sup>2</sup>

Ziggy Stardust for Paglia was a “bold, knowing, charismatic creature neither male nor female” and viewing one of his costumes for her was “a sacred epiphany, like seeing a splinter from the True Cross.”<sup>3</sup>

In fact, another columnist recently noted that David Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust “paved the way for future generations of androgynous, gender-bending icons in pop” and Bowie himself will always be remembered as a “barrier-busting hero who acted as an avatar for gender fluidity before that was even a term.”<sup>4</sup>

Bowie’s gender activism continued throughout his career even though he retired his Ziggy Stardust persona after only a few years. In 2014, he appeared in a PSA that proclaimed, “Gender is between your ears, not between your legs.”<sup>5</sup>

Remembering Bowie, Madonna commented that she “was so inspired by the way he played with gender confusion. [He] was both masculine and feminine.”<sup>6</sup> Martin Scorsese, who directed Bowie in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, said that Bowie has “left a deep imprint on the culture.”<sup>7</sup>

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1 See <http://www.britannica.com/art/glam-rock>

2 David Daley, “A bold, knowing, charismatic creature neither male nor female’: Camille Paglia remembers a hero, David Bowie,” *Salon.com*, January 12, 2016, [http://www.salon.com/2016/01/12/a\\_bold\\_knowing\\_charismatic\\_creature\\_neither\\_male\\_nor\\_female\\_camille\\_paglia\\_remembers\\_a\\_hero\\_david\\_bowie/](http://www.salon.com/2016/01/12/a_bold_knowing_charismatic_creature_neither_male_nor_female_camille_paglia_remembers_a_hero_david_bowie/)

3 *ibid*

4 Kyle Anderson, “David Bowie,” *Entertainment Weekly* (January 22, 2016), 29.

5 *ibid*

6 Interview with Kyle Anderson, “David Bowie,” *Entertainment Weekly* (January 22, 2016), 30.

7 *ibid*, 33.

## CURRENT FORMS OF GENDER REBELLION

Unfortunately, the Glam Rock movement of the 1970s is not very different from the gender rebellion movement we see today through the likes of Bruce Jenner. Glam Rock sought to defy sexual stereotypes through sexual and gender ambiguity and androgyny. The leaders essentially desired to thumb their noses at constructed understandings of gender. They wanted to define themselves.

The problem with claiming the right to name ourselves is that we are created beings. We have a Creator God who has already defined us. With great intentionality God created two distinct genders (Gen 2:18-25). Gender is a gift from God, not something that is socially constructed or self-determined. As the book of Isaiah declares, “But now, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand” (Isa 64:8).

Southern Baptists, in a 2014 resolution “On Transgender Identity,” set forth a broad statement of biblical truth as reflected in the Baptist Faith and Message, Article III: “Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God’s creation.”

Truth be told, however, human beings made a mess of things when we rebelled against God and decided to claim the right to define ourselves. Conceptualizations of gender have evolved quite a bit since Stoller’s 1968 definition, and current definitions describe gender as representing several distinct things:

1. Our bodies (gender biology)
2. How we dress and act (gender expression)
3. How we feel inside (gender identity)<sup>8</sup>

Add to those understandings the concept of sexual orientation, and you get a staggering number of ways that people are choosing to identify themselves today. Back in 2014, Facebook came out with more than 50 different “custom” gender options other than male and female. Terms like gender expansive, gender fluidity and genderqueer are just some of the new entries into the current lexicon. It is difficult just to keep up with all the new and evolving definitions!

David Bowie’s gender rebellion in the 1970s paved the way for the gender fluidity movement of our day. His legacy is found in comments by the likes of young Disney starlet Rowan Blanchard, who stars in “Girl Meets World.” This 14-year-old teen and self-proclaimed feminist activist recently declared herself “queer” in a tweet because she doesn’t want to be labeled.

Blanchard tweeted, “In my life – only ever liked boys...However I personally don’t wanna label myself as straight, gay or whatever so I am not gonna give myself labels to stick with – just existing.” In a follow-up to that tweet, she said, “Yes open to liking any gender in future is why I identify as queer.” Time magazine named Blanchard one of the 30 most influential teens of 2015.<sup>10</sup>

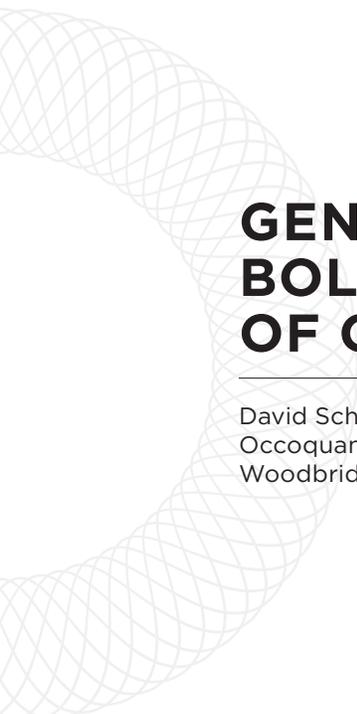
Blanchard, like Bowie, is claiming the right to define herself. At its heart, this act is rebellion against God.

Sadly, we have made complicated what is very clear for God: “Male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27).

<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/>

<sup>9</sup> Rebecca Rose, “Girl Meets World Star Rowan Blanchard Opens Up to Fans: ‘I Identify as Queer,’” *Cosmopolitan* (January 18, 2016), see <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/entertainment/news/a52308/rowan-blanchard-identifies-as-queer/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://time.com/4081618/most-influential-teens-2015/#4081618/most-influential-teens-2015/>



# GENDER-SPECIFIC BLESSINGS: BOLSTERING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF GENDER ROLES

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**T**hroughout the Bible there is great discussion about “blessing.” In Genesis 1 God made man and woman in his image. He called them to have dominion over creation and he “blessed them” (Gen 1:26–28). After death reigned on the earth (Gen 5) and God brought waters of judgment on all the earth (Gen 6–8), God promised to bless Abraham and all the nations through him (Gen 12:1–3). Ultimately, through this patriarch and his “seed” the whole world would be blessed. The rest of the Bible tells the story of this blessing, how from Abraham’s descendants came an offspring who died and rose again to secure blessing for all who call upon his name.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal 3:13–14)

In short, it is impossible to understand the storyline of the Bible and what God is doing in the world without a biblical understanding of “blessing.” Therefore, as we consider what it means to seek God and what is his blessing, we should not only define our terms by the saving work of Jesus Christ (instead of the sham promises of the prosperity gospel), but we should be aware of how blessing throughout the Bible is at times gender-specific.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To be clear, “blessing” has different connotations as it is used in various parts of the Bible. In the Old Testament, blessing often relates to land and offspring, as introduced in Genesis 12:1–3. In the New Testament, blessing comes to mean the gift of the Holy Spirit (Gal 3:14; Eph 1:3). In this essay, blessing relates to the divine favor that we can pursue and expe-

Larger books have detailed the biblical truth of biblical complementarity.<sup>2</sup> These books ground gender roles in God’s good creation; they identify the way the curse afflicted men and women in ways unique to men and women; and they show how redemption restores gender roles through Christ’s death and resurrection. What follows depends largely on these larger works, but aims to read redemptive history with an eye towards the unique way God designs to bless men and women—hence, a gender-specific biblical theology of blessing.

## CREATION

In the beginning God created mankind in his image, male and female he created them (Gen 1:27). Like the one God in three persons, whose members are each wholly God and also in ontological union with one another, Adam and Eve were each image-bearers in and of themselves (cf. James 3:9) *and* together they reflected the glory of God in a way that they could not alone. This was God’s good plan in the beginning. By it he meant to bless all his children (Gen 1:28).

In this original setting, Genesis reveals distinctive gender roles in numerous ways. For instance, the order of creation (Adam then Eve), God’s address of Adam not Eve in Genesis 3:9, Adam’s authority to name Eve (2:23), and the name of the human race as “man” not woman (5:2) are just some of the ways Genesis reveals gender differences in creation.<sup>3</sup> Made equally in the image of God, men and women are designed to reflect his glory in different ways.

Thus, it should not surprise us when God blesses his children, he often does so in ways that comport to their gender. For instance, when Psalm 128 praises God for the blessings he bestows upon faithful families in Israel, these blessings relate to the man’s calling to bring fruit from the ground (vv. 1–2) and the woman’s calling to bring children into the home (v. 3). Unlike our culture which eviscerates gender normativity, God makes his people to reflect his glory in uniquely masculine and feminine ways. He is not indifferent to the way he blesses us; rather he blesses us according to his created designs.

## FALL

Next, gender roles continue under the curse, only now because of sin they are distorted and endangered. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, Yahweh punished them with a curse that remains to this day. To the woman he promised pain in bringing fruit from the womb (Gen 3:16); to the man he forewarned of pain in bringing fruit from the ground (Gen 3:17). In other words, God’s curse does not generally afflict men and women; it targets areas of vocation unique to each of them. For the man, the field (variously defined) becomes a place of burden; for the woman, the home (variously defined) is filled with pain and difficulty. This is true for married couples (Gen 2:24), but it spills over to singles, divorced, and widowed as well.

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rience as God bears spiritual fruit in our lives.

<sup>2</sup> The standard work is *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006). One of the most helpful biblical-theological treatments on the subject of men’s and women’s roles is Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger’s *God’s Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Wayne Grudem has listed ten ways gender roles can be observed in creation. See his *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 30–42.

As Wayne Grudem has said, “the curse brought a distortion to previous roles, not the introduction of new roles.”<sup>4</sup> In debates between complementarians and egalitarians, the origin of men’s and women’s roles stands at the center. The former assign gender roles to creation; the latter to the fall.<sup>5</sup> Creation is determinative for gender roles, not the fall. The curse creates competition between the genders; it does not create different roles.<sup>6</sup> Through God’s judgment, which curses men and women according to their roles, we find a tacit confirmation of the original design. Men who were created to bring fruit from the ground will suffer in that labor, and women who were created to bring forth fruit from the womb will experience pain in the process.

Therefore, like creation, the fall is gender-specific. And because it is, it makes logical sense that God’s blessing would be tailored to meet the needs of men and women. Indeed, since blessing ought to be defined (in one sense) as the removal of God’s curse, the gender-specificity of the curse puts us on high alert for how God will restore blessing to those whom he has cursed according to their various vocations.

## REDEMPTION

Redemption does not erase gender roles, it restores them. In the New Testament when the Spirit comes, he empowers men and women to fulfill their callings as godly *men* or godly *women*. Titus 2:1–8 recalls the unique way in which men and women relate to one another and the world in which they live. For instance, verse 5 encourages women to be “working at home.” No such domestic admonition is given to men; yet, Ephesians 6:4 addresses men and not women: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger.” Likewise in Titus 1:5–9 and 1 Timothy 3:1–7, men are given the unique responsibility to lead and teach in God’s family of faith, i.e., the “household of God” (1 Tim 3:15).

From these kind of verses (and many others), we learn there are no androgynous disciples of Christ. Godly masculinity and femininity are equally pleasing to God, and must be pursued by men and women, respectively. Coming to our aid, the gospel of God restores men and women to reflect grace and glory in gender-specific ways. “Christian redemption does not redefine creation; it restores creation, so that wives learn godly submission and husbands learn godly headship.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, in the church, as a community of the new creation, God commands us men and women to learn how to treat one another as men and women (1 Tim 5:1–2), thus preparing his children for the kingdom of God.

In the new heavens and the new earth, therefore, we have no reason to believe gender distinctions will cease. While the nature and function of marriage will be different (Matt 22:30), gender will not be neutered. The same “sons and daughters” who receive the Spirit of God (Acts 2:17–18) will exist forever

<sup>4</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 463. “The curse brought a distortion of Adam’s humble, considerate leadership and Eve’s intelligent, willing submission to that leadership which existed before the fall” (ibid., 464).

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 58: “The ruler/ subject relationship between Adam and Eve began after the fall. It was for Eve the application of the same death principle that made Adam slave to the soil. Because it resulted from the fall, the rule of Adam over her is viewed as Satanic in origin, no less than death itself.” For a defense of gender roles rooted in creation, see Raymond Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 95–112.

<sup>6</sup> Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 39–40: “The curse brought a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new roles. . . . Eve would now rebel against her husband’s authority and Adam would misuse that authority to rule forcefully and even harshly over Eve.”

<sup>7</sup> Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 109.

as sons and daughters in his kingdom. Therefore, while in one sense all God's children will be firstborn sons as it relates to inheritance (Gal 3:26; 1 Pet 3:7), every son or daughter of God will retain and express the gender God designed for them. Only, in glory there will be no gender dysphoria or egalitarian confusion. What the curse imposes today will be undone by the blessed work of Jesus Christ.

## **GOD'S BLESSINGS ARE GENDER SPECIFIC**

In sum, a biblical theology of gender roles affirms God's good design in creating men and women to be "equal, yet different." Both are co-heirs with Christ but with different roles in God's *oikonomia*. Both contribute mightily to God's work in the world but with different relational imperatives. In Christ men find blessing in God's work by bearing fruit as they orient themselves towards the field (variously defined) so as to produce fruit through their Spirit-empowered calling to cultivate and keep (Gen 2:17). Likewise, in Christ women find blessing in God's work by bearing fruit as they orient themselves towards the home (variously defined) so as to produce fruit through their Spirit-empowered calling to be a helper (Gen 2:18).

These particular orientations give shape to biblical masculinity and femininity, but without denying the alternative. As men go into the field to cultivate and keep, they must also play a leading role in the home (Eph 6:4). In marriage, men may not give as many hours at home, but as the spiritual head they must not be derelict of duty.

At the same time, women like Ruth, Priscilla, and the Proverbs 31 woman model the kind of work *outside the home* that comports with an orientation towards to home.<sup>8</sup> Marriage supplies the context where a woman's role as "helper" makes the most sense, as she orients herself toward her husband and children (cf. Ps 128:3). But even single women can orient themselves towards home (in a sense) by developing character and competence that manifests godly femininity and that will prepare them to be a helper in marriage—either marriage on earth (the shadow of marriage) or in the age to come (the substance of marriage). Of course, how this all looks will depend largely on whether a man or woman is single or married, has children or not, lives in the modern West or the rural East, etc.

Nevertheless, because Scripture is binding for all people in all places and ages, the blessings it describes are also universally gender-specific. Yes, many blessings (e.g., the gift of the Spirit, access to God's throne of grace, the promise of eternal life, etc.) are universal gifts. But as we have seen, many blessings are uniquely tailored for men and women.

The Lord does not eradicate gender distinctions in his work of redemption; he empowers men and women to live as God intended. Therefore, as we read the Bible we should be aware of the gender-consciousness that parallels the contours of redemptive history. At the same time, as we join in the Lord's work we should submit our personal narratives to his macro-narrative; our private desires should be conformed to his design. With regards to complementarity this includes pursuing God's blessing in ways that fit our unique calling as men and women. While the rest of the world (and many Christians) may find this odd, this is the way of our Creator. And as he said of the day when he made mankind male and female: "It is very good."

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<sup>8</sup> For a helpful discussion of the history of work in America and the tension women face in "working in the home" (Titus 2:5) and in the modern world, see Nancy Pearcey, "How Women Started the Culture War," in *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 325–48.

# “TO MAKE HER HOLY” (EPHESIANS 5:26): ARE HUSBANDS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SPIRITUAL MATURATION OF THEIR WIVES?

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## I. INTRODUCTION

**M**any pulpits have proclaimed that husbands are responsible for overseeing the spiritual maturity of their wives based upon Eph 5:26. However, reading this passage in context, examining the Greek words used, understanding the Old Testament background to the passage, and thinking through the issue theologically will help clarify Paul’s meaning and provide a proper exegesis and application of the passage.

There are three main categories of interpretation for this passage. The first category I’ve called “Sanctification is the Husband’s Responsibility.” The following authors/pastors have been specifically chosen as examples because they are known for being careful expositors and have ministries that I particularly appreciate. The use of these men should not be seen as an indictment against them, but calling into question their particular use of Eph 5:26–27. “The man is responsible for the spiritual well-being of his wife. Her sanctification is his responsibility. There is probably no male task that has been more neglected in our society than this one.”<sup>1</sup> And, “In seeking the sanctification of the church, there is a sense in which Christ seeks to change his wife. So the husband is called to change his wife. But that change is not supposed to ruin her. The change is to be toward a higher conformity to the image of Christ. We should seek to present our wives to Christ as holy and blameless, being without spot or wrinkle!”<sup>2</sup> Finally, in discussing Ephesians 5, one author says that “The man who sanctifies his wife understands that this is his divinely ordained responsibility. Men . . . , do you realize it is your responsi-

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1 R. C. Sproul, *The Intimate Marriage: A Practical Guide to Building a Great Marriage* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2004), 58.

2 Ibid., 59.

bility to seek your wife’s sanctification?”<sup>3</sup> These authors appear to be declaring that Eph 5:26 describes the husband as being responsible for his wife’s *progressive* sanctification, her growth in holiness.

The second category is a little more fuzzy, where it *seems* like the husband is responsible but the connection to Eph 5:26 is more ambiguous: “By Implication, the Husband is Responsible for His Wife’s Sanctification.” For example, “When a husband’s love for his wife is like Christ’s love for His church, he will continually seek to help purify her from any sort of defilement. He will seek to protect her from the world’s contamination and protect her holiness, virtue, and purity in every way. He will never induce her to do that which is wrong or unwise or expose her to that which is less than good.”<sup>4</sup> And, “The soteriological truth in this analogy is that saving grace makes believers holy through the cleansing agency of the Word of God, so that they may be presented to Christ as His pure Bride, forever to dwell in His love. It is with that same purpose and in that same love that husbands are to cultivate the purity, righteousness, and sanctity of their wives.”<sup>5</sup> As an example from an expositional commentary, Klein sees the primary point of 5:26–27 as to explain Christ’s sacrifice for the church,<sup>6</sup> but he consistently applies the analogy to the husband. For example, regarding 5:26, he says that Paul expects a husband to act in his wife’s best interest, not his own.<sup>7</sup>

The third category clarifies that the husband is to have a sacrificial love for his wife and the example of this sacrificial love is the way that Christ loved the church. All of the discussion about sanctification, presenting the church as glorious and without spot or wrinkle, is primarily about Christ and the church. Thielman says, “The analogy between the love of husbands for their wives and the love of Christ for the church leads to a *digression* on the relationship between Christ and the church.”<sup>8</sup> And Hoehner says, “It must be remembered that the purposes expressed in verses 26–27 are related to Christ’s sacrificial love stated in verse 25. . . . The purpose of Christ’s love for the church was for her ultimate good, which should be the goal of a husband’s love.”<sup>9</sup>

## II. CONTEXTUAL CLUES

The one command in Eph 5:25–27 given to husbands is that they are to love their wives. Paul then defines what he means by this “love” in the following verses. He begins the clause with a subordinate conjunction which indicates comparison. The specific comparison is between the husband’s love for his wife and Christ’s love for his church. There are two parallel verbs in the subordinate comparison clause: 1) Christ loved the church and 2) Christ gave himself on behalf of the church. These two verbs are used very similarly earlier in the chapter: “and walk in love, just as also Christ loved us and gave himself for us” (Eph 5:2a). A comparison between these two verses is revealing:

5:2b just as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us

3 R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*, rev. ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 37.

4 John F. MacArthur Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 300.

5 *Ibid.*, 300.

6 William W. Klein, “Ephesians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., vol. 12, eds. Tremper Longman III and David A. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 151.

7 *Ibid.*, 152.

8 Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 382. Emphasis added.

9 Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 762.

5:25b just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her<sup>10</sup>

In 5:2, the object of Christ’s love is “us,” but in 5:25 it’s “the church.” In 5:2 Christ gave himself for “us,” but in 5:25 it’s “her,” referring again to the church. The relationship between 5:2 and 5:25 makes it all the more clear that 5:25–27 is primarily about Christ and the church.

All of verse 26 is a subordinate purpose clause, indicated by the conjunction ἵνα (*hina*). The main purpose that Christ gave himself for the church is to “sanctify” her. Whether “sanctify” refers to positional sanctification or progressive sanctification will be clarified by a word study on “sanctify” and the Old Testament background to the following phrase.

All of verse 27 is a subordinate clause, indicated by ἵνα (*hina*). The main purpose that Christ sanctified the church was to present to himself the church as glorious. Paul then provides five descriptions of the church: three things that do not describe the church and two that do. The positive descriptions of the church are that it is “holy and blameless.” These two words are used together in Eph 1:4: “in order for us to be holy and blameless before him in love”. The purpose of election (Eph 1:4) is so that Christians would be positionally holy and blameless. This is suggested by the fact that Christians do not live perfect lives, neither perfectly holy nor blameless. The word blameless is also used to refer to Christ in 1 Pet 1:19 and Heb 9:14. This further affirms that both in 1:4 and 5:27, positional holiness and blamelessness is the referent. Arnold declares that the terms “holy and blameless” remove us far away from earthly marriage: “This, of course, far transcends what any other husband is able to accomplish for his bride and further confirms that this portion of the passage is *solely* a lesson on Christology.”<sup>11</sup>

Examining the leads to the following conclusions. 1) There is one command given to a husband: love your wife. 2) An example of what Paul means by “love” is provided: Christ’s love as demonstrated for the church by giving himself (dying) for the church. All of vss. 26 and 27 are directly about Christ’s love for the church.

### III. EXAMINATION OF GREEK WORDS

Three Greek words will be briefly analyzed to help in interpreting the passage. Paul says that Christ “gave himself.” The Greek word for “gave” is παραδίδομι (*paradidōmi*). BDAG says that this verb is used “alone w(ith) the mng. *hand over to suffering, death, punishment, esp. in relation to Christ.*”<sup>12</sup> Paul uses it twice in Romans to indicate Christ’s death: Rom 4:25 and 8:32. A final verse that is similar to Eph 5:25 is Gal 2:20: “who loved me and gave himself for me.”<sup>13</sup> Paul is referring to Christ’s death with this word. Christ’s death was to pay the penalty for sin. A husband is unable to die and pay the penalty for their wife’s sin. This is a reference to Christ and not a “double-reference” to Christ and a husband.

The purpose for Christ giving himself (that is, dying) for the church is to sanctify her. The word “sanctify” signifies, to many Christians, the concept of growing in holiness, of becoming more and more like God. Or, in the terminology of Ephesians “that you are filled to all the fullness of God.” The best recent study completed on New Testament terminology for sanctification is by David Pe-

<sup>10</sup> Translations throughout are the author’s own unless otherwise noted.

<sup>11</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 390. Emphasis added.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3d ed, rev. and ed. F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 762.

<sup>13</sup> This is another example of ἀγαπάω and παραδίδομι being used together.

terson. Peterson says that “God sanctifies his people once and for all, through the work of Christ on the cross.”<sup>14</sup> Christians are definitively sanctified when God calls them holy by setting them apart at salvation. When sanctification is referred to in Scripture, it’s typically in this way: positional/definitive sanctification. The Old Testament talks about this when it discusses objects and places that God has sanctified.<sup>15</sup> The New Testament picks up on this theme in several places. For example, Paul says that the Corinthian Christians “were washed, you were sanctified” (1 Cor 6:11). In Heb 13:12, the author says that Jesus suffered “that He might sanctify the people by His own blood.” This is not to deny that the New Testament teaches the concept of progressive transformation for Christians. However, the New Testament typically uses different words and phrases than “sanctification,” like “grow in grace” (2 Pet 3:18) and “to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). Positional sanctification (and regeneration) is the basis for progressive sanctification. Based upon Peterson’s study, the reference in Eph 5:26 is extremely likely to be referring to positional sanctification, something that occurs at salvation. He concludes: “There is no suggestion in the context that the sanctification of the church means making it progressively ‘more holy.’”<sup>16</sup>

The final word under consideration is ῥῆμα (*rhēma*). This Greek word is typically used for the spoken word, that is, “the proclamation of the Word of God.”<sup>17</sup> BDAG explains that generally the singular “brings together all the divine teachings as a unified whole, w(ith) some such mng. as *gospel*, or *confession*.”<sup>18</sup> For example, Rom 10:17 says: “Therefore, faith comes from hearing, and hearing comes through the word of Christ” (see also Rom 10:8, 18). The only other use of ῥῆμα (*rhēma*) in Ephesians is in 6:17b: “and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” This appears to be another piece of evidence that the context is not progressive sanctification, but positional sanctification that takes place once one responds to the gospel.

#### IV. THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND TO THE PASSAGE

Thielman says that while Christ giving himself was how positional sanctification was accomplished, from another angle, it was “with the water bath in the word.”<sup>19</sup> He points out that λουτρόν (*loutron*) is the common term for “bridal baths,” the custom of a bride washing in water in preparation for the wedding or as part of the ceremony.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, this is probably a metaphorical reference to “the cleansing power of the gospel,” not baptism.<sup>21</sup>

What about “in the word”? Does it modify sanctify, cleanse, or the washing of water, or a combination of these? The safest answer is to take it with the immediate antecedent: the washing of water. It probably does not refer to words spoken at a baptism, but to the “word of God” (cf. Eph 6:17), and more specifically, the gospel, “whose preaching brings the church into existence as people hear and

14 David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 13.

15 See Klaus Bockmuehl, “Sanctification,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988), 613.

16 Peterson, *Possessed*, 53. See also John Murray, “Definitive Sanctification,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 2:1 (April 1967): 5.

17 Arnold, *Ephesians*, 388.

18 BDAG, 905.

19 Thielman, *Ephesians*, 383.

20 *Ibid.*, 384.

21 So *ibid.* See also Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 422; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 753.

believe it.”<sup>22</sup>

Theilman believes that the imagery of the typical wedding has merged with Ezek 16:8–14.<sup>23</sup> The LXX of Ezekiel 16:9a reads “and I bathed you in water.” That is very similar to the wording in Eph 5:26. While Ephesians 5:26 has the noun λουτρῶν (*loutrō*), Ezek 16:9 has the related verb ἔλουσά (*elousa*). Both use the Greek word ὕδωρ (*hudōr*) for water. Theilman summarized wonderfully the comparison between Ezek 16:8–14 and Eph 5:26. He concludes:

There God imagines Israel as his young bride, whom he has bathed, cleansed, anointed, and clothed in finery and jewels. Here in Ephesians, Christ takes the place of God in that imagery, and the church fills the place of Israel. Again, however, Paul breaks the boundary of a traditional image. In Ezek. 16 the imagery of the bride is part of a prophecy against Israel for its unfaithfulness to God: once made beautiful by God, Israel had become a prostitute through its promiscuous alliances with other nations and their gods. Paul’s image runs in the opposite direction: those who comprise the church were once stained, but through the death of Christ and the preaching of the gospel, Christ has cleansed them and set them apart for himself, just as a young and dazzlingly beautiful bride, in all her finery, is presented to the groom.<sup>24</sup>

Arnold also sees Eph 5:26 as an allusion to Ezekiel 16.<sup>25</sup> In commenting on this passage in Ezekiel, Block says that the image of spreading out the edge of his garment to cover her refers to an ancient Near Eastern custom which signified “the establishment of a new relationship and the symbolic declaration of the husband to provide for the sustenance of his future wife.”<sup>26</sup> Applied to the context of Eph 5:25–27, this is a description of positional/definitive sanctification, the beginning of a “new relationship.”

## V. THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The above analysis leads to the conclusion that Paul is describing Christ’s death for the church so that, in the end, He could present her without spot or wrinkle, as a glorious church. Exegetically, there is insufficient evidence to support the idea that Paul is describing progressive sanctification. However, outside of the exegetical data, what about theologically? Could it still be true that a husband is responsible for his wife’s progressive sanctification?

As in all relationships, the husband should be seeking to edify his wife and aid her in her maturity, but her growth in Christ is ultimately the responsibility of herself. Near the context of Eph 5:26, Paul

<sup>22</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 385.

<sup>23</sup> See *ibid.*, 386.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 386. Note that Lev 14:8 contains the phrase καὶ λούσεται ἐν ὕδατι, which is very similar. It should be noted that according to Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1–24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 484, the “young woman whom Yahweh has rescued is an innocent maiden.”

<sup>25</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, “Ephesians,” *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon.*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 333–34. See also his expanded explanation of how Paul develops the themes of Ezekiel 16 in Ephesians (Arnold, *Ephesians*, 284–86).

<sup>26</sup> Block, *Ezekiel*, 482–83. For more information on this, see Paul A. Kruger, “The Hem of the Garment in Marriage. The Meaning of the Symbolic Gesture in Ruth 3:9 and Ezek 16:8,” *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 12 (1984): 79–86.

says, “But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head-- Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part” (Eph 4:15–16, HCSB).<sup>27</sup> Every Christian has a responsibility to live in such a way as to seek the maturation of each other. However, no person will be held responsible before God, ultimately, for the maturation of someone else. So to say “her sanctification is his responsibility” is overstating the responsibility each Christian has to one another.

## VI. CONCLUSION AND APPLICATION

Analysis of the structure and context of Eph 5:25–27 demonstrated that a husband is given only one command in the passage: love his wife. The rest of the passage used Christ’s love for the church as a comparison for the sake of explaining the depths of the sacrifice of this love. The sacrificial love of Christ is similar to the kind of sacrificial love a husband should have for his wife. Three Greek words were studied. Since Christ “giving himself” referred to his sacrificial death for the sins of those who believe in Him, this is not something any husband could do. The Greek word-group for “sanctify” most commonly refers to positional sanctification in the New Testament, thus not placing this verse in the realm of progressive sanctification. Finally, since the Greek word ῥῆμα (*rhēma*) probably refers to the gospel, this further removes the passage from the context of progressive sanctification. The Old Testament background of Ezekiel 16 further lends to the context being that of positional sanctification. Finally, the concept that a husband is ultimately responsible for the progressive sanctification of his wife does not hold weight theologically.

None of this means that a husband shouldn’t seek for his wife to become more like Christ daily. Since every Christian should desire the progressive sanctification of each other, how much more a husband with his wife. However, the main point of this paper is to say that Eph 5:25–27 does not directly address this issue. Arnold’s conclusion is to be preferred. He notices that Paul uses a comparative conjunctive in 5:22 and connects 5:24 to that with an adverbial conjunction. In 5:25 Paul uses a similar comparative conjunction and then he connects 5:28 to that with the same adverbial conjunction.<sup>28</sup>

5:22 – wives to your own husbands as to the Lord

5:24b – in the same way also wives to their husbands in everything.

5:25a – Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church

5:28a – in the same way husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies.

This is one reason why Arnold can so conclusively declare that vss. 26–27 are “another Christological aside.”<sup>29</sup> One popular preacher who sees this same structure is D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He concluded: “In verses 25, 26, and 27 he tells us what Christ has done for the church, and why He has done it. Then in verses 28 and 29 he gives us a preliminary deduction from that as to the duty of a husband towards his wife, especially in terms of the union that subsists between Christ and the church, and the husband

<sup>27</sup> Cf. with 1 Thess 5:11.

<sup>28</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 390–91

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

and the wife.”<sup>30</sup> Lloyd-Jones also recognized that “sanctify” was a reference to “set apart for Himself” and not progressive sanctification.<sup>31</sup>

Paul provides a teaching about Christ and the church in Eph 5:25–27 which is followed by applying that teaching to the concept of husbands loving their wives. Attempts to apply the specifics in verses 26 and 27 are misguided as it is specifically talking about the way Christ loved the church. The application of verses 26 and 27 can be seen in what Paul says in 28–29. Therefore, Eph 5:26–27 does not describe as part of a husband’s duty the progressive sanctification of his wife.

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<sup>30</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit*, 130.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 152. However, note that he failed to recognize that the cleansing in 5:27 is a reference to Ezekiel 16 and therefore he believed that it referred to progressive sanctification (*ibid.*, 155–56).



# MARRIAGE: A PORTRAIT OF THE GOSPEL FROM THE BEGINNING

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**T**he dismal state of marriage in the United States is a well-documented reality. The growing trends in marital and related statistics cause concern on many levels. Sociologically, the strength of a nation depends, to a large degree, on the strength of its families.<sup>1</sup> Theologically, those who fear God recognize that the divide between God's design of the institution and its current form is troubling. A tumultuous cultural wind necessitates the Christian to anchor in the past and fix his eyes upon the future, as a lighthouse, in order to remain steadfast in truth and practice. The apostle Paul does exactly this in his explanation of marriage in Ephesians 5.

Paul is forward in his thinking about marriage in the Kingdom, but his progressive focus is not severed from the past. The apostle typically viewed everything through eyes fixed on the gospel, but this time he adds creation and eschatology as vantage points. This essay will utilize the apostle's appeal to creation and consummation within Ephesians 5:31-32 to demonstrate that marriages, from the beginning, were to portray the grand story of the gospel from creation design to eschatological union.

In Paul's urge for husbands to love like Christ, he concludes the section by anchoring his paradigm within the metanarrative of God's redemption. First, Paul tied his view of marriage in verse 31 to creation by quoting Genesis 2:24. Second, he carried the thought through to consummation in Ephesians 5:32. These pillars, at both ends of time, are to serve as guides for understanding the intimate marital union.

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Roback-Morse, *Love & Economics: It Takes a Family to Raise a Village* (San Marcos, CA: Ruth Institute, 2008), 6.

## CREATION AND CONSUMMATION

### *Give and Take*

God presented the first bride to her husband. In Genesis 2:22, the Lord God made the woman from the rib of the man and “brought her to the man.” Immediately following the man’s naming of the woman as his very bone and flesh, God established the principle of man leaving and cleaving to his wife in order to form a one-flesh union. Before considering the elements of the marriage union involved in the leave and cleave principle, one must also acknowledge God’s presentation of woman to the man.

In the Genesis narrative God established a pattern for biblical marriages; namely, that a daughter is to be given in marriage and a man is to take a wife (Gen 2:22-24). God is not revealed as father to his people until Deuteronomy 32, but he certainly qualifies as progenitor of humanity as described by the creation narrative. Therefore, it can be said that God, as father, gave the first bride to her husband setting a pattern that was to be followed in succeeding marriages.

The pattern of giving and taking in marriage can be viewed as a foreshadowing of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19. Following the established pattern, Christ takes a bride to be his wife. God also gives the church as the bride of Christ. Jesus testifies that all that the Father gives to him are his (John 6:37, 10:29, 17:6, 9, 24). Those who believe form the body of Christ, the church, and it is they who have been given to Christ by their Father. At the marriage supper Christ will take his bride—those whom the Father has given to him (Rev 19).

### *Leave and Cleave*

The one flesh union was established in order to constitute a new family unit. After the woman was given to the man, God said that man was to, “leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). This was not such a shift in locale, as often the Israelite male would remain a member of his father’s house, but, the man settled as head of his own household by cleaving to his wife. The wife also was to leave the authority of her old house and be given by her father to the husband. Both human parties involved in the covenant marriage were intended to leave their previous households in order to establish a new institution before God.

Within the action of leaving and cleaving, Adam became the primary burden-bearer of this newly formed institution. Adam bore the burden of responsibility for the family, a role he abdicated as he stood by while his wife delighted in and ate the forbidden fruit. The man’s newfound role, as the burden-bearer, was demonstrated as God sought him first to answer for the sin in the garden. Romans 5 further evidenced Adam’s blame in the fall. In contrast, Christ took on the full responsibility of sin even when he was not guilty. As the bridegroom, Christ did not passively sit awaiting the judgement of the bride. Rather, he left the glories of heaven and took on flesh to dwell among us in order that he may take the burden of our fall.

Genesis 2 is not simply a description of the first marriage, but it is intended as a template for all subsequent marital unions.

Jesus quotes this verse in His discussion with the Pharisees on the subject of divorce. Paul then quotes it twice in his epistles, once when discussing the one-flesh relationship of a husband and wife as a parallel to Christ’s relationship to the church, and

once, surprisingly enough as a reason to abstain from sex with a prostitute.<sup>2</sup>

The reason both Jesus and Paul use this verse as a guiding principle in marriage is to demonstrate God's design, from the beginning, of leaving and cleaving was to *hold fast* to one's spouse as a presentation of Christ securely holding his beloved.

The well-established ideology of marriage throughout Scripture is intended to encourage human understanding into the depth of union between Christ and his bride. The context of the awaited Marriage Supper provides insight into the *leaving* aspect of the union, especially for the bride. The bride must be distinguished from strangers and have singularly focused affections, directing her mind to the bridegroom alone. The desiring bride must leave all previous commitments and wants in order to secure the union. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is the consummation of a secured covenant between lovers. The husband has devotedly loved his bride, and the bride has forsaken all to be joined together with him. Covenant marriage between man and woman is intended to depict such a glorious leaving and cleaving as will be realized ultimately at the consummation.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Two Become One***

The union is not complete in the mere leaving of prior endearments. The cleaving of marriage is to establish a covenantal commitment fully realized in God's design from the beginning, ". . . the two shall become one flesh." The one-flesh union is exemplified by physical intimacy, but its purpose seems to strive at something deeper. The married parties are two distinct bodies, but assuredly now one in essence and commitment. As Scripture progresses in revelation, Paul added a hint as he repeated the phrase from Genesis 2:24.<sup>4</sup> In earthly marriages, the two people become one as expressed by Moses' phrase, "and they were both naked and not ashamed" (Gen 2:25). Paul's more profound meaning is bound in the emblematic nature of the earthly marital union for the heavenly union between Christ and his bride. The great unification of Christ with his church will surpass the one-flesh union veiled by the natural world as we are one in Spirit with him (1 Cor 6:17).

### ***The Husband Protects the Bride***

One text used to admonish a man to protect his wife is 1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." This is not the only text that teaches a man to protect his wife. Biblical support for the idea that the man is responsible to protect his family is found in Deuteronomy 20:7-8; men go forth to war, not women, here and in other Old Testament passages.<sup>5</sup> John Piper claims the Scriptures propose God's design is for males to protect females:

The "mystery" of marriage is the truth that God designed male and female from the beginning to carry different responsibilities on the analogy of Christ and his

<sup>2</sup> Robert Andrews, *The Family, God's Weapon for Victory* (Rice, WA: Sentinel, 1995), 61-63.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man's Picture* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999). 239ff.

<sup>4</sup> Eph 5:31-32.

<sup>5</sup> Num 1, Judges 7, and 2 Sam 23.

church. The sense of responsibility to protect is there in man by virtue of this design of creation, not by virtue of the marriage covenant. Marriage makes the burden more personal and more intense, but it does not create it.<sup>6</sup>

Paul implied this same type of protection in his demand of husbands to love their wives, “like Christ loved his church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). No greater love can be shown on this earth than for someone to lay his life down for another (John 13:15). Isaiah 53:1-6 is most descriptive concerning Christ’s atoning death on behalf of his bride. He has “borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities . . . and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” The atonement, foreshadowed in the Old Testament sacrificial system, demonstrated the need for an appeasement of God’s wrath for the sin of man.<sup>7</sup> From an eschatological point of view, the atonement secures the bridal garment. In the atonement, Christ endured the wrath of God due his bride and provided her with a garment purchased with his own blood (Rev 19:8). Paterson described the significance of the fine linen given to the bride at the marriage:

How radiantly beautiful the bride of Christ appears as she has prepared herself to be presented to the Lamb. However, her beauty is bestowed beauty, for John is also informed that the clean, bright linen she is wearing ‘was given her to wear.’ Again the emphasis on grace and redemption is brought to the fore. In almost every conceivable way, the Apocalypse magnifies the grace of God in salvation. The righteousness of the church and those who make up the bride of Christ is not an acquired righteousness but a bestowed righteousness.<sup>8</sup>

The protection a man is to provide for his bride is not necessarily accomplished by guns and brawn, but by humility, compassion, gentleness, and personal holiness.<sup>9</sup> The man must respond to the selfless call of Philippians 2 in order to protect his wife in the manner modeled by Christ. Christ bore the wrath of God against man in order to demonstrate love and provide atonement, but this could have never been possible without his mind of selflessness.<sup>10</sup> A husband can in no way obtain redemption for his bride, but he is to willingly lay down his life for her sake in order to exemplify the work of Christ.

Christ is known as the Lamb for his wedding day because this is the title given him as the purchaser and protector of his bride. The triumph of Revelation does not change the name of Christ. Although the angel identified Jesus as “the Lion” in Revelation 5:5, John’s favorite identity of Jesus is as the Lamb. One could agree with Spurgeon’s assessment, “This term— ‘the Lamb’—seems to be the special name of Christ which John was accustomed to use.”<sup>11</sup> The Lamb purchased the bride through

6 John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 43-44. Also see 16 on page 476.

7 Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology, 2nd ed.* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 830.

8 Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, vol. 39. *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B & H, 2012), 344.

9 Voddie Baucham, *What He Must Be... If He Wants to Marry My Daughter* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 144-145.

10 Phil 2:3-5, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...”

11 Charles H Spurgeon, “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb” NO. 2428 Accessed on August 30 2013, <http://www.spur->

his atoning death on the cross.<sup>12</sup> The depth and meaning of Christ's love was displayed while "we were yet sinners" (Rom 5:8).

The character and duty associated with this image of the husband radically alters the way one views the roles of a man in Christian marriage. Christian love can only be known from the actions it prompts. This was not a love drawn out by any excellency in its objects but is continually expressed by a constant interest towards the unworthy. It was in love that Jesus purchased his Bride<sup>13</sup> and so it will be on that wedding day the Lamb will appear in love's greatest triumph.<sup>14</sup> There is no greater title by which the husband should be known.

In contrast, Adam had opportunity to protect his wife. The text in Genesis does not explicitly say where the man was during the woman's dialogue with the evil one. But, it seems clear that he was with her when she ate the fruit. Adam did not protect his bride from deception and self-destruction, but witnessed her indulgence and thereby joined her in sin. Husbands cursed by sin will opt for one of two ditches skirting their responsibilities of servant leadership and sacrificial protection. They may respond passively, as Adam, to avoid conflict by preferring disengagement or perhaps they will attempt to lead by tyrannical rule. Neither of these poles reflects the protection and security provided by Christ. The expression of love through sacrifice and servanthood ameliorates the meager display of manhood by the first Adam.

If the bride is with Christ, she has no reason to fear. The greater context of Revelation discloses the harsh reality of the great and terrible Day of the Lord. The judgments of God are poured out in the form of bowls, seals, and trumpets on the earth. Then, the seat of judgment is to follow where Christ will be the judge of both believer and unbeliever. The fact that believers will face judgment should never cause fear that they will be eternally condemned.<sup>15</sup> "He who hears my words," says Jesus, "and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."<sup>16</sup> The bride does not fear judgment of her husband, because she is already accepted. She is to reflect gratitude of that acceptance and adorn herself with the character of a pure bride. Christ has already provided the wedding garment of his righteousness in works prepared beforehand.<sup>17</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS FOR GOD'S DESIGN OF MARRIAGE

The deep doctrine of union with Christ is intended to motivate our worship in corporate gatherings. The grace revealed in the husbandly work of Christ demands response, but that response is not limited to Sundays. The implications of this doctrine are to alter living room conversations, protect bedroom relations, and permeate family meals. If we believe this doctrine, the stakes in rearing our sons and daughters to be men and women are incalculable. Our momentary interactions become opportunities of worship, to glorify God by displaying his union with sinners washed clean. We will never fully display the clarity of the gospel, but the portrait we paint with our marriages should be a reflection, however dim, of the consummation.

[geongems.org/vols40-42/chs2428.pdf](http://geongems.org/vols40-42/chs2428.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Patterson, *Revelation*, 344.

<sup>13</sup> John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 2 Cor 5:14; Eph 2:4.

<sup>14</sup> Spurgeon, "The Marriage Supper of the Lamb."

<sup>15</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 1142-1145.

<sup>16</sup> John 5:24, also see Rom 8:1.

<sup>17</sup> Rev 19:8 and Eph 2:10.

At the end of Ephesians, the apostle gazed with a cross-tinted lens to make sense of the marital design. “‘Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and His church” (Eph 5:31-32). Paul intended the reader to look in two directions. First, the reader is to look back to creation design and the work of Christ on the cross. The apostle also directed the reader’s attention forward to the culmination of the eschatological union.

Since the beginning, the enemy has been attempting to thwart the plan of God.<sup>18</sup> The serpent was told by God that he would be placed on his belly and his head crushed as a result of his deceiving the woman. It was foretold that the seed of woman would crush the head of Satan. The seed would come through a family union. In the story of redemption, God chose a family to bring forth the promised one. “Ultimately, we human beings, whether we realize it or not, are involved in a cosmic spiritual conflict that pits God and Satan, with marriage and the family serving as the key arena in which spiritual and cultural battles are fought.”<sup>19</sup> The fruit of family unions were intended to populate the earth with worshippers, which further explain why the assault on the family is an epic spiritual battle for the integrity of the gospel. The distinctions in gender roles are important because they are rooted in the eternal complement between Christ and his bride. Are we preparing our daughters and sons for gospel integrity? Do our marriages depict an accurate portrait of the gospel we herald?

Marriages on earth herald a gospel. Marriages either reflect the union of Christ with his bride or the union between the Babylonian harlot and the beast.<sup>20</sup> Like the harlot, those who are wed to the beast will be abused and deceived. The harlot is dressed luxuriously in fine linen and jewels. The character of the beast is revealed in the end as he will hate the prostitute, make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh.<sup>21</sup> Her adornment and lucrative living were not enough to secure his faithfulness. The beast, consistent with his faithless character, left her destitute, naked, and ashamed.

The noticeable contrast of the character of Christ is that of the husband being *faithful* and true to his bride.<sup>22</sup> Sinners find themselves naked and ashamed, or at best in filthy rags. Christ is a better husband because he takes the unworthy bride and clothes her in fine linen bright and clean. She is adorned with the righteousness of her beloved. The doctrine of imputation captures the husband’s acceptance of the bride in her wedding garment.

God’s plan was that Christ, slain before the foundation of the world, would be wed to those who believe. God, therefore, designed marriage to illustrate the beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. A proper theology of marriage and family must not neglect the purpose of gospel revelation as it pertains to marriage. Any tinkering with the temporal institution that was to portray the gospel of God is to tinker with our view of that gospel. The church should teach husbands and wives to live in relationship as is becoming of the good news. Marriage is forever tethered to the consummated truth the union was intended to portray. In Christian theology, the eternal union between Christ and his bride charts the course for earthly genders and unions.

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18 Gen 3:15.

19 Andreas Köstenberger and David Jones, *God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 15.

20 Rev 17–19.

21 Rev 17:16.

22 Rev 19:11.

## GOD AS FATHER, GOD THE FATHER, AND HUMAN FATHERS

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**W**hen one considers biblical teaching on the Fatherhood of God, one finds two senses in which God is Father. First, as the one God, he is Father to his children, whether Israel or the Church. That is, as the God who created and redeemed his people, he relates to them as their Father, who cares, corrects, punishes, guides, and restores. Here, there is no specific Trinitarian distinction evident, *per se*, as the one God is acting, as one, toward his people as their Father. Second, when Trinitarian specificity has come more into play, Father is far more often reserved for the first Person of the Trinity who is the eternal Father of his eternal Son, who (Son) in the incarnation becomes none other than Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Here, while some references to “Father” refer more broadly to the one God who is Father of his children, more often than not, Father denotes specifically the Trinitarian person of the Father, who is Father precisely because he is eternal Father of his eternal Son, who likewise, through Christ, becomes also Father of those who are in Christ. Thus, as one considers both of these expressions, one might say that “God *as* Father of his people” and “God *the* Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” are equally expressive of the biblical revelation of the Fatherhood of God.

In what follows, I hope to accomplish three goals: first, to consider some of the biblical teaching related to who God is as Father; second, some of the biblical teaching that depicts the Father as the Father of the Son, and third, to relate both sets of biblical teachings to the question of what human fathers can learn from this about what it means to be a father. Of course, what is assumed in this, which is best to be brought out into the open, is that the Fatherhood of God (in both senses) is more basic than, and instructive for, human fathering. God (both as the one God as Father and the first Person of the Trinity as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ) is the primal and perfect Father; we human fathers are those called fathers following the model of “the Father,” and hence we are made to bear resemblance to his fathering. If one wishes to dispute that the biblical revelation of the Fatherhood of

God is meant to convey something about human fathering, I would ask for some evidence why this would NOT be the case. The burden would be on the objector, not on the supporter, of this connection. After all, this is not a matter of seeking to mimic in our humanity some incommunicable aspect of God's being (e.g. trying to learn from God's self-existence what it means for us to exist – which is fully fallacious), but it is more like learning from God's holiness what it means for us to be holy—"Be holy as I am holy." Since God is the primal and perfect Father, it seems clear, then, that in many ways we likewise should seek to be human fathers patterned after the ways God displays his role as heavenly Father—as an adaptation to the imperative, "Be holy as I am holy," we can infer that the revelation of God's Fatherhood presents us with a parallel, if implicit, imperative, "Be father as I am Father." And furthermore, as we shall see, several biblical texts make a direct connection between God's "fathering" to how this should be applied in human relations, including in the role of human fathering. It appears fully valid, then, to pursue this question: how is God Father, and what can we learn from this about human fathering?

### **FIRST, GOD AS FATHER**

Consider some select passages where we see the one God spoken of as Father of his children:

Psalm 89:20–29 – 20 "I have found David My servant; With My holy oil I have anointed him, 21 With whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him. . . . 26 "He will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.' 27 "I also shall make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth. 28 "My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him. 29 "So I will establish his descendants forever And his throne as the days of heaven."

Malachi 1:6 – 6 "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. Then if I am a father, where is My honor? And if I am a master, where is My respect?' says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise My name. . . ."

Matthew 5:43–48 – 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

1 Peter 1:14–17 – 14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "You shall be holy,

for I am holy.” 17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth.

Hebrews 12:7–11 – 7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

James 1:13–17 – 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. 16 Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. 17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

In both Old and New Testaments, then, God’s role as Father of his children—whether Israel or new covenant believers—is displayed to instruct us in two respects. First, it tells us much about who God is in his own character. His honor and authority, his position over and above his children, his greatness and place of deserved respect and obedience, all are highlighted in his supreme role as Father of his children. As Father, he should be obeyed, followed, and his word should be obeyed. When his children fail to show him such deserved respect and allegiance, God is dishonored and this invites the possibility of God’s just discipline of his children. But there is more to the character of God as Father than his deserved place of honor and respect. As Father, he likewise is one who cares for his children with great love and concern. He’s the Giver, Provider, Protector, and Savior of his children. They can trust his hand never to bring them anything ultimately harmful but always seek to benefit their lives, in the end. In short, God as Father is both great and good. He is both our highest authority and perfect care-giver. We fear and tremble at his voice of highest authority, and we cherish the richness of his care, affection, and unfailing love for his children.

Second, we can infer from God’s Fatherhood of his children something of the pattern that should be evident in the parenting manner and substance of human fathers. Both respect and tenderness, both authority and loving affection, both exacting obedience and lavish kindness should mark those who father their children in a manner in which God fathers us. The balance is critical, and one must only consider for a moment the manner of God’s own fathering of us to see this is so. Although human fathers may err through imbalance of excessive heavy-handedness or indulgent permissiveness, God’s own pattern and manner stands as our corrective. As human fathers take their cue from God’s fathering, we learn the importance both of exercising authority over our children and exhibiting warmth and loving affection with our children. That both are required, and both are critical to be good fathers, is one of the most important implications of noticing just how God acts as Father to his children.

## SECOND, GOD *THE* FATHER

Consider some select passages where we see the first Person of the Trinity, God the Father, spoken of as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and then (amazingly) also as the Father of his children who are in Christ.

The Son is the eternal Son of the Father, but his “Sonship” is manifest in Scripture in three senses:

Eternal Son, e.g., John 3:16-17 – 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world be saved through him.

Incarnate Son, e.g., Luke 1:35 – 35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”

Exalted Son, e.g., Acts 13:32-33 – 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, 33 this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you” [quoting Ps 2:7]

And so it clear from the revelation of the Son of the Father, as eternal Son, incarnate Son, and exalted Son, he always is Son to his Father and so accomplishes the work of his Father, carries out the will of his Father, and so fully submits to his Father’s authority over him. Although there are many texts supporting this claim (which I’ve argued for previously in various venues<sup>1</sup>), here is one text which offers summary evidence for the everlasting “Sonship” of the Son, and hence his place always as Agent of the Father’s will, that is always to do the will and carry out the work of the Father:

Hebrews 1:1-2 – 1 God [the Father], after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son [incarnate Son], whom He appointed heir of all things [exalted Son], through whom also He made the world [eternal Son].

Notice from this text, the Father speaks through his Son in the Son’s incarnate proclamation, and the Father exalts the Son to his position over the nations as inheritor of all that is in creation, and the Father is the Creator of the world through the agency of his Son. So, indeed, in eternity past, in the incarnation, and in eternity future, the Father accomplishes his work in and through his Son, the Agent of the Father.

As Son of the Father, what characterizes the relationship of this Father and Son, and what in particular characterizes the Father? He gives him extremely important work to do, which work fulfills

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., my article in *JBMW*, Fall 2008, “Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead,” 43-58.

the will and design of the Father:

1 Corinthians 8:6 – yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

John 6:38 – For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 8:42b – I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

John 8:28-29 – 28 So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

John 4:34 – My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.

Hebrews 5:8-9 – 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.

Romans 8:31-32 – 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

1 Corinthians 15:25-28 – 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy that will be abolished is death. 27 For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, ‘All things are put in subjection,’ it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. 28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

Psalms 2:7-9 – 7 I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’

God the Son, then, is both God and Son. *As God*, he is fully equal with God the Father, in that

both Father and Son possess fully the identically same and eternal divine nature. As such, the equality between the Father and Son (and Spirit) could not be stronger—they are equal to each other with an equality of identity (i.e., each possesses the identically same divine nature). *As Son*, the Son is always the Son of the Father and is so eternally. As Son of the Father, he is under the authority of his Father and seeks in all he does to act as the Agent of the Father’s will, working and doing all that the Father has purposed and designed for his Son to accomplish. The eternal Son, God the Son, is both fully God and fully equal to the Father, while he is fully Son and eternally in a relationship of Agent of the Father, carrying out the work and implementing the will of the Father in full submission and obedience to all that the Father has planned. God and Son, i.e., fully God (in nature) and fully Son (in person)—this is who this second Person of the Trinity is.

While one might think that a relationship marked by such strict and unequivocal authority and submission would not, indeed could not, also be marked by love, the fact is that this relationship is loving to its very core. Indeed, not only does the Son express his absolute and unqualified allegiance to the Father in strict obedience to his every word and command, the Son does so out of a deep and abiding love for his Father. In short, the Son’s submission to the Father, and his love for the Father, are inseparable.

John 14:31 – I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that *I love the Father* [italics added].

John 15:9-10 – *As the Father has loved me*, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and *abide in his love* [italics added].

The mutual indwelling of the Trinitarian Persons with one another provides another lens to see something of the beauty of the Father-Son relationship. And what is especially amazing here is that this intimate mutual indwelling of the Father with his incarnate Son is one that is shared also with believers. Consider these passages:

First, note the union of the Father and Son in the life and work of the Son:

John 10:37–38 – 37 “If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; 38 but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.”

John 14:10–11 – 10 “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. 11 Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves.”

Second, note the union of the believer with both Christ and the Father and with one another:

John 14:20–23 –20 “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in

Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” 22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?” 23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

John 17:20–26 – 20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

And in keeping with this last observation—that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also Father to us who are in Christ—notice also some other astonishing texts showing the relationship between the Father and his children who belong to Son:

Matthew 6:9–13 – 9 “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. 11 ‘Give us this day our daily bread. 12 ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’

2 Corinthians 1:1–4 – 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

### **THIRD, THE RELATION BETWEEN THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD AND HUMAN FATHERING**

Consider the following suggested lines of implication and application. Although much more could be

said for each item, it is hoped that these points will be seen to arise from a careful consideration of just how God has dealt with his people as their Father, and how the first Person of the Trinity has been and is the eternal Father of the eternal Son.

1. Respect and honor is owing to one who is father due to his position of authority, requiring children's joyous obedience and respectful submission to their fathers (Matt 6:9-10; 1 Pet 1:14-17; Mal 1:6).
2. Care, provision, protection, comfort, kindness must be shown from one who is father (Matt 6:11-12; 2 Cor 1:1-4).
3. It must be clear that fathers should never seek their children's harm but always and only seek what is for their good. Children need to know that their fathers are 100% for them (Heb 12:10; James 1:13-17).
4. Discipline must be administered – both formative (Heb 5:8-9) and corrective (Heb 12:7-11) – from responsible and loving fathers to their children.
5. Fathers should administer judgment fairly and impartially as God the Father does (1 Pet 1:14-17).
6. Loving intimacy and understanding comfort needs to be expressed with tenderness and care from fathers to their children (John 15:9-10; 17:23, 26; 2 Cor 1:1-4).
7. Here we see the use of fatherly authority to assign meaningful work to those under your charge. Let them share in the work and also be recipients of honor as a result (1 Cor 8:6; John 4:34; 6:38; 8:28-29).
8. Fathers, in their care for what is best for their children, should encourage sacrificial and others-focused service and love toward those who are difficult to serve and love, reflecting the Father's love for all (Matt 5: 43-48).
9. Fathers should urge "brotherly" unity in which children share in a unity in the faith that mirrors the unity of the Father and the Son – applicable surely for families and for church as well as other communities of those of the faith (John 17:21-22).
10. A father's ultimate goal with his children is for their spiritual transformation and holiness. All other matters pale in comparison to the supreme importance of this one alone (1 Pet 1:13-17; Heb 12:10).

How rich and instructive is the two-fold theme in Scripture of the Fatherhood of God. To see the one God as Father of his people is to marvel at the intimacy of the relationship he has designed to have with those whom he loves and brings into his family. And to see God the Father in relation to his eternal Son is to behold the wonder of authority and submission, of love and intimate fellowship, lived out in perfect harmony. As the primal, absolute and perfect Father, we pray that human fathers will pay closer notice to how fathering is done at its best. May we human fathers learn and grow to be more like that One who exhibits eternal Fatherhood and fathering, and may this bring glory to name of the One in whose likeness we long to be refashioned.

# THE NEW HOUSEHOLD IN CHRIST: HOW WIVES AND HUSBANDS ARE TO “PUT ON THE NEW SELF” IN COLOSSIANS 3:18-19

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he aim of this study is to argue that Colossians 3:18-19 represents Paul’s vision for the “new household in Christ” that is clothed with “(re)newed garments” and enjoys the power of the gospel in an estate that has existed under the curse of Adam’s sin. The Apostle Paul’s injunction for wives to submit to husbands “as is fitting in the Lord” and for husbands to love their wives without being harsh in 3:18-19 flows out of the initial command in 3:9-10 for all Christians to “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”<sup>1</sup> Although the tradition within biblical studies has been to seek to situate Paul’s account of the so-called *Haustafeln* (household codes) in Colossians and Ephesians primarily within the cultural setting of the Greco-Roman world through a form-critical approach, it is the contention of this presentation that the backdrop against which Paul addresses wives and husbands is Genesis 1-3.

I will seek to demonstrate this thesis in three stages. First, the subject of the OT’s presence and material influence upon Colossians will be treated. A brief survey of recent approaches to Paul’s use of the OT in this letter will be covered followed by a suggested proposal concerning authorial composition that builds upon other scholars’ explanations for the nonoccurrence of scriptural quotations who likewise assume Pauline authorship for Colossians. Second, Genesis 1-3 will be argued as the scriptural backdrop to the whole of Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. Despite the letter’s historical particularity, a strong case can be made that by Colossians 3, Paul has already been instructing these believers whom he has never met from within the context of the biblical world of OT Scripture since the letter’s earliest

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, 2001.

moments. And third, an interpretation of 3:18-19 will be proffered that understands Paul's injunctions for wives and husbands as still literarily underneath the exhortation to be clothed in the "new self" (3:10) while "stripping off" the former garments of the "old man" (3:9; cf. Gen 3:21); these are the garments soiled by sin that humans wear prior to experiencing renewal after image of their Creator that is found in Christ Jesus, the true image of the invisible God (Col 1:15; 3:10). Hereby the orders instituted in the Garden by God can be restored through "the new household in Christ."

## THE OLD TESTAMENT IN COLOSSIANS

A perennial question for investigations into Paul's Epistle to the Colossians is the nature of the letter's relationship to the OT Scriptures. This concern is due to the absence of any direct citation or quotation from the OT in Colossians. Evaluated within its place in the so-called "Prison Epistles" (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon), Colossians does not appear to be alone regarding this question. Only Ephesians contains explicit OT references whereas Philippians takes a similar approach to Colossians in its omission of direct citations. The presence of the OT in Philemon is so remote that editors G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson did not even include a chapter on it in the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (CNTOT)*.<sup>2</sup> In this context, the query is not unique to Colossians regarding Paul's authorial practices.

On the other hand, many scholars regard Colossians and Ephesians to share considerable verbal and thematic overlap due to the likelihood that they were composed in close proximity both in respect to time and provenance. If Ephesians merited multiple direct OT quotations, why not Colossians? The question is amplified whenever the literary relationship between the two epistles is cast as one being dependent upon the other.<sup>3</sup> Whatever rationale Paul had for giving Ephesians explicit quotations and Colossians none continues to be a topic under investigation.<sup>4</sup> For now, the prime interest of this study is the nature of the OT's presence in Colossians and its implications for the Apostle Paul's address to wives and husbands in 3:18-19.

## A SURVEY OF APPROACHES

In recent years, several studies have emerged on Paul's use of the OT in Colossians. One of the front-runners has been Christopher Beetham's substantive 2008 monograph, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter*

<sup>2</sup> A glance at the table of contents will show the exclusion of Philemon as George Guthrie's entry on Hebrews immediately follows 1, 2 Timothy and Titus by Philip Towner.

<sup>3</sup> For a thorough survey of the positions, see Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 8-21. Cf., Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Publishers, 1990), xlvii-lviii.

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Beetham has proposed that Paul omits direct references to OT Scripture because his desire is for the Colossians to see Christ as Torah and Wisdom, thus citing Scripture may infringe upon the preeminence of Christ that Paul is seeking to uphold in the letter. Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Biblical Interpretation Series (Atlanta, Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 260-62. In his recently published volume on Colossians in the Brazos Commentary series, Christopher Seitz rejects Beetham's thesis and suggests that "Paul does not quote scripture in Colossians, arguably because his audience does not know it. His work of bringing them to maturity entails accustoming them to scripture's main patterns and themes, in a language they can comprehend." Christopher R. Seitz, *Colossians*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 105.

of *Paul to the Colossians*.<sup>5</sup> He submits that “the reason for the present study is that no monograph or even journal article has probed the use of the Old Testament in Paul’s letter to the Colossians.”<sup>6</sup> However, later in his introduction, Beetham updates this assessment noting that as he completed his work, he discovered Gordon Fee’s independent study on, “Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians: Reflections on Pauline Christology and Gentile Inclusion in God’s Story,” for a now published *Festschrift* for the late NT scholar, E. Earle Ellis.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Beetham admits that his work was coterminous to G. K. Beale’s (his doctoral supervisor) own intentional research into the manner of the letter’s use of the OT for Beale’s forthcoming commentary on Colossians in the Baker Exegetical series. In the meantime, Beale’s initial findings and conclusions can be observed in his contribution to the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* on this Pauline epistle.<sup>8</sup> More recently, OT scholar Christopher Seitz has engaged the issue of Paul’s use of the OT Scriptures in Colossians in his respective volume for the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible series. Although other commentaries and studies outside of these four consider Colossians’ relationship to the OT, these contributions will be the primary dialogue partners for the current study due to the fact that their research has given particular attention to this subject matter and its consequences for interpreting the theological message of Colossians.

In his opening section on “Introduction and History of Research” for *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, Beetham concludes that one of the major reasons why no focused study upon the OT’s presence in Colossians had heretofore appeared is because the traditional biblical studies approach to the question of the NT’s use of the OT was preoccupied with explicit quotations and direct citations, hence, Colossians seemed not to apply.<sup>9</sup> Yet, with the advent of Richard Hays’ influential work on Pauline hermeneutics and biblical intertextuality, more scholarly attention has been allotted than previously to the presence of OT echoes and allusions in the NT writings. In light of Hays’ work, Beetham declares that the harvest is ripe, and likely, the laborers will not soon be few pertaining to the field of this type of study in Colossians as well as other NT writings.<sup>10</sup> Both Beetham and Beale’s methodology consists of identifying OT echoes and allusions in Colossians according to a set of criteria each with their own modifications, yet in agreement that the occurrences are to be “author-oriented.”<sup>11</sup>

Likewise Fee, whose essay also was being constructed and published contemporaneous to Beetham and Beale’s works, takes an intertextual approach to perceiving Colossians’ relationship to the OT Scriptures. Throughout his article, Fee similarly enlists the hermeneutical language of echoes, but his

5 This monograph is the publication of Beetham’s 2005 dissertation, “The Scriptures of Israel in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians.” PhD diss., Wheaton College Graduate School.

6 Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 2.

7 Gordon D. Fee, “Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians: Reflections on Pauline Christology and Gentile Inclusion in God’s Story,” in *History and Exegesis: New Testament Essays in Honor of Dr. E. Earle Ellis on his 80th Birthday*, ed. Sang-Won (Aaron) Son (NY: T&T Clark, 2006), 201-21.

8 G. K. Beale, “Colossians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 841-70.

9 Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 2.

10 Ibid., 1-2; see also Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

11 Beetham distinguishes between “author-oriented” and “audience-oriented” approaches opting for the former for his methodology. He defines an “author-oriented” approach as one that discerns echoes and allusions according to the language of the author, whether conscious or unconscious. The validity of the allusion/echo is not determined by the reconstruction of the audience’s epistemic ability to recognize the latent reference. Beetham, *Echoes*, 13-14; see also Beale, “Colossians,” 841-42.

overall thesis is that this literary device serves a greater purpose for Paul to include the Gentile Colossians into Israel's story through Christ.<sup>12</sup>

More recently, the discussion has been continued by Seitz in his volume on Colossians for the Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Selecting Seitz to comment on this particular Pauline letter in this particular series could not have been a more fitting pairing to further insight into Colossians' relationship to the OT. Not only is Seitz a recognized OT scholar in the realm of biblical studies who was trained in the historical-critical method, he also has been a significant voice for a canonical approach to biblical theology and the task of theological interpretation of the Bible in the vein of the precritical tradition according to the rule of faith.<sup>13</sup> In his own words, Seitz recognizes this dynamic and suggests it might give him a potential advantage as a commentator on Colossians:

My hope has been that because the "oracles of God entrusted to the Jews" are central to my own training and my own understanding of the character of Christian scripture, I might be in a position to stand closer to Paul—even in my own Gentile DNA—than many commentators working at present in a field of biblical studies where two divisions of labor have opened up, spawning in turn innumerable subspecies of study. I am not a New Testament scholar at work in an academic shop set up in the modern academy. I am also not an Old Testament/Hebrew Bible scholar who believes that a "historical sense" can set aside canonical and theological considerations.<sup>14</sup>

From outset in the "Author's Preface," Seitz reflects:

Rusty [R. R. Reno] probably had no business inviting an Old Testament scholar to pretend he was a theologian writing a commentary, consistent with that discipline in its modern guise, on a letter in the New Testament. All the same, I like to imagine my grasp of the Old Testament and its rhythms as placing me closely alongside Paul himself, in ways that the New Testament guild or theologians properly speaking come at it less directly.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, the prospect of a commentary by Seitz on a NT writing is timely given the book he published immediately prior to the Colossians volume was his dense proposal on the hermeneutical relationship between the Testaments in *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*.

So how is Seitz's view of Paul's use of the OT in Colossians distinct from the allusions/echoes,

12 Fee, "Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians," 201-2. In contrast to Seitz, Fee does not regard Paul's omission of direct scriptural OT quotations from Colossians because his readers would have no knowledge of the Hebrew Bible. In fact, Fee argues that it is highly probable given the nature of the OT echoes that the Gentile Colossian Christians would have known Israel's Scriptures well even if they were illiterate. A major component of Fee's position is his assumption that the Septuagint would have been used in Gentile congregations connected to Paul's mission.

13 See esp., Christopher R. Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); idem., *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); idem., *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

14 Seitz, *Colossians*, 56.

15 Ibid., 16.

intertextuality approach explored by Beetham, Beale, and Fee? In short, Seitz believes that the OT's material influence upon the NT authors and their writings cannot be reduced to mere human and/or authorial intention that is determined by an analysis of citations and allusions.<sup>16</sup> In the first place, Seitz contends that the OT shapes the NT canon both formally and materially. The former assumption leads him into a discussion on the possibility of seeing the Book of the Twelve in the OT canon as the antecedent to the formation of a thirteen-letter Pauline collection in the NT canon.<sup>17</sup> Next, he transitions to consider the OT's material presence in Colossians.

Seitz notes the "author-oriented" approach of Beetham and Beale for explaining the manner in which "the Old Testament makes its force felt through allusions."<sup>18</sup> He chooses Beetham to interact with more in depth, who claims that Paul's avoidance of direct citation in favor of allusions/echoes is because he is laboring to have the Gentile Christians identify Christ as Torah and Wisdom.<sup>19</sup> This perspective, according to Seitz, restricts itself perhaps inappropriately to a rigid view of "authorial conscious intention."<sup>20</sup> Instead, Seitz wishes to shift the focus from "Paul the author" to "Paul the authored."<sup>21</sup> The OT material shaping of Paul's thought in Colossians is not reducible to identifying self-conscious allusions in some formulaic "tidy exegetical grid."<sup>22</sup> Nor should one envision Paul guarding against direct citations of OT Scripture for fear that the Gentile Christians in Colossae would prioritize written Torah over Christological wisdom. A driving aim behind Seitz's rejection of Beetham's thesis wherein allusions lead to transfer of authority from Torah to Christ is that the OT must not be relegated to first-story level of importance to the NT.<sup>23</sup> This construal of the Testaments subordinates the OT to the NT, which for Seitz is severely problematic concerning the ontological status of the Hebrew Bible as the Word of God and Christian Scripture as well as the role it serves proving and extending authority to the emergence of a Second Testament that is making claims to being the selfsame Word of God.

What could be occurring is that through Paul's "deep educational internalization" of the OT Scriptures, their literal sense has pressured its way into his thought and theology to declare their own explanation of "the mystery of Christ."<sup>24</sup> In this way, "Paul the authored" is Paul authoring Colossians from a mind that is wholly grasped by the OT Scriptures beyond perchance his own comprehension to demonstrate the apostolic teaching's accordance with God's prior scriptural Word concerning its literal

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16 *Ibid.*, 38-39.

17 *Ibid.*, 39-43. Seitz's provocative thesis has appeared elsewhere prior to his commentary on Colossians. See e.g., Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation*, *Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 103: "In its formal and material givenness, the Law and the Prophets pattern has influenced the formal and material development of the NT as canon. Here Deuteronomy's function finds a correlate in John's relationship to the Synoptics, which shows concern for the post-Easter appropriation of the heart of Jesus's message by the apostolic generation inspired by the Holy Spirit, who are enabled to remember Jesus's words and to understand the witness to Jesus accomplished by the OT. The individual and associative aspects of the Twelve find analogies in the Pauline-Letter collection, where both the individual and the associative aspects must be carefully handled. Hebrews, the Catholic Epistles, and Revelation occupy a similar hermeneutical position to the Writings of the OT canon."

18 Seitz, *Colossians*, 43.

19 *Ibid.*, 44; cf. Beetham, *Echoes*, 247-52

20 Seitz, *Colossians*, 44.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*, 45.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*

sense witness to Christ.<sup>25</sup> Hoping for an alternative to “conscious authorial intention,” Seitz proposes,

The way, then, that the scriptures will function is not as foundations but as declarative of mysteries they genuinely guard in their own literal sense, which are coming to light in ways Paul cannot himself fully grasp, but only be grasped by. The scriptures of Israel, the Christian Old Testament, will be heard in the church as reading Paul and clarifying his apostolic word.<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the commentary, Seitz handles Paul’s use of the OT in a more precise manner; however, he consistently resists placing Paul into any form of methodical or deliberately constructed interpretative scheme for embedding the OT into the Colossians’ letter or for future readers’ hermeneutical imitation. In sum, Seitz contributes significantly, if not provocatively, to the study of the OT’s material influence upon Colossians, much less the rest of the NT. His suggestion that Paul is not operating in a formulaic way, but rather is writing from a mind molded and saturated by OT Christian Scripture that is making known its literal sense concerning Jesus Christ in an extemporaneous manner should be considered and weighed. In what follows, I would like to attempt to bring together the merits of both the “author-oriented” allusion/echo approach and Seitz’s non-formulaic view of Paul’s authorial apostolic testimony for the sake of understanding the presence of Genesis 1-3 in the Epistle to the Colossians.

## **AUTHORIAL COMPOSITION FROM WITHIN THE TEXTUAL WORLD OF THE BIBLE**

Charles Spurgeon famously gushed over John Bunyan’s immersive knowledge of the Scriptures by saying,

Read anything of his, and you will see that it is almost like the reading the Bible itself. He had read it till his very soul was saturated with Scripture; and, though his writings are charmingly full of poetry, yet he cannot give us his *Pilgrim’s Progress*—that sweetest of all prose poems—without continually making us feel and say, “Why, this man is a living Bible!” Prick him anywhere—his blood is Bibline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God. I commend his example to you, beloved.<sup>27</sup>

In light of Seitz’s comments, perhaps Bunyan was simply embodying Paul’s example. Spurgeon’s lavish description of Bunyan captures well Seitz’s aforementioned impression of how to account for the material presence of the OT in a Pauline letter devoid of explicit quotations. From this viewpoint, Seitz is resolved to resist any diminishing of the OT in Paul’s thought to merely a foundation for the NT

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “Mr. Spurgeon as a Literary Man,” in *The Autobiography of Charles H. Spurgeon, Compiled from His Letters, Diaries, and Records by His Wife and Private Secretary*, vol. 4, 1878-1892 (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1892), 268.

where the consequence might entail that the First Testament perceptively stands inferior to the Second one. On the contrary, Seitz clarifies, “the scriptures are declaring their own Christological purpose, and they are doing so in a way that Paul may only partly comprehend but not fully track or compass. That we can see them now through careful study, moreover, is a sign of our own present knowledge of these scriptural texts.”<sup>28</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Apostle Paul, “a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee” (Phil 3:5), was an apostolic writer whose heart and mind was saturated with the Hebrew Bible, but now read and wrote about its meaning equipped with enlightened eyes of the heart, filled with “a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of [Christ]” (Eph 1:17-18). Even though Seitz’s point is well taken that the process of moving from prophetic/apostolic word to letter writing has been “in large measure hidden from view,” one must grant that scriptural authorship operates within the realm of meaningful composition of a text.<sup>29</sup> Beetham acknowledges this dilemma in a preliminary discussion of the nature of an “echo,” when he suggests that it can be “consciously or unconsciously executed.”<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Beetham responds,

Even if Paul only unconsciously echoed a text simply out of his saturation with Scripture, we can still speak of Paul “doing” something as an author with and in the words he wrote. In such a case, Paul still expressed himself with phraseology whose language stems from a particular text that he had read on a previous occasion, whether he himself was aware that he was doing it or not.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, biblical readers are always left with biblical texts that are made up of authorial compositions in order to convey meaning.

Must one choose between conscious authorial intertextuality and supposed subconscious biblical permeation that overflows into literary forms and practices? If the process is out of reach historically for defining the exact manner with which Paul engaged the OT Scriptures to produce his apostolic written testimonies, it is not necessary then to assume that the same mind that is grasped wholly and deeply by the prophetic OT Word of God is unable to grasp at a cognizant level the saturation of his own literary practices with the antecedent scriptural witness to Jesus Christ. Once again, a helpful approach is to take into serious consideration that no apostolic authorial composition exists outside the realm of the biblical world, or rather, “the textual world of the Bible.”<sup>32</sup> Because Paul writes with the understanding that the OT Scriptures present a historical, realistic narrative of the “real world,” what other language

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<sup>28</sup> Seitz, *Colossians*, 45.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Beetham, *Echoes*, 13.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 13-14; cf., “I have tried to include for study those OT allusions whose validity are attested by the best evidence and that I consider to be probable. However, some may still wonder whether Paul has intended to make a particular allusion, and they may question that if Paul really intended to convey all the meaning from an OT text for which I am contending, why he did not make the links with that text more explicit. In such cases I would allow for the possibility that Paul merely may have presupposed the OT association in his mind, since he was such a deep and long-experienced reader of the OT Scriptures. This would mean that there is no semantic link with the OT text under discussion, but rather that Paul perhaps was either unconscious of making the reference or was not necessarily intending his audience to pick up on the allusion or echo.” Beale, “Colossians,” 842.

<sup>32</sup> This phrase is borrowed from Michael B. Shepherd’s, *The Textual World of the Bible*, Studies in Biblical Literature 156 (NY: Peter Lang, 2013).

would he borrow in order to explicate the meaning of new creation in Christ than the counterparts from original creation in Genesis?<sup>33</sup> In fact, as another OT scholar John Sailhamer notes, figuration only works if the events that share similarity can be linked by a “real” historical connection.<sup>34</sup>

From this vantage point, Fee’s summation of Paul’s approach to “OT intertextuality” in Colossians has much merit. According to Fee, Paul’s intertextual device is employed for a twofold pattern that has to do “(1) with the Colossians’ own relationship to the biblical story, and (2) with the role of Christ in incorporating them into that story.”<sup>35</sup> Put differently, Paul’s composition of Colossians occurs from his permanent residence in the “textual world of the Bible,” and he seeks to awaken and educate his Gentile audience to the true reality concerning the new status of their citizenship (1:13-14), finding their lives “hidden with Christ in God” (3:3), the Firstborn of creation and the dead (1:15, 18). For the Apostle Paul, OT Christian Scripture obtains its meaning in Christ, therefore, as Orthodox theologian John Behr has insightfully explained, “the scriptures were not used merely as a narrative of the past, but rather as a thesaurus, a treasury of imagery, for entering into the mystery of Christ, . . . In this it is not so much scripture that is being exegeted, but rather Christ who is being interpreted by recourse to the scriptures.”<sup>36</sup>

This discussion has been relevant to the present study for two main reasons. First, if Paul is an apostolic author engaged in biblical composition through the literary form of letter writing, who is about “the business of world making,”<sup>37</sup> then it would be fitting to comprehend the pervasive and consistent allusions/echoes to Genesis 1-3 as the encompassing “textual world” for Colossians’ particularity. And second, perceiving Colossians holistically against the canonical backdrop of Genesis 1-3 plays an important role for what an interpreter does when confronted with a passage such as Colossians 3:18-4:1 (3:18-19 mainly in view) that many biblical commentators have regarded as foremost an accommodation of a first century Greco-Roman household code. In other words, if Paul’s authorial composition that produces the material presence of the OT in Colossians is only evaluated by way of fragmented instances of formulaic allusions/echoes, then Seitz’s cause is lost for “the scriptures to speak their word over and alongside [Paul’s],” whereby their literal sense horizon is “now being heard in the apostolic cause of speaking forth Christ and explicating his eternal significance as they bore and bear witness to this mystery.”<sup>38</sup> Otherwise, the OT’s relation to Colossians is piecemeal at best. In sum, the words of the sixteenth century German Reformer, Martin Luther, express the matter well: “And what is the New Testament but a public preaching and proclamation of Christ, set forth through *the sayings of the Old Testament* and fulfilled through Christ?”<sup>39</sup>

33 Shepherd’s opening lines to his book offer a basic description of the concept of “biblical realism”: “The Bible is the real world. It is not a worldview or a template set over against the real world and in competition with other worldviews. It is the biblical authors’ representation of reality. The Bible does not merely document a period of history. It seeks to encompass all of history from creation to new creation and does this by means of a pattern of figuration based on the sequence of events narrated in Genesis—Kings.” *Ibid.*, 1.

34 John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), 91.

35 Fee, “Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians,” 201.

36 John Behr, *The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death* (NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2006), 17.

37 Shepherd, *The Textual World of the Bible*, 1.

38 Seitz, *Colossians*, 45.

39 Martin Luther, *Preface to the Old Testament*, trans. Charles M. Jacobs and rev. E. Theodore Bachman, in *Word and Sacrament: I*, ed. E. Theodore Bachman, vol. 35 of *Luther’s Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehman (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 236. For a study on Luther’s vision of biblical (narrative) realism, see the excellent work from Robert Kolb, *Luther and the Stories of God: Biblical Narratives as a Foundation for Christian Living* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

## THE NEW HOUSEHOLD IN THE NEW SELF: A THEOLOGICAL EXEGESIS OF COLOSSIANS 3:18-19

With these recent studies on Colossians' relationship to the OT, this letter can no longer be considered ineligible for inclusion in the ongoing discussions over the NT's use of the OT. Whether or not one grants their methodologies or the rationales submitted for why Paul chose the route of intertextual allusions and echoes instead of direct quotations, these authors have persuasively demonstrated the overt presence of the OT Scriptures throughout the entire fabric of the epistle. A quick summary of their findings will paint a clear picture of the undeniable pervasiveness and consistency of Paul's use of the OT in Colossians.

### GENESIS 1-3 IN COLOSSIANS

In Beetham's study, he identified twelve instances of allusions/echoes. For the purposes of this study, the cases most related to Genesis and the creation/new creation themes are: (1) Gen 1:28 – 1:6, 10 [echo]; (2) Isa 11:2, 9 – 1:9-10 [echo]; (3) Creation by way of Prov 8:22-31 – 1:15-20 [allusion]; and (4) Gen 1:26-27 – 3:10.<sup>40</sup> For his independent research on Colossians for the CNTOT, Beale submitted seventeen OT allusions/echoes. Again, the ones most pertinent to Genesis and the creation/new creation themes are: (1) Gen 1:28 – 1:6, 10; (2) Exod 31:3, 35:31-32, Isa 11:2 – 1:9-10; (3) Gen 1:27 – 1:15; (4) Possibly "Wisdom" in 1:15-17; and (5) Possibly Gen 3:7-21 – 3:9-10.<sup>41</sup> Next, in his article on, "Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians," Fee identifies ten echoes; those whose intertext was Genesis and creation/new creation are: (1) Gen 1:26, 28 – 1:15; (2) Isa 11:2 – 1:9-10; (3) Gen 1:1 – 1:18; and (4) Gen 1:26, 28 – 3:9-10.<sup>42</sup> As noted above, Seitz bows out of putting forward a definite set of such allusions/echoes, yet his reticence to lock Paul into a precise method does not prevent Seitz from still treating the OT Scriptures as the primary source for the typical (intertextual) moments and additional ones where its material force is felt.

More generally, Seitz contends early in the commentary that Genesis 1-3 is the scriptural canvas for the entire letter. He sees Colossians 1:15-2:23 as the major body of text that sets this stage clearly, especially the so-called "Christ hymn" of 1:15-20.<sup>43</sup> In the first place, Seitz suggests that if one yields to textual priority as the properly historical question for interpreting Colossians, then it reveals that the sheer "collocation of terms we find in these six verses best suits the primary source of scripture and not the refraction of that in Philo or other contemporaneous Jewish sources."<sup>44</sup> Behr similarly responds to the approach taken by Eduard Lohse in his commentary on Colossians and Philemon for the *Hermeneia* series stating, "[Lohse's] work tends to prefer to find the background for understanding Col 1:13-20 in Platonism, Stoicism, and Hellenistic Judaism. *It would seem methodologically more sound, however, to have such recourse only when something is clearly to be so explained, or cannot be explained in terms of the*

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A related passage to the discussion above reads: "Luther believed that all stories in Scripture occur, as all other events in human history, in a sequence that began with creation and will end with Christ's return to judge" (6).

<sup>40</sup> Beetham, *Echoes*, 267-70.

<sup>41</sup> Beale, "Colossians," 841-70.

<sup>42</sup> Fee, "Old Testament Intertextuality in Colossians," 201-21.

<sup>43</sup> Given this position, Seitz says the interpreter must not fail to ask the question of how 1:15-2:23 relates to Colossians 3 and 4. In Seitz's impression, Paul never apparently transitions from the scriptural backdrop of Genesis 1-3 when he moves to the "new life in Christ" content of Colossians 3 and 4. Seitz, *Colossians*, 86.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.

OT.”<sup>45</sup> And for Behr, Seitz, and even Fee, the strongest evidence against presupposing an extrabiblical or cultural source as Paul’s prime material for 1:15-20 is as, Seitz reflects, “the density of reference to a single scriptural text: Gen 1.”<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, these Gentile Colossian Christians, who are “new creation” fruit borne by “the word of the truth, the gospel,” need a Christology (Col 1:15-20) that corresponds to the Genesis context already established by 1:6 and sustained into 3:9-10 so that they may have a frame of reference for the experience of “new/true humanity” through renewal of their image after the Image of their Creator. Contrary to the view that sees Paul transferring authority from Torah/Wisdom to Christ as the reason why he is not quoting direct citations from the OT, Seitz says that the Torah never intimates that Christ will one day stand where OT Scripture once stood.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, Seitz continues,

The oracles of God entrusted to the Jews do not make this latter claim as a first-order affair anyway: it is a derivative notion, which can be observed in Philo and Sirach. Paul understands that one critical aspect of scripture is the existence of the book of Genesis, which he mines precisely because it stands prior to the law in the strict sense and yet is part of the Torah; . . . Paul does not quote scripture in Colossians, arguably because his audience not know it. His work of bringing them to maturity entails accustoming them to scripture’s main patterns and themes, in a language they can comprehend.<sup>48</sup>

The force of this argument is felt when read in line with Paul’s sober reminder to his Gentile audience in 1:21-22 of their prior estrangement, alienation, and hostility in mind towards God, but now have been brought near through reconciliation “in [the Son’s] body of flesh by his death” and renewal “in knowledge” in the “new man” (3:10). To borrow similar verbiage in Ephesians, Paul understands the import of linking Genesis to new creation in Colossians to situate the Gentile Christians in the scriptural world where their estrangement/alienation was from “the commonwealth of Israel,” causing them to be “strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12-13). Thus, Paul couches their understanding of reconciliation and renewal within the realm of life in the Son, the Second Adam, who is the Firstborn of creation and the Firstborn from the dead, preeminent over all original and new creation. Herein lies the Gentile dilemma in distinction from Israel and their possession of the Law, yet Paul toils to show the OT Scriptures to be in accordance with Christ, “maintaining one cross for God’s single work of reconciliation in his only Son.”<sup>49</sup>

Another significant moment in Colossians 1:15-2:23 for supporting the continuation of Genesis 1-3 as Paul’s primary scriptural context for reflection is Colossians 2:14, one of the most difficult places of translation and interpretation in the letter. The key words are *χειρόγραφον* (“the record of debt” [ESV], or “a certificate of indebtedness”)<sup>50</sup> and *τοῖς δόγμασιν* (“legal demands,” [ESV], or

45 John Behr, “Colossians 1:13-20: A Chiastic Reading,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 40 (1996): 247, fn. 2; italics added. See Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 46-61.

46 Seitz, *Colossians*, 94. Both Seitz and Fee reject the view that identifies the source for Paul’s articulation of 1:15-20 as Wisdom Christology derivative of Proverbs 8 and other Wisdom tradition, non-scriptural writings. Beetham and Beale (tentatively) take the position of Proverbs 8 and Wisdom Christology as the intertext for this passage.

47 Ibid., 105.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., 105.

50 BAGD, 7910.

“ordinance/commands,” “decree,” “doctrine/dogma”).<sup>51</sup> An extensive exegesis of this verse is beyond the limitations of this study, but Seitz’s fresh interpretation is worthy of consideration. An assortment of positions on 2:14 have been put forward over time such as the Mosaic Law, natural law, a pact with Satan, an IOU from humanity to God, and a heavenly book.<sup>52</sup> As one surveys them, it becomes clear that this text is a “hard saying.”

Commentators Peter O’Brien and Douglas Moo represent perhaps the most common interpretation that the χειρόγραφον is an IOU document of indebtedness to God on the basis of comprehending τοῖς δόγμασιν as God’s “commands/ordinances” discernible for the Gentiles through natural law/conscience, yet are concretely encapsulated in the “decrees” of the Law of Moses.<sup>53</sup> In most cases, identifying the “decrees” in 2:14 with the formal declaration of the Mosaic Law results from being normed by Paul’s only other usage of the δόγμα in Ephesians 2:15, where the Law appears to be more easily recognized as the referent.<sup>54</sup> For added support, Moo is favorable towards James Dunn’s enlistment of Romans 1:32, perceiving it to have wording close to Colossians 2:14 regarding God’s “decrees” (τὸ δικάϊωμα τοῦ θεοῦ) to which all of humanity is obligated for obedience and worthy of death when disobeyed. Here Dunn sees the Law of Moses as the immediate context.<sup>55</sup>

Seitz believes Paul is moving in a direction other than the Law. He rejects the governance of Ephesians 2:15 for the meaning of τοῖς δόγμασιν in Colossians 2:14 on two main grounds: (1) Colossians itself is not involved in a discussion on the Mosaic Law, and (2) Ephesians is not concerned with “debt” (χειρόγραφον) in relation to its “decrees.” Most likely, Seitz suggests, Paul is associating the Gentile audience, as well as all of humanity, with Adam in the scriptural world of Genesis 2-3.<sup>56</sup> “As a consequence of the debt of Adam,” Seitz continues, “God rendered a decree of death that encompassed all humanity.”<sup>57</sup> To connect the Gentile’s “debt” or IOU with Adam’s disobedience and God’s decree of the curse (i.e., death) and curses in Genesis 3 (Gen 3:14-19) seems plausible in light of the preceding context.

One potentially significant line of defense of Seitz’s view that appears to have been overlooked by commentators is the relationship between Colossians 2:14 to 2:13. Much could be said of how the

51 BAGD, 2060.

52 For an overview of interpretations on Colossians 2:14 see, Roy Yates, “Colossians 2:14: Metaphor of Forgiveness,” *Biblica* 71 (1990): 248-59. Yates offers a “proposed solution” to the quandary of making sense of Paul’s language and thought here. He suggests “a mystical assent” view that sees the τοῖς δόγμασιν as pointing to the ascetic rules and ceremonial ordinances described in 2:16-20 that are supposedly the means for arriving at true mystical (contra the flesh) spirituality (256-57). Paul previously unfolds a Christology that dismantles this practice of supposed Christian spirituality by emphasizing that the Gentile Colossians have been “reconciled in [Christ’s] body of flesh” (1:22).

53 Peter T. O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Publishing, 1982), 124-25; Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 209-11.

54 O’Brien, *Ephesians*, 197; Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 210.

55 Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 210; On the use of Romans 1:32, see James D. G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 165; Romans 1:32, “Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”

56 Seitz, *Colossians*, 128-29; see also John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians*, *Classic Commentary Library* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957; reprint, 1856), 166-67, who recounts a possible view that “supposes the handwriting to be the broken covenant which God originally made with Adam.” Eadie acknowledges this position within the history of interpretation, but is inclined to understanding the indebtedness to the Mosaic Law which is an indictment not only against Israel, but all of humanity.

57 Seitz, *Colossians*, 129.

latter can inform the former, but I will give attention to one particular point. In Colossians 2:14, Paul uses “trespasses” (παράπτωμα) twice. The first instance speaks towards the Gentiles’ “death” (νεκρός, in their τοῖς παραπτώμασιν. The second instance declares God’s forgiveness for “all our trespasses” (ἡμῖν πάντα τὰ παραπτώματα), which comes by way of Christ’s cross and its cancellation of humanity’s debt in view of God’s “decrees.” It seems that ceiro,grafon (certificate of indebtedness) should correspond to the “trespasses” that brought “death.” Although undeniable overlap can be observed in Colossians 2:13 with Ephesians 2:1, 4-5, one is compelled to consider if Paul is also working within the Adam-Christ analogy akin to Romans 5:12-21 given the Genesis 1-3 background already established.

O’Brien notes that when Paul uses the plural, “trespasses,” it is in reference to actual sins that people commit against the will or law of God, but when he makes the word singular, it describes Adam’s disobedience as witnessed in Romans 5:15-18.<sup>58</sup> In Romans 5:15, the Apostle Paul enlists παράπτωμα instead of ἁμαρτία as he begins in Romans 5:12. These two words appear to be synonymous of the “one man’s” disobedience that ushered death into the world. To reinforce Seitz’s view that Colossians 2:14 is not concerned with the Mosaic Law, Paul likewise emphasizes the point that Adam’s deathly “trespass” brought sin and death into the world “before the law was given” (Rom 5:13). If a fine distinction must be made between Paul’s plural and singular usage of παράπτωμα, then it can be assumed that the τοῖς παραπτώμασιν of Colossians 2:14, wherein the Gentiles were “dead” could perhaps be associated with Paul’s teaching in Romans 5:12 that “death spread to all men because all sinned (ἥμαρτον).” Similarly restated in Romans 5:15, Paul says that “many died through one man’s trespass (παραπτώματι).”

In sum, Adam’s trespass brought sin and death into the world, resulting in humanity’s inheritance of the curse/curses because they committed trespasses and continued in sin. Therefore, even if “trespasses” is plural in Colossians 2:14, this form does not necessarily create distance from the Adam-Christ link antecedent to the Law in Romans 5:12-21, though overlap can also be argued with Ephesians 2:1-5 where the Mosaic Law is traditionally understood in view. As Seitz reflects,

Working from the one cross of Christ, he describes a debt cancellation that reaches back to Adam and encloses both the circumcised who reflected long on the character of debt and guilt, as well as the uncircumcised, who Paul nevertheless believes, on the basis of Gen 2-3, will grasp what he is intending to say: that one cross avails for both Jew and Gentile. . . . The one bond that against “us” (Jew and Gentile) was revealed in the Genesis account of the disobedience of Adam. The new Adam canceled that bond when he nailed it to the cross in his own dying and rising. He evacuated it and its force.<sup>59</sup>

## **INJUNCTIONS FOR WIVES AND HUSBANDS CLOTHED IN THE RENEWED IMAGE**

How does Paul’s permeated use of Genesis in Colossians affect one’s interpretation of his meaning in the so-called “household table” in Colossians 3:18-4:1? More particularly, how does one approach the injunctions to wives and husbands in 3:18-19 given its close literary proximity to the creation/new creation language that resurfaces explicitly in 3:10? Beetham, Beale, and Fee all identify 3:10 as

<sup>58</sup> O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 122; idem, *Ephesians*, 56-57.

<sup>59</sup> Seitz, *Colossians*, 130-31.

a clear intertextual allusion/echo to Genesis 1:26-27. Would it be appropriate to divorce Paul's direct address to wives and husbands in Colossians 3:18-19 from considering the ground of his exhortations in the declaration of "new humanity" in 3:10 and against the scriptural horizon of Genesis 1-3? Putting asunder these two texts seems all the more problematic when one notices that Paul has omitted "male and female" from his "one in Christ" list in 3:11 whereas he included them in the parallel passage in Galatians 3:28-29.

### *The Household Code: Greco or Garden?*

For many commentators, the literary unit of "new life in Christ" beginning in Colossians 3:1 stops at 3:17. For example, O'Brien says that 3:18-4:1 "is introduced without any connecting particle and constitutes an independent, self-contained paraenetic unit."<sup>60</sup> Dunn likewise observes that "it has the appearance of a free-standing unit."<sup>61</sup> Besides structural analysis, others have understood this section as a stand-alone passage because commentators have identified its source in the Greco-Roman culture or Hellenistic Judaism versions of the "household code." Representative of a typical form-critical approach is Eduard Lohse, who considers 3:18-4:1 "a self-contained and clearly delimited section within the letter."<sup>62</sup> This section is packaged as such because its source is found in Hellenistic Judaism, and on these terms, Lohse suggests that the unit is "the oldest Christian 'rule for the household'—it is clearly discernible how the ethical teaching was adopted and Christianized."<sup>63</sup> In slight contrast, Roy Yates proves to be somewhat of an exception. He believes that 3:1-4:6 is a complete paraenetic section, but still maintains that "the ethical lists, the household code, and the *topoi*, [have their] antecedents in Hellenistic and Jewish religious life."<sup>64</sup>

Against such prevailing views, there are good textual reasons to consider Paul's injunctions in particular to wives and husbands (3:18-19) as still part of the ethical and practical overflow of 3:1-17 for those who have "put on the new self" in Christ. In the first place, as previously mentioned, the absence of "male/female" in Paul's list in 3:11 anticipates the special attention they will receive shortly in 3:18-19. "Slaves" are referenced twice between 3:11 and 3:22, but this most likely is due to Colossians' relationship to Philemon and Paul's hopes for Onesimus (4:9).<sup>65</sup>

Second, rather than treating 3:17 as a full stop and considering 3:18-4:1 as grammatically disconnected, the verse can be understood as a hinge text.<sup>66</sup> Paul's admonition to do whatever one does, whether in "word or deed," to do it in "the name of the Lord Jesus" can look backwards and point

60 O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 214, 219.

61 Dunn, *Colossians and Philemon*, 242.

62 Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, 154.

63 *Ibid.*, 156.

64 Roy Yates, "The Christian Way of Life: The Paraenetic Material in Colossians 3:1-4:6," *Evangelical Quarterly* 63 (1991): 251.

65 Seitz takes this position, "These are categories of the old Adam. They remain as renewal is taking place, but they are no longer determinative. They cannot have the place of priority they once had. A new denominating is in place. In my view 'male and female' are not in the list here because Paul will be speaking about them very shortly. In the case of Gal 3:28, Paul is in the context of Abraham and his offspring, not Gen. 3." Seitz, *Colossians*, 160.

66 One possible path of grammatical argument could be in viewing the conjunction *kai* that sits in the first position in 3:17 as a continuative that does not intend to isolate 3:1-16 from 3:18-4:1, but rather, keeps Paul's thought moving by way of a brief digression in 3:17 from a focus upon the implications of the "new self" for Christians' "word(s)" to their "deeds" in the name of the Lord Jesus. For concise comments on the syntax of 3:17, see Constantine R. Campbell, *Colossians and Philemon: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 60-61), 2013.

forwards. In 3:5-16, the Apostle Paul has placed extra emphasis upon the speech and words of those who live in the “new self.”<sup>67</sup> As he digresses in 3:17, Paul reflects upon the ethical and communal exhortations that are “word-based” and then glances onwards into the “deeds” or “duties” of the Christian social order. Paul also introduces the verbiage of “in the Lord” in 3:17 that becomes undeniably connected to the various “deeds” to be done “in the name of the Lord” in 3:18-4:1. In the nine verses of 3:18-4:1, nine instances of κύριος occur.<sup>68</sup> This textual dynamic alone ought to be sufficient evidence to guard against compartmentalization of the so-called “household code.” On these grounds, Seitz remains unconvinced that Paul is simply Christianizing a preexistent Greco-Roman “household table.” Paul’s formulation is too distinct both in order and theological qualification. Instead, this section continues Paul’s flow of thought of the full livelihood of the “new self.” He writes, “Doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus includes what is fitting, pleasing, and reverent to the Lord, within the family of his new designing. Proper service and proper justice are within the single domain of the Lord Christ (3:24).”<sup>69</sup>

If one will grant that the OT’s material influence upon Colossians finds its primary locus in Genesis 1-3, then Paul’s transition to address “the new household in Christ” can hardly be nothing more than prescribing Christian motivations in the midst of tolerating first-century social structures and duties.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, the “new self” in 3:10 that now clothes wives and husbands “in the Lord Jesus” is best understood as a person’s “new nature” whereby the imago Dei is set free from the “old self” (“old

67 For example: “slander,” “obscene talk from your mouth” (3:8); “do not lie to one another” (3:9); “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (3:16); “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (3:16).

68 “Fitting in the Lord [ἐν κυρίῳ]” (3:18); “this pleases the Lord [ἐν κυρίῳ]” (3:20); “earthly masters [κυρίους]” (3:22); “fearing the Lord [τὸν κύριον]” (3:22); “work heartily, as for the Lord [τῷ κυρίῳ]” (3:23); “knowing that from the Lord [ἀπὸ κυρίου]” (3:24); “serving the Lord Christ [τῷ κυρίῳ Χριστῷ]” (3:24); “Masters [Οἱ κύριοι]” (4:1); “Master [κύριον] in heaven” (4:1).

69 Ibid., 168; against the standard form-critical assessment, see also the recent critical work of James P. Hering, who argues similarly for the Colossians’ *Haustafel* to be included within the overall theological message of Paul’s letter instead of viewed as something primarily imported into Colossians. Regarding 3:17, Hering contends that the *Haustafel* is the place where Colossians’ preoccupation with the Lordship of Christ theme finds concrete application: “The *kurios* language provides a literary link to the broader letter’s vision of Christ’s dominion. It is in the HT where we find this theological aspect taking concrete, ethical form. The κυρίου Χριστός assumes the central position of influence, which then creates the possibility to cast common relations in a truly Christian manner.” James P. Hering, *The Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln in Theological Context: An Analysis of Their Origins, Relationship, and Message, American University Studies* (NY: Peter Lang, 2007), 77.

70 Though not alone in defense of this view, one can consult, I. Howard Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:21-33,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed., eds. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005), 186. Interestingly, Marshall admits upfront that “Greco-Roman ‘household tables’ offer no precise parallels to the New Testament material, although the general pattern of giving teachings structured according to household roles, addressed to the same three pairs of people and inculcating reciprocal duties, can be traced back to Aristotle.” This textual observation does not seem to generate for him the same impulse heard earlier from John Behr, who considers methodologies deficient that locate the source of Paul’s thought in extrabiblical sources without having first exhausted the avenues for OT explanation. See Behr, “Colossians 1:13-20: A Chiasmic Reading,” 247. Similar to Marshall’s admission, Hering’s intensive study on the *Haustafeln* in Colossians and Ephesians shows that the form-critical approach cannot account for the unique features of the “household code” in Colossians, despite some overlapping features to ancient, extrabiblical texts. As noted above, Hering’s thesis is that the *Haustafel* in 3:18-4:1 can only be truly accounted for as the product of Paul’s sustained Christian theological reflection and message for the entire epistle. Hering, *The Colossian and Ephesian Haustafeln in Theological Context*, 2-4, 61.

Adam”) with its practices, and is now being renewed in knowledge.<sup>71</sup> Even “knowledge,” Beale notes, “may echo the Genesis context, where ‘knowledge’ was at the heart of the fall” (Gen 2:17).<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, the clothing/garmenting imagery in connection with “image” certainly also has its bearings in Genesis 1-3.<sup>73</sup> With these aspects in mind, Seitz offers a compelling reflection upon the terrain he has trekked thus far in favor of including the so-called “household code” as an integral, if not inevitable, unit within a grander scheme of the scriptural world of Genesis for the letter to the Colossians:

Given the Gen 1-3 background of so much of this letter—in my view going back at least to the decrees of the writ against us in Col 2:13[14]; and before that, to the relationship of the Son to the invisible God in 1:15-20 (“image,” “firstborn of creation,” “beginning”); and before that, to the fruitful multiplying of the gospel in 1:6—it is difficult to leave this unit out of the same general pattern.<sup>74</sup>

If Seitz is correct, then the proper question would be, “Is Paul describing ‘the new household in Christ’ as it would have been in Eden if Adam’s disobedience had been delayed or not occurred at all?”<sup>75</sup>

### ***On Wives and Husbands***

From this vantage point, Paul’s injunctions follow the pattern of God’s “decrees” (Col 2:14) addressing the wives first and then the husbands to show that as they have “put on the new self” in Christ, the curse upon the household estate can be reversed (Gen 3:14-19).<sup>76</sup> Thus, when Paul delivers the exhortation in Colossians 3:18, “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord,” he is not commending them to adapt to the patriarchy of their culture and time so long as it lasts; rather, Paul’s concern for wifely submission is the fulfillment of a role that has pre-Fall roots, though it has since

71 Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (NY: T&T Clark, 2004), 164-65; see also Seitz, *Colossians*, 158-59; Beetham, *Echoes*, 231-45; Beale, “Colossians,” 865-68; Some have argued for a more corporate identity of “new man” (ἀνθρώπου) that is concerned with the bringing together of Jew and Gentile in Christ envisioned in Ephesians 2:15. Some examples are: O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 190-92; Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 267-68, and Darrell L. Bock, “‘The New Man’ as Community in Colossians and Ephesians,” in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands: Biblical and Leadership Studies in Honor of Donald K. Campbell*, eds. Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 158-60.

72 Beale, “Colossians,” 866; see also, Seitz, *Colossians*, 159. “We are being renewed in knowledge—not of the tree of knowledge—that brings about renewal, as the garments of our old Adam are being replaced by the garments of Christ the new Adam. The garmented fellowship enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the fall is here intimated, as Christ restores the fellowship for us that he enjoys with the Father, ‘highly exalted’ in consequence of his sacrifice on our behalf. ‘Knowledge’ here is the form of Christian provisioning that stands in contrast to the deathly knowledge in disobedience.”

73 Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus*, 152-71; Beale, “Colossians,” 866-68; Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 310-23, who affirms Kim and also the view that in Col 3:9-10 “the permanent spiritual reality referred to involves putting on *the new self*, not Christ.” In other words, Campbell’s exegetical analysis indicates that the “clothing” imagery is associated with Paul’s concept of union with Christ, whereby men and women receive “new natures” out which Paul issues forth ethical injunctions.

74 Seitz, *Colossians*, 171.

75 *Ibid.*, 148.

76 *Ibid.*, 148, 171; Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 292-93, recognizes that Col 3:18-4:1 ought to be understood as exhortations to fulfill particular roles within the “new humanity” from 3:10.

been garmented in the corrupt nature of the “old man/Adam.” But, now as a beneficiary in Christ’s new creation, the call to return to this role’s rightful creation-design is a response that can be enacted clothed in the power of the “new self” with a renewed image in true knowledge “after the image of its creator.” This reading would also affirm the interpretation of God’s “decree” of the curse in Genesis 3:16 that the woman would be plagued with the “desire” to usurp her husband’s headship as had been committed already in her yielding to the temptation of the serpent.<sup>77</sup> Paul’s tag line, “as is fitting in the Lord,” is not a Christian consolation for endurance underneath a form of social, hierarchical domination, but instead, harkens back to what the LORD God intended to be “fitting” for the wife in the Garden in relation to her husband before there was sin, corruption, and death. As George Knight comments, “To put it theologically, redemption in Christ undergirds and commends the wife’s submission to her husband according to God’s design at creation rather than, as some feminists claim, overturning a submission rooted only in the fall.”<sup>78</sup>

Seitz posits that “as is fitting in the Lord” also doubles for both sides of Paul’s injunctions.<sup>79</sup> Just as the wife’s submission is “fitting in the Lord” as she experiences the renewal of the “image” in Christ, so also it is “fitting in the Lord” for her husband to love her well according to his own role in a pre-Fall order (Col 3:19). Though the virtue of “love” is king in today’s world, the word must mean something that does not relativize all distinctions and roles. Perhaps no different than when some people treat the coexistence of “truth and love” as a zero-sum game, others can apply the same principle in like manner to the exhortation for husbands to love their wives as an implicit command to discard the office of headship in the home.<sup>80</sup> Further, against this Genesis canvas, the scriptural world of Genesis 3 continues to make its presence known when the Apostle Paul adds, “and do not be harsh with them.” As the wife submits “in the Lord” (3:10, 17), he must also set aside the domineering temptations of the “old self” to see the curse of Adam’s trespass undone. Moreover, Paul has already identified “putting on the new self” in 3:10 with “putting on love” in 3:14, which he says, “binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger summarize the effects of the curse in Genesis 3:16 as, “The loving harmony that prevailed before the fall will be replaced by a pattern of struggle in which the woman will seek to exert control over her husband (interpreting ‘desire’ as ‘desire for control,’ cf. Gen 4:7), who will respond by asserting his authority.”<sup>81</sup> But Paul has gospel news for this broken household

77 For a brief defense of this translation of Genesis 3:16, see Ray C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 108-9. One may also consult, Susan T. Foh, “What is the Woman’s Desire?” *Westminster Theological Journal* 37 (1975): 376-83; Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 145-47; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 81-82; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1 (Nashville: B&H, 2002), 250-52; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 201-2; John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 107-8.

78 George W. Knight III, “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 174; cf. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Margaret E. Köstenberger, *God’s Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 47-48.

79 Seitz, *Colossians*, 172; cf., Eadie, *Colossians*, 259, who similarly ponders, “It would almost seem, however, as if the phrase, ‘as is fitting in the Lord,’ enforced both the duty recorded before it, and that which stands after it.”

80 On the issue of “truth and love” as a zero-sum game, see the immensely helpful chapter by D. A. Carson, “The Church and Christian Truth Claims,” in *The Intolerance of Tolerance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 97-126.

81 Köstenberger and Köstenberger, *God’s Design for Man and Woman*, 47. See fn. 77 for additional resources on this translation/interpretation of the curse in Genesis 3:16.

filled with strife and perennial conflict. By “putting on the new self,” the husband can love his wife “as is fitting in the Lord” both by not failing to execute godly leadership whereas Adam passively resided in the background surrendering Eve to the craftiness of the serpent and by resisting harshly domination, which should be unnecessary with a wife who likewise shares in the renewal of the “image” in true “knowledge” in Christ, finding the spiritual power to fulfill her God-designed role “in the name of the Lord.”<sup>82</sup> Conversely, wifely submission underneath her husband’s “law of love,” so to speak, should be quite natural and “fitting” as the kind of biblical submission God intended in Genesis 1-2 “finds its divinely ordered purpose.”<sup>83</sup>

## CONCLUSION

After the Fall, Adam and Eve knew their nakedness and “sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths” (Gen 3:7). Following God’s “decree” of the curses, the LORD God rejected their self-made clothing; He Himself “made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (Gen 3:21). These garments are the ones Paul summons them “to strip off/put off” (ἀπεκδυσάμενοι) in Colossians 3:9.<sup>84</sup> Yet as one set of clothes is removed, another is put on. And just as Adam and Eve were unable to make their own coverings in Genesis 3:7 acceptable unto God, so also men and women today still wearing the “old self” cannot change their spiritual clothes by themselves. Just as the LORD God Himself had to make acceptable garments for the first husband and wife before their exile east of Eden, so also husbands and wives today must be clothed by God in Christ, who will dress them in the image of his Son, the Image of the invisible God (Col 1:15) and transfer them back into the Son’s kingdom (Col 1:13-14). In doing so, wives and husbands will find their “images” renewed in right knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ and his gospel. These “clothes” will “correspond to that divine intention before the fall.”<sup>85</sup>

In a passage that encompasses the train of Paul’s Genesis-driven thought beyond 3:18-19 into 4:1, Seitz’s condensed reflection serves as a “fitting” summary for conclusion and further consideration:

But in this case, the sequence wives, husbands, children, slaves tracks with the decrees of Gen 3. Their effects are now reversed because a new life has been made available in Christ. Wives submit to husbands as is fitting in the Lord, as against them both acting independently in disobedience. Husbands love their wives and do not seek to assign them blame. Children (Eve is the mother of all) are to obey parents and not unleash tragic violence we see in Gen 4-11. Toil is now not under curse but can be serving the Lord with proper hopefulness of inheritance (Col 3:24). This would also explain why Paul does not include the Galatians pairing in Col

82 Ibid., 48; Seitz, *Colossians*, 172, “To be subject is not to be subjugated.” Seitz also carefully notes, “To say that a wife is to be subject to her husband and that he must love her as his chief responsibility stands under what Paul has stated thus far. The submission of the wife is not the obedience of the child, which is in turn due both parents equally. Paul adds to the exhortation to love the charge not to be harsh, for this is inconsistent with the fivefold garment set forth in 3:12 with its elaborations in 3:13-16” (173).

83 Seitz, *Colossians*, 172.

84 Moo, *Colossians and Philemon*, 266; BAGD, 844. The word ἀπεκδύομαι typically means “to take off, strip off” clothing.

85 Seitz, *Colossians*, 147; he goes on to say, “Instead of a tree of knowledge wrongly chosen and so the means of humanity’s disobedience, we have reference in 3:10 to renewal in knowledge of a different, life-giving kind. This knowledge is the gospel itself and Paul’s conveyance of it to the Colossians.”

3:11 (“neither male nor female”), for here the context is one of a proper new Adam in Christ and the conditions of being male and female in him. He means to get to that after his description of the “new man that is being renewed in knowledge after the image of the creator” (3:10). And he does, still speaking of the slave but defining his toil in a different world than the world east of Eden.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 148.



# CONFRONTING THE TRANSGENDER STORM: NEW COVENANT REFLECTIONS ON DEUTERONOMY 22:5

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## 1. THE RISING STORM

**A** gender identity crisis is sweeping across our land. This study seeks to help the church assess biblically and confront lovingly yet truthfully the rising storm of transgender issues confronting our culture.<sup>1</sup> The American Psychological Association<sup>2</sup> defines “sex” as “a person’s biological status” that “is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex” and that is identified by “sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia.” In contrast, the APA states that “gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex.” While one’s biological sex is fixed by nature, this definition treats gender as a culturally bound category, so that what is gender normative in one culture may legitimately stand against what is or was gender normative in another culture or age. With this, the APA further stresses the need to distinguish persons’ biological sex from their “gender identity,” which may be “male, female, or transgender.” And then we must account for persons’ “gender expression” through things like

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1 The author presented an earlier draft of this study as a sermon at Bethlehem College & Seminary, 15 November 2015. You can access a video of the message at <http://bcsmn.edu/index.php/bcs-media/chapel-messages/item/transgender>. Jason S. DeRouchie (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) serves as Associate Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Bethlehem College & Seminary in Minneapolis, MN. His resource website is at [derouchie-meyer.org](http://derouchie-meyer.org), and he is the author and editor of numerous articles and books, including *What the Old Testament Authors Really Cared About: A Survey of Jesus’ Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2013) and the forthcoming *Understanding and Applying the Old Testament: 12 Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2017). DeRouchie serves on the peer review board for *JBMW*.

2 “Definition of Terms,” an excerpt from “The Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients,” adopted by the American Psychological Association Council of Representatives, February 18–20, 2011, <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexuality-definitions.pdf>.

clothing, communication patterns, and interests, which may or may not reflect one's gender identity or biological sex.

Before readying this study, I personally did not realize how serious the transgender issue is in our day. Yet now I see that it is massive, and I do not believe that the church can ignore it.<sup>3</sup> In 2013 California became the first state in the Union to require that public schools allow transgender students to use the bathrooms and play on the sports teams that correspond with their personal gender identities.<sup>4</sup> Since then there has been a growing wave of debate across the country, and at the last elections numerous states went to the polls to decide whether bath- and locker room access would be governed by biological sex or gender identity. A recent case in the Chicago area may actually make it to the federal courts.<sup>5</sup>

I remember as a youth standing in awe of Bruce Jenner's athletic ability as I watched replays of his decathlon gold medal at the Montreal 1976 Summer Olympics. Now he (or is it she?) and a subset of social media are calling upon me and my children to call him Cait and to even follow *Glamour* magazine in celebrating him as "woman of the year."<sup>6</sup>

In the fall of 2015 in Ontario, Canada, the sex-education curriculum began introducing 8th graders to six different genders and four options for sexual orientation.<sup>7</sup> As to gender, you can be male, female, two-spirited, transgender, transsexual, or intersex. Sexual orientation can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual.

Similarly, since the fall of 2014, the Lincoln, NE, public school system began training its teachers

3 The Southern Baptist Convention is at the forefront of this response. In 2014 it passed a resolution "On Transgender Identity" that is filled with biblical conviction and Christian love: <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2250/on-transgender-identity> (drafted by Denny Burk and Andrew T. Walker). With this, the website for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention is loaded with helpful resources to help churches and individuals think and respond Christianly to this debacle (<http://erlc.com/>). Recently two leaders have written on this issue in helpful, bold, biblically grounded, culturally relevant, and loving ways: Denny Burk, *What is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), esp. 157–84; idem, "Training Our Kids in a Transgender World," in *Good: The Joy of Christian Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Owen Strachen and Jonathan Parnell (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2014), 87–102; R. Albert Mohler Jr., *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, & the Very Meaning of Right & Wrong* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2015), esp. 67–84.

4 See the California legislative counsel's digest, "AB-1266 Pupil Rights: Sex-Segregated School Programs and Activities," approved by the governor on 12 August 2013, [https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140AB1266](https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB1266). For a favorable response from a transgender advocate, see Parker Marie Molloy, "California's School Success and Opportunity Act (AB1266) Will Save Lives," *Huffington Post*, released 21 August 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/parker-marie-molloy/californias-school-success-and-opportunity-act-\\_b\\_3786798.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/parker-marie-molloy/californias-school-success-and-opportunity-act-_b_3786798.html).

5 Ed Payne and John Newsome, "U.S.: Illinois Transgender Student Must Get Full Locker Room Access," *Cable News Network* (CNN), 3 November 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/03/us/illinois-school-district-transgender-ruling/>; Mitch Smith and Monica Davey, "Illinois District Violated Transgender Student's Rights, U.S. Says," *The New York Times*, 2 November 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/03/us/illinois-district-violated-transgender-students-rights-us-says.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/03/us/illinois-district-violated-transgender-students-rights-us-says.html?_r=1). For Andrew T. Walker's solid evangelical response, see "The Transgender Movement and Government Overreach: Why It Matters," Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission blog, 5 November 2015, <http://erlc.com/article/the-transgender-movement-and-government-overreach-why-it-matters>.

6 Jenner's identification as a trans woman went public in an April 2015 interview with ABC's *20/20*: Diane Sawyer, "Bruce Jenner: The Interview," *20/20*, 25 April 2015, <http://abc.go.com/shows/2020/listing/2015-04/24-bruce-jenner-the-interview>. Jenner then formally announced the shift from Bruce to Caitlyn in an interview with *Vanity Fair*: Buzz Bissinger, "Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story," *Vanity Fair* July 2015, <http://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/06/caitlyn-jenner-bruce-cover-annie-leibovitz>.

7 Arti Patel, "Ontario's New Sex Ed Curriculum: Exactly What Your Kids Will Learn," *Huffington Post* 25 February 2015, [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/25/ontario-sex-ed-curriculum\\_n\\_6754696.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/02/25/ontario-sex-ed-curriculum_n_6754696.html).

in how to create a gender-neutral or gender-inclusive environment in their classrooms.<sup>8</sup> They give every teacher a handout that includes 12 easy steps to gender inclusiveness, among which are: “Don’t use phrases such as ‘boys and girls,’” and “When you find it necessary to reference gender, say, ‘Boy, girl, both or neither.’”<sup>9</sup>

Sitting in my own home in Minneapolis, MN, I once found it easy to think that the transgender storm was only hitting nearby countries and states and that it was reaching me and my church only from a distance via social media. Now, however, I realize that this is not the case. Indeed, the storm is blowing right at our back door, and for some in my Bethlehem Baptist Church and Bethlehem College & Seminary family, it has entered into the living room. In December 2014, the Minnesota State High School League took up the issue and overwhelmingly approved to open girls’ sports to transgender student athletes in its 500 public schools.<sup>10</sup> As of fall 2015, students born male but who identify themselves as female can now compete as “girls” against girls in sports with no stated restrictions to women’s locker rooms, so long as they have approved written statements from their parents, guardians, or health-care professionals regarding their “consistent or sincerely held gender-related identity.” The lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender (LGBT) movement quips that only this approach supplies “equal access to all students,” and they claim any other view is “bathroom bullying.”

I know that some of you reading this study have yourselves wrestled with gender identity or have been the victim of another’s gender identity crisis. I ache for you, and I long for you to know the healing and wholeness that only Jesus can bring. These matters are deeply personal and often very difficult to talk about, but know that you are not alone. Our God knows your pain and struggle, and I encourage you to find a faithful, Christian leader who can help you find hope in the life-transforming, grace-saturated, pain-overcoming, mercy-filled love and power of God to heal.

8 Margaret Reist, “LPS Staff’s Transgender Training Concerns Parents,” *Lincoln Journal Star* 1 October 2014, [http://journalstar.com/news/local/education/lps-staff-s-transgender-training-concerns-parents/article\\_0b37dd75-758d-50c1-9deb-16901059bc5a.html](http://journalstar.com/news/local/education/lps-staff-s-transgender-training-concerns-parents/article_0b37dd75-758d-50c1-9deb-16901059bc5a.html); cf. Tim Wright, “The New Utopia: A Genderless Society?” *Search for Tom Wright* (a blog), 15 October 2014, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/searchingfortomsawyer/2014/10/the-new-utopia-a-genderless-society/>. The Lincoln Public Schools used guidelines set forth by the Gender Spectrum, a liberal southern California non-profit organization that seeks to create more gender-sensitive and -inclusive environments for all people, especially gender non-conforming and transgender youth: [www.genderspectrum.com](http://www.genderspectrum.com).

9 As would be expected, in world where the God-established binary distinctions of male and female become non-existent, people are forced to reconsider language patterns like personal pronoun use that have stood the test of centuries. R. Albert Mohler Jr. (*We Cannot Be Silent*, 78) has recently noted the way the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools has offered fresh options for your *preferred gender pronoun*. They write: “Some people prefer that you use gender neutral or gender inclusive pronouns when talking to or about them. In English, the most commonly used singular gender neutral pronouns are **ze** (sometimes spelled **zie**) and **hir**. ‘Ze’ is the subject pronoun and is pronounced /zee/, and ‘hir’ is the object and possessive pronoun and is pronounced /heer/. This is how they are used: ‘Chris is the tallest person in class, and ze is also the fastest runner.’ ‘Tanzen is going to Hawaii over break with hir parents. I’m so jealous of hir.’” (“What the heck is a ‘PGP’?” <http://www.gsafewi.org/wp-content/uploads/What-the-heck-is-a-PGP1.pdf>)

10 The Minnesota State High School League details their new policy in two areas of their guidelines: “Gender Identity Participation in MSHSL Activities” (<http://www.mshsl.org/mshsl/ParticipationInMSHSLActivities.pdf>) and “Transgender Eligibility Appeal Procedures for a Male and Female (MTF) Student” ([http://www.mshsl.org/mshsl/Participation-InMSHSLActivities12\\_4\\_14.pdf](http://www.mshsl.org/mshsl/Participation-InMSHSLActivities12_4_14.pdf)). For the local news update, see David La Vaque, “High School League Overwhelmingly Approves Transgender Policy,” *Star Tribune* 9 March 2015, <http://www.startribune.com/dec-4-high-school-league-approves-transgender-policy/284783781/>. *The Minnesota Family Council* has delineated the impact of this ruling for MN families: “MSHSL Transgender Policy,” Minnesota Family Council, <http://www.mfc.org/mshsl-transgender-policy/>. The transgender advocate Gender Spectrum (<https://www.genderspectrum.org/explore-topics/education/#more-239>) points approvingly to the “Guidelines for Creating Policies for Transgender Children in Recreational Sports,” *Transgender Law & Policy Institute*, September 2009, [https://www.dropbox.com/s/czdivxw8d9jgjr/trans\\_children\\_in\\_sports.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/czdivxw8d9jgjr/trans_children_in_sports.pdf?dl=0)ldren-in-Recreational-Sports.

I know of one who has had to bear the burden of a parents' divorce due to a father's struggle with cross-dressing and female gender identity. May the Lord care for the broken hearts of all involved, lead this father to repentance and healing from his gender identity crisis, and grant this son great wisdom as he seeks to operate as both child and parent. I know of another lady who, at the young age of 16, was seduced into a long-standing relationship by a woman claiming to be a man. Today this lady bears the scars of this past relationship, while also celebrating the redemptive, healing work of Christ in her own life. In Jesus we gain a new identity and freedom to live in God's world God's way for God's glory.

## 2. THE OT LAW AND THE CHRISTIAN

We begin our confrontation of the transgender storm in Deuteronomy 22:5. As Christians today, we are not under the old covenant law (Rom 6:14; 1 Cor 9:20–21; Gal 5:18), which means in part that the Mosaic law is no longer the direct and immediate guide or judge of the conduct of God's people.<sup>11</sup> The age of the Mosaic law covenant has come to an end in Christ, so that the law itself has ceased from having a central and determinative role among God's people (Rom 10:4; 2 Cor 3:4–18; Gal 3:15–4:7).<sup>12</sup> Yet the law of Moses still serves Christians by providing a prophetic witness to Christ and by clarifying the character of God and how deep and wide love for God and neighbor goes.<sup>13</sup>

While Christians are not legally bound to the Mosaic law, we do not throw out the law itself. Indeed, Moses himself predicted that in the day when God would circumcise hearts and empower love (Deut 30:6), God's people would hear YHWH's voice and keep all the commands Moses gave in Deuteronomy (Deut 30:8). But as Jesus declared in Matthew 5:17–19, while all the commanding parts of the Mosaic law still matter for Christ-followers, we only appropriate them through Christ's law-fulfillment. Only when we consider the impact Christ's work has on any given law can we begin to consider the lasting significance of that law for believers.

With this, Paul asserts that through our love for others Christians fulfill the law and that all the commandments—not just moral laws or civil laws but all the laws—are fulfilled in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom 13:8–10). Paul told Timothy that “all Scripture [including the OT] is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). The OT still speaks to Christians. It was Jesus and Paul's only Bible, and these “sacred writings . . . are able to make you [and me] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). In this vein, this study draws from an OT law, which I will interpret in order to address the transgender questions that are in fresh ways confronting the church of Christ Jesus.

I follow a three-step process in establishing the lasting significance of any OT law for Christians:<sup>14</sup>

11 So too Douglas J. Moo, “A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Five Views on the Law and Gospel*, ed. Wayne G. Strickland, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 343; cf. 375.

12 *Ibid.*, 359.

13 For more on this approach to a Christian's relationship to OT law, see David A. Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian: A Compromise,” *JETS* 34.3 (1991): 321–34; Moo, “A Modified Lutheran View,” 317–76; Tom Wells and Fred G. Zaspel, *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2002), 77–160, esp. 126–27, 157–60; Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions About Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010); Brian S. Rosner, *Keeping the Commandments of God*, NSBT 31 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013); William W. Combs, “Paul, the Law, and Dispensationalism,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 18 (2013): 19–39.

14 I have adapted some of these guidelines from Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics and the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 314–24 and Dorsey, “The Law of Moses and the Christian,” 332–33.

1. I first determine the law's type and original meaning, significance, and purpose, including all implications.
  2. Next, I determine the theological significance of the law, which includes (a) clarifying what the law tells us about God and his ways, (b) assessing how Christ's law-fulfillment impacts the law, and (c) stating in a single sentence the love principle behind the law.
  3. Finally, I preserve both the portrait of God and the love principle behind the law but change the context, all in light of Christ's new covenant work.
- Let us walk through this process with Deuteronomy 22:5.

### 3. DEUTERONOMY 22:5 IN ITS LITERARY CONTEXT

This verse comes in the second movement of Moses' second Deuteronomic sermon. In chapters 5–11 he tells Israel *what* they are to do—love God and neighbor. Now in chapters 12–26 the detailed “statutes and rules” (12:1; 26:16) clarify *how* they are to do it. Deuteronomy 16:20 summarizes the thrust of the unit: “Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue” (author’s translation). 12:1–16:17 addresses righteousness in community worship; 16:18–18:22 talks about righteousness in community oversight, and 19:1–26:15 gives instruction on righteousness in daily community life. This first part of chapter 22 simply overviews various, unrelated laws that consider the right way to live. Into this context, we read in Deuteronomy 22:5: *“A woman shall not wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man put on a woman’s cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.”*

### 4. DEUTERONOMY 22:5—THE LAW’S TYPE AND ORIGINAL MEANING, SIGNIFICANCE, AND PURPOSE

God gave Deuteronomy 22:5 for the benefit of all Christians, but he did not originally give it to us. There is a distance between the church and this command in that it was originally revealed to Israel under a different covenant and time in redemptive history. As such, as Christians we must seek first to determine the law’s type and original meaning, significance, and purpose in the Mosaic covenant.

Formally this law is more like the ones in vv. 9–12 than the ones in vv. 1–4 and vv. 6–8. Specifically, it is an apodictic rather than casuistic law, stating a general principle to guide life rather than supplying an “if or when-then” scenario in which the prohibition becomes operative. The principle itself seems less a core truth like “you shall never commit adultery” and more a secondary application of a core truth. On the surface, the prohibition relates to what the APA terms “gender expression”—“the way a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture” through things like dress.<sup>15</sup> At a deeper level, however, the law assumes a more fundamental rule—that there are only two biological sexes—male and female—and that what is gender normative in God’s world is that one’s biological sex should govern both one’s gender identity and expression. Before divine wrath is poured out, this text provides a kind corrective to gender confusion and transgender identity.

Deuteronomy 22:5 stands independent of its context and simply comes to us as two prohibitions followed by a single motivation clause. In Hebrew, there are two types of negative commands—imme-

<sup>15</sup> APA, “Definition of Terms,” <https://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/sexuality-definitions.pdf>.

diate (*al*) and durative (*lō*), and God chose to frame these prohibitions as durative, so that we should read the “not” as a “never”: “A woman shall *never* wear a man’s garment, nor shall a man *ever* put on a woman’s cloak.” From God’s perspective, there is never a permissible time for the type of cross-dressing addressed in this passage.

Digging deeper into this law, we should note that the term translated “man” is *geber* (“strong man”) and not the more common *’ish*. Some have suggested that *geber* means “warrior” here (cf. 1 Sam 1:27; Ezek 32:27),<sup>16</sup> but this meaning is more associated with the adjective *gibbôr* (“mighty one,” cf. Gen 10:8–9; Deut 10:17). Furthermore, within the Pentateuch all other instances of *geber* simply overlap in meaning with *’ish*, showing up in contexts that distinguish the men from the young (Exod 10:7, 11) or from women and children (12:37).<sup>17</sup> The clear difference between *geber* and *’ish* is that, when paralleled with “woman,” *’ish* can often mean “husband,” whereas *geber* never does in any of its twenty-four OT uses. At the very least, then, this law concerning male-female relationships is not restricted to husbands and wives and thus family law but speaks to the broader society and community. *From God’s perspective, maleness and femaleness bears implications beyond the home or gathered worshiping community. It also impacts daily life in society.*

The term used here for the woman’s “cloak” (*šimlāh*) is restrictive, pointing specifically to the outer wrapper or mantle that a female would wear.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, the term rendered “garment” (*keli*) in relation to a man is broader and suggests any object associated with men—whether clothing (1 Sam 21:6), vessel (1 Kgs 10:21), ornament (Gen 24:53), or piece of equipment (Num 19:18) that was specifically associated with men.<sup>19</sup> This could even include weapons of war (Gen 49:5; Deut 1:41; Judg 9:54), but it was in no way limited here. Within Israelite culture, then, there were certain styles of dress, ornaments, or items that distinguished men and women. As such, two things appear to be at stake in this law:

1. Everyone needed to let their gender expression align with their biological sex, and
2. Everyone needed to guard against gender confusion, wherein others could wrongly perceive a man to be a woman and a woman to be a man based on dress.

Whether due to pagan religious activity or to a desire to engage in roles restricted to the opposite sex, such practices opposed any form of Godliness.<sup>20</sup>

Note now the motivation for heeding the command (= *ki* clause). God calls the type of cross-dressing, transvestite practice, and role confusion addressed here an “abomination to the LORD.”<sup>21</sup> This

16 E.g., J. Gordon McConville, *Deuteronomy*, AOTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 336–37.

17 “יִשְׁבֹּגְוִי,” HALOT, 1:175. which I will interpret in order to address the ehind of the law, has let his new covenant mercy move in both of our hearts. ok forwar

18 “הַלְמָשׁ,” HALOT, 3:1337.

19 “קִיבֹ,” HALOT, 2:478.

20 H. A. Hoffner Jr. argues that the transgender practices evidenced here were potentially connected to the pagan religious rites or magical practices of Israel’s neighbors (“Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity,” *JBL* 85 [1966]: 326–34). While possible, nothing in Deuteronomy 22 explicitly links the text to cultic ritual (so too P. J. Harland, “Menswear and Womenswear: A Study of Deuteronomy 22:5,” *ExpTim* 110 [1998]: 74–75). For further reflections on ancient Israel’s problem of cross-dressing, see N. S. Fox, “Gender Transformation and Transgression: Contextualizing the Prohibition of Cross-Dressing in Deuteronomy 22:5,” in *Mishneh Todah: Studies in Deuteronomy and Its Cultural Environment in Honor of Jeffrey H. Tigay*, ed. N. S. Fox, D. A. Glat-Gilad, and M. J. Williams (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 49–71.

21 Similarly, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 treat homosexuality as an abomination to the YHWH, and this sin is clearly associated with the gender crisis that Deuteronomy 22:5 addresses (cf. the use of *malakos* [“effeminate”] in 1 Cor 6:9 for the passive or receiving party in a same sex relationship).

statement highlights the gravity of the offense. Within Deuteronomy sins tagged abominable include the crimes of idolatry (Deut 7:25–26; 12:31; 13:14; 17:1, 4; 20:18; 27:15; 32:16) and witchcraft (18:9, 12) and the offense of dishonest gain whether at the criminal, civil, or family level (25:16). What is it about idolatry, witchcraft, and dishonesty that make them abominable to the Lord? Idolatry gives glory to someone other than YHWH; witchcraft looks to means other than God’s word to discern his will or what will happen in the future, and dishonest gain diminishes the value of God’s image in others.<sup>22</sup> We must conclude, therefore, that something about transgender expression and gender confusion directly counters the very nature of God.

This raises the likelihood that what makes transgenderism abominable is that it maligns humanity’s ability to reflect, resemble, and represent God rightly in this world. In Genesis 1 we are told that God created both males and females equal in their opportunity to relate to God, equal in their call to rule over God’s world; equal in their responsibility to image God in ever-increasing ways on a global scale, and equal in their dependence on God to fulfil the mission. Nevertheless, already in Genesis 1, there are two distinct biological sexes—male and female, and each plays different roles in being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth with God’s image. From the beginning the Bible understands that men and women display God in ways that are at times different but that are always complementary.

When we get to Genesis 2, these role distinctions are developed further. God portrays the paradigm kingdom family to be made of a head and a helper—the male head serving as the primary protector and provider and the leader in servant-hearted love and the female helper supporting, following, and complementing his lead (esp. Gen 2:7, 23 with 2:18). This family structure provides not only the paradigm for marriage but the building block for both the covenant community and the world’s societies. Just as God stands as head over his creation at large and his people in particular, so also the chief creatures—humans as male and female, who alone image God—will distinctively reflect, resemble, and represent this right order in their complementary roles and relationships. It is not just Hosea and Ephesians 5 that highlight the symbolic and doxological nature of gender roles. The Pentateuch itself explicitly identifies the parabolic nature of human marriage and of male-female interpersonal relations when it portrays Israel, God’s covenant partner, as “whoring after” and “committing fornication with” other gods (Exod 34:11–16; Lev 20:4–6; Num 15:38–40; Deut 31:16).

Gender identity and gender expression is about God’s glory and about maintaining the God-created distinctions on earth that in turn point to the ultimate distinction between God and his bride. Just as husbands and wives in the human household and men and women in the collective household of God bear distinct roles and, by this, uniquely display God’s image, so too the creator and Lord of all things is rightly magnified in the lives of males and females when our gender identity and gender expression align perfectly with our God-ordained biological sex. Those born boys are to live and thrive as boys, and those born girls are to live and thrive as girls. When corrupt desires want to alter this course, one must choose with God’s help the path that magnifies the majesty of God best, and that

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<sup>22</sup> Other “abominable” acts in Deuteronomy include eating unclean food (14:3), defective sacrifices or offerings acquired by corruption (17:1; 23:18[19]), and remarrying an ex-wife after she was married to another man (24:4). Why are these abominable to God? (1) All unclean animals appear to have had some association with the behavior or punishment of the serpent in the garden, so eating unclean food identified one with the original God-hostility. (2) Defective sacrifices and offerings gained through corruption meant one was either failing to honor God directly and/or to respect his image in others. (3) As a parable of God’s relationship (ultimately through Christ) with his people, human marriage is extremely significant, and the type of remarriage proposed appears to be so excessively broken that it would hardly depict rightly God’s unrelenting love for his bride.

path is defined in Deuteronomy 22:5.

Let me summarize the purpose of Deuteronomy 22:5 in its original context. God's law against transgender expression sought to maintain divinely-created biological and gender distinctions within the community. The goal of this pursuit was to nurture an environment that properly displays the supremacy of God and the ever-present head-helper distinction between God and the people he is creating for himself.

## 5. DEUTERONOMY 22:5—THE LAW'S THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

I now want to consider this law's lasting theological significance for the church. Here we consider what the law tells us about God, how Christ's law-fulfillment influences this law, and what love-principle is behind the law.

Deuteronomy 22:5 is the fruit of this truth: YHWH is ever passionate to preserve and display right order in his world. This is the essence of his righteousness, and maintaining gender distinctions is an important part of this order. The stress in Genesis 1–2 on the way males and females image God and the Pentateuch's depiction of YHWH's relationship with Israel as a marriage pushes the reader to view one's biological sex and gender identity and expression as first and foremost about God. The rest of the OT highlights this parabolic purpose of sex and gender distinctions in books like Hosea (chs. 1–3; cf. Judg 2:16–17; Isa 1:21; 57:3; Jer 2:2, 20; 3:1; 3:8–11; 31:31–32), and then the same is carried into the NT (see Matt 9:15; 12:38–39; 16:1–4; Mark 2:19; 8:38; Luke 5:34), most clearly where Paul portrays the church as Christ's bride (Eph 5:22–27; cf. Rev 19:7–9; 21:9). *To the level that we flatten the inborn distinctions between maleness and femaleness we flatten the distinctions between the sovereign savior and the saved, between the exalted and the needy, between the blameless one and the sinner.* We take glory away from God and his Christ when we act as though distinctions between men and women are non-existent. And we hurt the entire community both in the way we fail to point them to gospel righteousness and in the way we open them up for God's just wrath.

How does Christ's law-fulfillment impact this law? We can first say that Christ and his followers continued to distinguish men from women. Indeed, Jesus perfectly exemplified maleness in the way that he deeply respected femaleness, standing as the ultimate provider and protector and leader in servant-hearted love. Jesus . . .

1. Respected his mother (Luke 2:41–52; John 2:1–11),
2. Had female disciples (Luke 8:1–3),
3. Sought to protect women from male abuses (Matt 5:27–30, 31–32; 19:3–12; Luke 7:36–50),
4. Portrayed women as models of faith (Matt 25:1–13; Mark 7:24–30; Luke 4:24–26; 11:31; 18:1–8; 21:1–4),
5. Extended care and healing to seemingly insignificant female sufferers (Mark 1:30–31; 5:25–34, 35–43; 7:24–30; Luke 7:11–17; 13:10–17; John 4:1–42; 11:1–44; cf. John 7:53–8:11),
6. Received anointing from women (Luke 7:36–50; John 12:1–8), and
7. Disclosed himself first to women after his resurrection (Matt 28:9; John 20:14–18).

Christ is the substance to which all biblical symbols point, but unlike some pictures such as the

temple and clean and unclean laws, which have reached their terminus in Christ's first appearing, the distinction between males and females will continue at least to the consummation (cf. Eph 5:22–33; 1 Tim 3:4–5). And even then, while earthly marriage will apparently be no more—the picture being overcome by the reality (Matt 22:30), there is no reason to think that the distinction between men and women, heads and helpers within the community of faith, will alter in the new heavens and earth (cf. Rev 21:24, where “kings” are distinguished). Maleness and femaleness will most likely provide an eternal reminder of God's order in reality, wherein he is supreme over all.

Along with this, new covenant teaching maintains role distinctions between men and women, most explicitly in its instructions to husbands and wives (e.g., Eph 5:22–32; 1 Pet 3:1–7) and to local churches regarding their corporate worship, teaching, and leadership (1 Cor 11:1–16; 14:33–35; 1 Tim 2–3; Tit 1:5–16). It also calls for men to live as men, women to live as women, and for the young to be trained to live out the gender role related to their God-given sex (Tit 2:2–6). Paul exhorted Timothy to respect and encourage older men as fathers, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, in all purity (1 Tim 5:1–2). All this instruction assumes that we can rightly identify those who are men and those who are women.

Paul asserted that every OT commandment is summarized in the call to love our neighbor (Rom 13:8, 10). Jesus too said that “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt 7:12). With every law in the OT, we should, therefore, be able to boil it down into a single principle of love. In Deuteronomy 22:5, loving others and God means that people will maintain a gender identity that aligns with their biological sex and will express this gender in a way that never leads to gender confusion in the eyes of others. We should always be able to distinguish boys from boys and girls from girls. When our biological sex aligns with our gender identity and our gender expression, we express love for both God and our neighbor.

## **6. DEUTERONOMY 22:5—MAINTAINING THE PORTRAIT OF GOD AND THE LOVE PRINCIPLE BUT CHANGING THE CONTEXT IN LIGHT OF CHRIST'S WORK**

Deuteronomy 22:5 was not originally given to the church, but it contains a portrait of God and a principle of love that can guide the church today when read in light of the finished work of Christ. In Jesus we have a perfect pattern for maleness in relation to femaleness. With this, in Jesus we are supplied unmatched power for our pursuit of rightly-ordered living. The power comes through the pardon Jesus secured at the cross and the promises that he purchased at the cross. The gender identity crisis that we are facing today can only be confronted rightly in the context of past and future grace.

We have already noted that God's passion for right order has not changed in the new covenant, for it is part of his very being. With this, the physical and role distinctions between men and women do not appear to have changed this side of the cross. God's righteousness is unswerving, and we must be ever-concerned to display the magnificence of Christ's love for his church in every situation of life.

This affirmed, Deuteronomy 22:5 becomes instructive for the church in helping us recognize the appropriate path for gender expression and the sinfulness of gender confusion, which includes cross-dressing and transgender practice. As I conclude this study, I want to give some practical steps for the church in confronting the transgender storm, and as I do I will mix in explicit words of hope both to those struggling with transgender identity and to the victims of another's gender identity crisis.

### **6.1. Grieve**

Grieve deeply over the brokenness of our culture and the debased makeup of all who sin against nature by supporting transgender identity and expression. In Ezekiel 9, before sending in executioners to destroy all in Jerusalem who failed to look upon and savor the beauty of the Lord, God declared to a messenger, “Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it” (Ezek 9:4). Only those who grieve over sin will be saved. Church, grieve deeply over the way so many in our country are profaning the very nature of God by confusing maleness and femaleness through transgender.

### **6.2. Pray**

Don't be anxious, but pray to our sovereign God that he will soon make right all wrongs and overcome all abominations to his holiness. Pray that God will awaken sleepers and open blind eyes. Pray that God will preserve his church, even as the sheep are increasingly distinguished from the goats. Pray for persevering grace to maintain our trust in his bigness, his faithfulness, and his care, even in the wake of rising tribulation. Pray that we will “not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” but “rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28). Pray, church. Pray!

### **6.3. Remember**

Remember that the creation was subjected to futility *in hope* (Rom 8:20), and remember that he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). Remember that “through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22) and that, as God's children, we are “heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:17). And as you confront those with broken perspectives on gender, remember that you yourselves were once separated from Christ, but God saved you by grace through faith (Eph 2:12). Remember also that “faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17).

### **6.4. Be Mindful, and Care**

Be mindful of those broken in this transgender identity crisis, and care deeply for the violators and the violated. One's self-identity will be forever maligned so long as we are looking at a mirror and not into the face of Jesus. We need to help those struggling with transgender identity find a new identity in Christ, and we need to help those who have been hurt by others find the healing and relief that only Jesus brings. He alone is the savior. He alone is the healer.

If any of you today are struggling with transgender identity, I exhort you to realize that your sin is a direct affront against God and to repent. But not only this, know that the gospel of Jesus is the power of God for your salvation *because* in it the righteousness of God is revealed (Rom 1:16–17). What I mean is that the gospel contains all you need to find your personal identity realigned with God's definition of right order. *In your present state there is much grief, but in the face of Jesus there is relief*—relief from condemnation, relief from the fear of man, and relief of inability in accordance with your biological sex. The gospel is power because through the cross God becomes one hundred percent

for us in Christ, filling our pursuit of rightly-ordered living with all authority in heaven and earth. He can make you a new creation with new right standing and a new direction in life that properly displays his greatness to the world. The gospel is power . . . not only because the cross secures past pardon and transformed desires but also because it purchases future promises that help motivate our pursuit of God. The promise that the pure in heart will see God (Matt 5:8) can generate new hope, new hunger, new identity.

Now, if you today find yourself the victim of another's transgender identity crisis, know that Jesus heals and Jesus helps. He can make you feel clean again and set you on a new course that moves through healing to growth. He can give you a sense of purpose. He can restructure a proper vision of maleness and femaleness, and he can grant you wisdom for moving ahead. Come to Jesus and be saved from the torment of your past.

Church, I exhort you again. . . . Be mindful of the broken, and care.

### ***6.5. Nurture God-honoring Views of Maleness and Femaleness***

As Christians we need to be extremely intentional to build a deep-seated God-esteem into ourselves and others. We need to train our kids that everything we do should be for God's glory (1 Cor 10:31). The transgender crisis who be overcome if people became more passionate about God's authentic right to our surrender and less about an individual's self-claimed right to personal autonomy.

As believers, we should be among those who celebrate men being masculine and women being feminine, both in the way we act and in the way we dress. Because God has ordained males to take on the primary role of provision and protection, I encourage my sons to be risk takers, to do dirty work, and to be defenders, hunters, and builders. And because God has ordained females to help rule and serve, I rejoice if one of my daughters also wants to engage in any of these activities. But I also encourage them to nurture inward godliness, to master homemaking, and to ever carry themselves as women who fear the Lord. With this, I want to encourage my children and my congregants to ever carry themselves so that there is never any question as to whether their gender identity or expression stands in distinction from their God-given biological sex as male or female. Deuteronomy 22:5 wants us to know that things like hair cuts, dress, communication patterns, and interests matter when it comes to God's glory.

We must be balanced here though. At least right now—spring 2016—clothing stores in the US still distinguish men and women's clothing, and there are certainly styles that are more masculine or more feminine than others. But not all clothing is gender-specific. For example, though not always the case, in our present culture ladies can wear slacks, collars, and even ties with none questioning their femaleness. The church needs to account for this. Guys too could have ear rings or long hair with none question their maleness. What was at stake in Moses' law was gender identity and expression and gender confusion, and it is from this perspective that our outward apparel matters.

As I close this study, I ask you to pray with me:

Father we say together, "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory" (Ps 115:1). There is an onslaught of demonic forces shaping idols of the heart all over our country. You are greater. We pray that you would let us shine as lights, not being anxious but praying to you—you who are greater, you who are more beautiful, you who actually create the way you do because it fits best; it works; it is right. Help us

## STUDIES

embrace right order in your world. May it impact our dress . . . our speech . . . our preferences. Give us wisdom for mediating this very difficult gender storm. But we praise you that in Christ you have already overcome. To his glory we pray. Amen.



# VIRTUALLY AN AFFAIR: ARE EVANGELICALS PREPARED TO FACE PORNOGRAPHY'S VR REVOLUTION?<sup>1</sup>

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**M**eet Michael. Michael is a 35 year-old, middle class, American male with a wife, Kate, and two small children. Michael has a good job, lives a relatively comfortable life, and is loved by his friends and family alike. Michael and Kate are both believers, each claiming to have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Both are active in their local church: Michael is a deacon and Sunday school teacher, while Kate leads a weekly women's Bible study. If one were to ask Michael and Kate about the state of their relationship, each would answer positively—they enjoy a healthy marriage.

Meet Stacy. Stacy is an attractive, 22 year-old, single American female. Describing herself as an “adult performer,” Stacy works for a web-based pornography company through which she interacts live with her clientele online. Though she typically is many miles away from most of the men who pay for her services, she is able to perform for them in real-time via webcam in her apartment. Stacy talks to her clients when she performs, and, of course, her clients are able to see and hear what she does. But Stacy's clients are different than what one might call traditional voyeurs; her clients are instead direct participants.

Michael is one of Stacy's regulars, though his wife, Kate, is unaware. About two months ago, Michael felt he was becoming dissatisfied with his marriage. Something seemed to be lacking, and Michael traced it to his and Kate's sexual relationship. Kate seemed to be tired quite often and reluctant to perform the sexual acts that Michael desired, thus Michael felt his “needs” were not being met adequately. Consequently, Michael found the company online that employs Stacy (or more accurately,

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is adapted from “Virtually an Affair? Are Evangelicals Prepared to Face Pornography's VR Revolution?,” a paper I presented at the 67th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on November 19, 2015 in Atlanta, GA.

*exploits, Stacy*<sup>2</sup>) and for the past month, he has been availing himself of Stacy's services. Several nights a week, after Kate has fallen asleep, Michael quietly slips into the study in their home. He logs in to the porn company's website, goes to Stacy's page, and initiates the video connection, though it is not to the screen of his laptop. Rather, Michael dons a virtual reality (VR) headset connected to the laptop. Through the headset, he has been transported into the virtual space of Stacy's room and, through her placement of a special 360-degree video camera, he is in her bed. Michael then secures a device to himself designed to stimulate him physically, a device over which Stacy, miles away, has control via her Internet connection. Stacy begins her performance, and one can imagine what transpires thereafter.

The next morning, Michael justifies last night's activities. After all, he has needs, needs that Kate either cannot or will not meet. Michael reminds himself that he has always been faithful to his wife: Both were virgins when they married, and he has never slept with another woman. Nor did he sleep with one last night, he tells himself. Sure, there was the lust that is always involved when watching conventional pornographic videos, but he can repent of that later. He may have been telling a woman what to do sexually live, but what she did was just simulated because he was not physically present in her room. Yes, he may have actually felt sexually gratified after it was over, but it was only technology involved—a woman inside a VR headset and a machine placed on his body. It wasn't actual sex, right? It wasn't real.

While Michael's story may sound like something straight out of some bad self-published science fiction available for purchase on Amazon, the reality (if you will forgive the pun), is that this technology already exists and is steadily being refined.<sup>3</sup> But when one hears that it exists, he need not seek it deep in the R&D laboratories of Silicon Valley tech companies, hidden from the eyes of the world. Rather, he need only look in the public square, at press coverage of events like the Consumer Electronics Show 2016, where VR porn was not only the tech du jour in terms of buzz, but was even being demoed for attendees.<sup>4</sup> As VR continues to gain traction and more consumers become attracted to it, a probable conclusion emerges that there may well be many Michaels wading into these troubled waters in the near future. In fact, according to a prediction by the prestigious investment banking firm Goldman Sachs, the VR/AR market will become an \$80 billion market by 2025, less than a decade away.<sup>5</sup> One might argue that there are no Michaels in his church currently (spring 2016), and perhaps that is the case. Five years from now, however, this assumption is going to be significantly more diffi-

2 The exploitation of pornographic performers is not limited to the companies who employ them. Rather, the viewer of pornography is complicit as well. See Andrew David Naselli, "When You Indulge in Pornography, You Participate in Sex Slavery," *JBMW* 20, no. 2 (2015): 23–29.

3 Throughout this essay, in the interest of avoiding sexual temptation for the reader, I have elected not to name or cite any developers of VR pornography, nor to name or cite sources for any developers of VR technology or devices that have direct sexual application. However, it is worth noting here that a recent crowdfunding campaign for a device like the one described in the above hypothetical scenario was suspended because the demand for the device apparently outstripped the original planned supply capacity of the company making it. Consumers clearly are already eager to experience VR porn.

4 CES 2016 was held January 6–9, 2016 in Las Vegas, NV. See the above note regarding the lack of source. Further instances will go unmentioned.

5 Julie Verhage, "Goldman Sachs Has Four Charts Showing the Huge Potential in Virtual and Augmented Reality," *Bloomberg*, January 13, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-13/goldman-sachs-has-four-charts-showing-the-huge-potential-in-virtual-and-augmented-reality>. I recognize there is a difference between VR and AR (augmented reality) technology (as do the analysts at Goldman Sachs), but the conflation of the two when talking about the market potential of the technology is fairly standard in business press. Either way, an \$80 billion market for VR/AR translates into literally millions of VR headsets alone.

cult to defend.

There is no question we live in a world that is simply consumed with pornography.<sup>6</sup> Almost every sexual act our depraved minds might possibly conjure is now available to view on demand, and if there are perhaps some new acts that have not yet been devised, one can be certain that the porn industry is hard at work to find them, create demand for them, and then sell them to millions of waiting consumers. As evangelicals, our past responses to pornography have been firmly consistent and rooted in a biblical sexual ethic. But are we prepared to face the new issues inaugurated by the advent of virtual reality technology?

In this essay, I contend that evangelicals are largely unprepared for the coming challenges posed by the pornography industry's adoption of VR. In response, I will then suggest three actions evangelicals should take in order to ready ourselves to address these challenges both cogently and winsomely. Consequently, what I offer here is not meant to be an extensive treatment of VR pornography from a theological perspective (though undoubtedly some need to be written), but rather a call for a conversation to begin in earnest by offering suggestions for a way forward for evangelical engagement of this important issue. Toward that end, we begin by looking for past interactions.

## EVANGELICAL LACK OF PREPAREDNESS

As indicated by the previous projections of how quickly VR will be adopted, evangelicals simply cannot sit by idly until reaching a boiling point in which many believers have found themselves mired in VR pornography addiction and struggling to be freed from it. Rather, it is incumbent upon us as light-bearers in a culture of darkness to be at the forefront of conversations surrounding the innovation of VR porn and its potential consequences. Unfortunately, although they have written much on the ravaging effects of conventional pornography, it appears that few evangelical authors have chosen to address VR porn specifically.<sup>7</sup>

There are notable exceptions, of course, and going back as far as at least 1997, one finds prophetic voices such as that of Douglas Groothuis, who in his book, *The Soul in Cyberspace*, briefly discusses the potential implications of adopting 90s-era virtual reality technology for sexual purposes in a section of a chapter on cybersex.<sup>8</sup> Though the technology unsurprisingly has advanced beyond what he was able to describe nearly two decades ago, the general principles underlying the appeal of virtual reality remain consistent and thus relevant today. Yet it appears that Groothuis has not considerably pursued

<sup>6</sup> For a sampling of relevant statistics, see the "Annual Report 2015" from CovenantEyes, a leading accountability software provider, available at <http://www.covenanteyes.com/pornstats/>.

<sup>7</sup> There are far too many to cite here, but a representative sampling of evangelicals dealing with conventional pornography includes: Tim Challies, "7 Good Reasons to Stop Looking at Porn Right Now," Challies.com, June 25, 2014, <http://www.challies.com/articles/7-good-reasons-to-stop-looking-at-porn-right-now>; Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013); Andy Lewis, "Issues & Answers: Pornography," *Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*, March 1, 2007, <http://erlc.com/article/issues-answers-pornography>; Gavin Ortlund, "Fighting Porn by F.A.I.T.H.," *The Gospel Coalition*, January 5, 2014, <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/fighting-porn-by-f-a-i-t-h>; John Piper, "Pornography: The New Narcotic," *Desiring God*, October 9, 2013, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/pornography-the-new-narcotic>; William M. Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Grand Rapids: Intervarsity, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Groothuis, *The Soul in Cyberspace* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997). See chapter 6, "Cybersex: Eroticism without Bodies," especially pages 95–97.

his discussion of the topic further since the late 90s.<sup>9</sup>

Evangelical engagement with VR's implications on pornography since the time of Groothuis's initial thoughts has been almost nonexistent.<sup>10</sup> In my research for this essay, I found no scholarly work beyond Groothuis and few Internet articles available written by professing Christians (not necessarily evangelicals) about the development of VR porn, none of which dig deeply into the issue. One article located suggests that Christians should be mindful of this shift in the pornography industry, but then does not appear to offer much by way of specific actions or responses Christians should take.<sup>11</sup> Another article, published by XXXchurch, a parachurch organization aimed at helping Christians overcome sexual and pornography addictions, offers action steps but does not attempt to detail why VR porn would be able to tempt many to travel down destructive paths.<sup>12</sup> These articles notwithstanding, the overall lack of evangelical attention to the dangers of VR porn could be due to a variety of factors, but I posit that three in particular are likely reasons.

First, few evangelicals appear adequately aware of the nature of virtual reality and of what it is capable. This is ascertained by not only the paucity of engagements with the VR porn issue, but also their brevity and lack of detail.<sup>13</sup> Given the sensitivity of dealing with pornography, the Christian must of course be concerned with not glorifying or relishing the lurid details of illicit sexual acts and deviances. As Paul states in his letter to the Ephesians, some things are so shameful they should not even be mentioned (Eph 5:12). However, at the same time, neither can the Christian allow himself to be ignorant of the intricacies involved in discussing VR technology and how it has been applied toward pornography. It is not enough simply to know that VR porn exists and that people use it because they are, by nature, sinners; one must also determine how and why it appeals to us as human beings by examining the technology that fosters it.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, few evangelicals appear adequately aware of the vested interest the pornography industry holds in financially assisting the development of VR technology. For instance, many of us as believers are thankful for the use of streaming online video for ministry and kingdom purposes, yet comparatively few of us seem to grasp that our ability to use such technological methods is owed largely to pornography.<sup>15</sup> We enjoy shopping online today, yet conveniently ignore that during the Internet boom

<sup>9</sup> Groothuis briefly mentions virtual reality in his article, "Christian Scholarship and the Philosophical Analysis of Cyberspace Technologies," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 4 (1998): 631–40, but does not appear to address the topic in any of his scholarship thereafter.

<sup>10</sup> Evangelical engagement with virtual reality at all, for that matter, is scant. For example, assuming that the websites found in footnote 6 are representative of evangelical thought on the Internet, searches of "virtual reality" on each website produced zero results in which an accurate view of VR as experienced through a specially designed headset was expressed. Moving in a more scholarly direction, the recent three-volume, Robert H. Woods, Jr., ed., *Evangelical Christians and Popular Culture: Pop Goes the Gospel* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013), despite containing chapters on video games, the Internet, and technological perspectives held by evangelicals, does not deal with virtual reality in any depth. Likewise, searches for "virtual reality" on theological databases, such as ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, yields few results at all, let alone work done by evangelicals.

<sup>11</sup> Alex Bursin, "The Approaching Scourge of Virtual-Reality Porn," *Think Christian*, July 14, 2015, <http://thinkchristian.reframemedia.com/the-approaching-scourge-of-virtual-reality-porn>.

<sup>12</sup> Adam Palmer, "VR Porn Will Soon Be Real: Here Are 3 Ways You Can Deal," *XXXchurch*, February 15, 2016, <http://www.xxxchurch.com/men/vr-porn-will-soon-be-real-here-are-3-ways-you-can-deal.html>. Let the reader beware that the beginning portion of this article contains a couple of crude puns. While I have both theological and methodological reservations concerning XXXchurch, they are at least making an effort to address VR pornography.

<sup>13</sup> It is also ascertained by the lack of engagement with virtual reality on the whole. See footnote 9.

<sup>14</sup> Essays that engage in this very practice are waiting to be written by evangelical scholars, for certain.

<sup>15</sup> Tim Challies is a notable exception here. See Tim Challies, "Pornography Driving Technology," *Challies.com*, May 13,

of the 90s, the pornography industry spent millions of dollars developing ways to sell porn to Internet users through reliable online interfaces that would securely process credit card transactions, interfaces that were then sold to other online retailers.<sup>16</sup>

The point here is that evangelicals should be cognizant that whatever good may arise from VR technology and whatever future gospel applications it might hold, the pornography industry plays a key role in driving its development. When such is the case, the supposed neutrality of the technology involved becomes compromised: The intended immoral uses of the tech necessarily shape the development of the tech itself.<sup>17</sup> Failure to understand this if intending to engage theologically the issue of VR pornography produces cursory treatments that deal solely in externals and never strike at the heart of what motivates the innovators in the first place.

Lastly, few evangelicals appear adequately able to address how the potential effects of VR pornography use might be even more disastrous to the spiritual and physiological well-being of its users than the effects observed from the consumption of conventional pornographic videos. This third explanation for lack of engagement with the VR porn issue directly relates to the first, the lack of awareness of the nature of virtual reality and of what it is capable. Once one has learned how exactly how VR porn works or might work in the future, and once he understands the sophisticated methods by which it appeals to the mind of the user, only then is he able to compare and contrast its potential effects to those stemming from the use of conventional porn.

The effects of consuming conventional pornographic videos have been well documented by both scientists with no moral objections to pornography whatsoever and evangelicals who strongly oppose pornography on biblical grounds. The current scientific evidence is clear: Even if watching pornographic videos were not morally wrong, repeatedly watching them causes physiological changes to the brain.<sup>18</sup> In fact, according to William Struthers, in his book, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain*, pornographic videos “rewire” the brain of the viewer, literally forming new neural pathways for sexual arousal that become well-trodden and deeply ingrained through repeat

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2005, <http://www.challies.com/articles/pornography-driving-technology>.

16 Regarding this and the preceding claim, see Patchen Barsz, *The Erotic Engine: How Pornography Has Powered Mass Communication from Gutenberg to Google* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2011); Doug Gross, “In the Tech World, Porn Quietly Leads the Way,” *CNN*, April 23, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/TECH/04/23/porn.technology/>; and Frederick S. Lane III, *Obscene Profits: The Entrepreneurs of Pornography in the Cyber Age* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

17 This is a complex discussion involving philosophy of technology, for which we do not have the space. I would direct the reader’s attention to Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Bluff*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011); Steve Talbot, *Devices of the Soul: Battling for Our Selves in an Age of Machines* (Sebastopol, CA: O’Reilly, 2007); and Langdon Winner, *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) for arguments from different perspectives that technology is not neutral. This idea is rather unpopular among those outside of philosophy of technology, given the “technology as savior” narrative many sectors in today’s society implicitly adopt.

18 Kent C. Berridge and Terry E. Robinson “The Mind of an Addicted Brain: Neural Sensitization of Wanting Versus Liking,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4, no. 3 (1995): 71–76; Norman Doidge, *The Brain That Changes Itself* (New York: Penguin, 2007); Donald L. Hilton, Jr., “Pornography Addiction—A Supranormal Stimulus Considered in the Context of Neuroplasticity,” *Socioaffective Neuroscience & Psychology* 3 (2013), <http://www.socioaffectiveneuroscipsychol.net/index.php/snpp/article/view/20767>; Donald L. Hilton, Jr. and Clark Watts, “Pornography Addiction: A Neuroscience Perspective,” *Surgical Neurology International* 2 (2011), <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3050060>; Simone Kühn and Jürgen Gallinat, “Brain Structure and Functional Connectivity Associated With Pornography Consumption: The Brain on Porn,” *JAMA Psychiatry* 71, no. 7 (2014): 827–34; Eric J. Nestler, “Is There a Common Molecular Pathway for Addiction?” *Nature Neuroscience* 8 (2005): 1445–49; Gary Wilson, *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction* (Margate, England: Commonwealth, 2015).

usage.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the more one watches pornography and is sexually aroused by what he or she sees, the more he or she requires that same cycle of content—and in some cases, different or more extreme content<sup>20</sup>—in order to achieve and maintain arousal.

For example, in the increasingly unlikely scenario of a 22 year-old male who has never seen a pornographic video, he is presumably able to become aroused visually by the sight of an attractive woman. The more her body is revealed to him, the more aroused he becomes. However, if this young man watches a pornographic video that features violent actions, for instance, and finds himself aroused by the acts he sees performed, a new neural pathway is formed in the brain, ready to lead to sexual arousal the next time he watches a similar video in which the female is physically mistreated. As he watches more of such videos, the neural pathway for sexual arousal that was initially formed when he watched the first video is continually reinforced. This eventually leads to a point at which it is physiologically difficult for him to become aroused at the nude body of an attractive woman. Rather, he must not only see her physical body, but also either mentally envision violent acts against her or actually engage in violent acts against her in order to become and remain sexually aroused. Combine this with other neural pathways of arousal associated with particular sexual acts, and one ends up with a physiological “cocktail” of sorts in which the visual stimulus of a nude woman and the physical stimuli of traditional foreplay and lovemaking are no longer sufficient for sexual gratification.

But this is the background for the consumption of conventional pornographic videos, and our focus here is on virtual reality. When one involves VR, he or she potentially “ups the ante,” as it were, in the arousal game. In short, the appeal of virtual reality is largely predicated on the ideal of fantasy fulfilment. The brain, in effect, is able to be tricked into believing that what it is seeing is actually taking place, even if technically the participant is cognitively aware that this is not the case.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, if considering the previous scenario of the 22 year-old male, we would now have a scenario in which he is, in some capacity, participating in the violent acts being inflicted upon the woman he sees and hears in his VR headset. He has now progressed from an arousal cycle in which he views violent acts via video to an arousal cycle in which his brain is effectively tricked into thinking he is participating in these violent acts. A progression from fantasizing to fantasy fulfilment has occurred. Add to that the apparatus used by Michael in the opening of this paper, and as one might imagine, we have now moved to a new level of the effects of pornography on the person.

If we were to end here, we would be left with a bleak picture indeed. Evangelicals have not engaged the issue of VR pornography sufficiently or with any concerted effort, likely due to the reasons I posited above. What then, should be the evangelical response to VR porn moving forward? Assuming that evangelicals have educated themselves regarding VR technology and how it has been applied to the pornographic industry, I offer three suggested courses of action.

19 Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, 101–04, 135–36.

20 Paula Banca, Laurel S. Morris, Simon Mitchell, et al., “Novelty, Conditioning and Attentional Bias to Sexual Rewards,” *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 72 (2016): 91–101.

21 For an example of this, see Arvid Guterstam, Zakaryah Abdulkarim, and H. Henrik Ehrsson, “Illusory Ownership of an Invisible Body Reduces Autonomic and Subjective Social Anxiety Responses” *Scientific Reports* 5 (2015), <http://www.nature.com/articles/srep09831>. For why a perfect one-to-one correlation with physical reality is not required to fool the brain with VR, see Tom Vanderbilt, “These Tricks Make Virtual Reality Feel Real: Realistic Digital Spaces Need Delusions as Much as They Need Detail,” *Nautilus*, January 7, 2016, <http://nautil.us/issue/32/space/these-tricks-make-virtual-reality-feel-real>.

***Action #1: Articulate a Strong Theology of the Body***

First, evangelicals should articulate a strong theology of the body. While space does not permit a full examination of what the biblical text says about the human body, nor does it permit a full discussion of a theology of the body, at the very least we can acknowledge that evangelicals have not typically viewed the human body in an predominantly favorable light. Gregg Allison addresses this deficiency in evangelical circles:

It is my contention that evangelicals, at best, express ambivalence toward the human body and, at worst, manifest a disregard or contempt for it. Many people, often due to tragic experiences with the body (e.g., physical/sexual abuse), abhor their body, and many Christians, due to either poor or nonexistent teaching on human embodiment, consider their body to be, at best, a hindrance to spiritual maturity and, at worst, inherently evil or the ultimate source of sin.<sup>22</sup>

Allison is correct in his assessment of the pervasive attitude toward the physical body by evangelicals. The fact is that we have proverbially dropped the ball on advocating a comprehensive position on the body as something that was originally perfectly good as made by God, yet good even in its current fallen state. Far too often evangelical bodily focus has been almost exclusively on the eschatological hope of a glorified and perfected body like that of our Lord, the firstfruits of the resurrection. Although that is something for which we all rightly long, our earthly bodies nevertheless are good gifts given to us by God and worthy of our positive attention.

This goodness of the physical body is especially important to discussions surrounding VR pornography. The VR porn user, in effect, “excarnates” himself into a different form of reality in which physical presence has been minimized in favor of virtual presence.<sup>23</sup> Rather than fulfilling sexual desire the way that God intended in the context of a marriage between one man and one woman for life, the VR porn user has not subverted God’s design with an extramarital sexual relationship that is corporeal in nature, but instead with one that is incorporeal. A paradox of sorts is thus produced, one in which the individual, in order to achieve sexual gratification, intends to move himself beyond the confines of physical space to the virtual, yet nonetheless must rely on some minimum amount of physical stimulation.

There is something starkly perverse about attempting to fulfill sexual desire almost entirely at the cognitive level, intentionally distancing oneself from physical presence, and evangelicals should be at the forefront of arguing this. Under the pretense of fantasy fulfillment, the VR user perhaps finds he actually prefers a reality in which he is effectively able to control every aspect of his own gratification. Ethically speaking, there is little to prevent a plausible future in which many persons attempt to

<sup>22</sup> Gregg Allison, “Toward a Theology of Human Embodiment,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 13, no. 2 (2009): 4f.

<sup>23</sup> I am indebted to D. Brent Laytham, *iPod, YouTube, Wii Play: Theological Engagements with Entertainment* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 110–132, for his use of the idea of “excarnation,” who in turn is drawing upon Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007). Laytham uses excarnation primarily as a criticism of video games, arguing that their very nature is excarnational, thus they divorce the player from physical reality. Laytham overstates his case, and I take a decidedly more positive view of video games in Matthew C. Millsap, “Playing with God: A Theoludological Framework for Dialogue with Video Games” (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), though I find his point better suited to virtual reality, the goal of which is, in many ways, excarnation.

achieve sexual fulfilment by foregoing embodied presence entirely.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, prime territory here is available to be taken by evangelicals with fully developed theologies of the body. If we are not willing to be the prophetic voices who advocate the essential goodness of embodied presence in a rightly exercised sexual relationship as contrasted against excarnated sexual acts, who will speak toward it?<sup>25</sup>

***Action #2: Acknowledge that Virtual Reality Is Reality***

Secondly, evangelicals should acknowledge that virtual reality is reality. At first glance, this action may appear to be contradictory to what I argued above. But we must be careful that we make the distinction between physical presence and reality. There is a reality in which you and I are physically present. I am in reality as I write this essay, sitting in a chair at a desk. You, the reader, are in reality as you read it. But were we instead in virtual reality, you and I physically in different locations but virtually in the same space via our VR headsets, and I were standing before you, reading the essay aloud, it would nonetheless be reality although there is no shared physical presence. If I am delivering the essay and you are experiencing it through VR technology, you are still hearing and seeing “me” deliver the essay. The content of the essay is identical and its meaning is communicated, whether in physical or virtual space. The reality of the communication remains consistent although the presence is subject to change.

Budding research on the effects of VR outside the VR experiences themselves is beginning to demonstrate that VR experiences are real enough to produce effects that extend beyond the actual time spent in virtual reality.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, it seems appropriate to conclude that it is more accurate to say that virtual reality is a different form of reality or a different space within reality rather than not constituting reality at all. Indeed, there are many actions that can be taken in virtual reality that translate into actual communication extending outside the virtual space. For instance, if two VR users interact in the same virtual space by shaking hands as their avatars, a communicative act is nonetheless being exchanged between two human beings living on planet earth. The fact that it is taking place virtually rather than physically does not preclude its actuality.

Why is this acknowledgment important for evangelicals specifically? It is important because if we follow the temptation of many in society to dismiss virtual reality as something of a gimmick and “not real,” then we inadvertently open the door for arguments that experiences had and actions taken within virtual spaces likewise are not real. For example, although we naturally find a man and a woman going on dates behind their spouses’ backs to be morally wrong, what justification would we

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24 What I have in mind here is the development of technology that can trick the brain into thinking an orgasm has been experienced although there has been no physical orgasm. No actual physical stimulation would be required.

25 An additional topic evangelicals should prepare to address is the temptation of foregoing bodily presence in favor of virtual gatherings for corporate worship as experienced through VR technology, which must include concomitant discussions of whether the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper can be properly administered or experienced in virtual space.

26 See, for instance, Sun Joo (Grace) Ahn, Jeremy N. Bailenson, and Dooyeon Park, “Short- and Long-term Effects of Embodied Experiences in Immersive Virtual Environments on Environmental Locus of Control and Behavior,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 39 (2014): 235–45, in which it was shown that users who cut down a tree in an “immersive virtual environment” subsequently used 20% less paper than a control group who instead read a description of tree cutting. This is but one of many studies performed by the Virtual Human Interaction Lab at Stanford University. For more of these studies, see <https://vhil.stanford.edu/pubs/>. For a fascinating *Wall Street Journal* interview with the director of the VHIL, see Geoffrey Fowler, “Jeremy Bailenson Peers into the Future of Virtual Reality: Strivr Labs Co-founder Says VR Has the Potential to Change the Way Users Feel—and Behave,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/jeremy-bailenson-peers-into-the-future-of-virtual-reality-1455082679>.

have for finding a man and a woman spending time together in virtual spaces behind their spouses' backs through VR headsets to be equally wrong? If the incorporation of VR technology somehow automatically disqualifies the reality of the interaction, then logically we are left to conclude that the man and the woman have not actually communicated with one another at all.

The problem here should be obvious. Morality cannot be conveniently confined to the physical spaces we inhabit. Rather, what one does in a virtual realm can and does hold moral consequence in the physical realm. In order for this to be so, virtual reality must be reality. The degree to which the line between physical reality and virtual reality is blurred may be an open question, but it can never be drawn so distinctly that the two are impermeable.

### ***Action #3: Work to Understand the Relationship between Virtual Acts and the Desires of the Flesh***

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, evangelicals should work to understand the relationship between virtual acts and the desires of the flesh. In a way, this third action is a natural progression from the first two. If evangelicals hold to a strong theology of the body that prizes physical presence and if they work within a framework that treats virtual reality as reality, then the next logical course of action is to tackle the conundrum of acts performed in the virtual realm as motivated by desires in the physical. At the outset of such an endeavor, one must admit that this is a complicated issue to which no one, as yet, has offered a definitive solution. At the very least, in the limited space available, perhaps we can consider a potentially helpful way of thinking through the matter.

As VR use progressively becomes more widespread and its sexual applications become more enticing to an increasingly aware public, evangelicals should be ready to discuss to what extent actions in a virtual realm may, in fact, be sinful. After all, our own sinful natures as humans are not somehow prevented from accompanying us into the virtual realms we may enter. Some instances of sinfulness will be clear. For example, if a scriptural case can be made against watching conventional pornographic videos, then the same case holds against viewing sexual acts on a VR headset regardless of whether or not there is any active participation on the part of the viewer.

Things become more difficult, however, when dealing with larger scriptural issues under which the use of VR porn may fall. Let us return to the scenario that opened this essay. How are evangelicals to respond to Michael when he attempts to argue that the sex he experienced with Stacy, the adult performer, was not real sex but something akin to masturbation? Certainly the lust involved is the same either way and thus condemnable in that respect, but did Michael commit actual adultery even though he has never been in Stacy's physical presence or actually physically touched her body?

Michael's wife, Kate, certainly thinks so. She is planning to go to her pastor to explain to him that she feels she has biblical grounds for divorce because Michael committed actual adultery rather than it being a Matthew 5 case of adultery in his heart. Is she right? Michael did lust after Stacy, he did commit sexual acts with her, albeit virtually, and he did physically experience orgasms brought about by a combination of his actions (his choice to use the stimulating device) and actions not his own (Stacy's control of said device). Under a biblical definition of actual adultery, is Michael an adulterer?

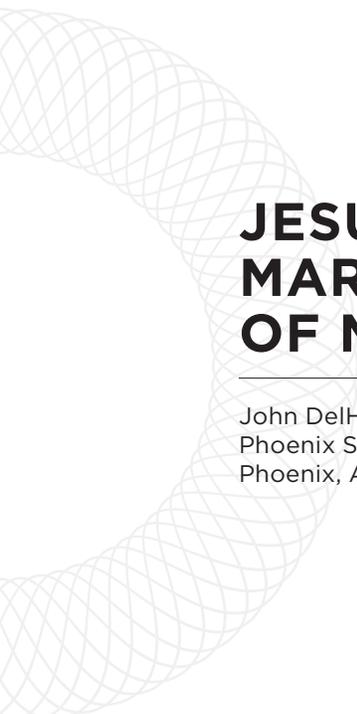
This is illustrative of the questions evangelicals should be prepared to address, and they will be hard pressed to do so if they do not begin working now toward understanding the relationship between virtual acts and the desires of the flesh. Perhaps a helpful principle in pursuing that end might be to remember that the lustful desire manifested in the consumption of pornography is both the issue

and not the issue. In one sense, lustful desire is the issue because it *can* lead to the action to participate in VR pornography. And, of course, there can be no mistake that the lust itself is sinful. On the other hand, the lustful desire is not the issue because it need not *necessarily* result in the use, to whatever degree, of VR porn. It could be that the person in question takes the lustful desire and instead acts upon it by watching a conventional pornographic video.

In defining the relationship as outlined above, then, we must be cognizant that addressing the sexual lust at the foundational level is both helpful and needed, as it holds the potential of preventing other sinful actions that might result. But we must also be cognizant that if the person in question has moved beyond conventional pornographic videos to participation in VR porn, there is more behind the motivation than merely sexual lust; something else has additionally contributed to moving the user to the allure of disembodied, virtual gratification. Evangelicals should seek to ascertain the nature of the factor that ultimately pushed the user over the edge of the virtual precipice.

## CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have argued that evangelicals are not prepared to address the challenges that will arise and have already begun to arise with the advent of virtual reality pornography. I then offered three suggested actions for evangelicals to better prepare themselves: articulating a strong theology of the body, acknowledging that virtual reality is reality, and working to understand the relationship between virtual acts and the desires of the flesh. The new frontier of VR porn is fraught with peril, and our adversary, Satan, no doubt has the desire to use it to the fullest to ruin countless lives. As evangelicals whose work is to speak truth as light into darkness, we must be ready. We must consider those who are at risk of pursuing VR porn. We must consider those who are currently addicted to VR porn. We must consider those who are involved in making VR porn. We must consider those who are refugees from VR porn. We must consider the innocents who have and will suffer because of VR porn. And we must consider the world around us who will be watching our responses. Will we be winsome and cogent in addressing these major issues at the forefront? Only if we take steps now to begin the conversation in earnest. We must educate ourselves and do the hard work of engaging the attendant issues before countless lives are ruined by the honey which drips from virtual lips.



# JESUS AND THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE: A CLOSE READING OF MARK 10:1-12

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**W**riting for the majority in the recent historic Supreme Court decision that granted the right for same-sex couples to marry, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy ventured the following description of marriage: “No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were.”<sup>1</sup> Different intellectual traditions are evoked in the citation, but the language of “union” echoes Scripture. However, from the context, the word has been given a different meaning than what was intended by Jesus Christ.

To show this, I offer a close reading of Mark 10:1-12, which reviews the passage’s origin and form and then focuses on Jesus’s words in their historical, biblical context. The meaning of marriage that Jesus communicates is profound yet clear.

## ORIGIN

The church received Mark as Peter’s memories of Jesus. Papias<sup>2</sup> (approx. AD 60-130), bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, relates:

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1 Lee Epstein and Thomas G. Walker, *Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Rights, Liberties, and Justice* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Sage, 2016), 444.

2 See Matthew Black, “The Use of Rhetorical Terminology in Papias on Mark and Matthew,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (1989): 31-41; Marion C. Moeser, *The Anecdote in Mark, the Classical World and the Rabbis* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002).

Mark, having become Peter's interpreter [or translator], wrote accurately what he remembered, although not in an order, the things either said or done by the Lord [or Christ]. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but later, as I said, Peter, who would teach in anecdotes [or according to needs], but not (with the thought) of producing an orderly arrangement of the sayings of the Lord, so that Mark did not err in this manner, having written down some of the things as he recalled. For he made (it a) singular concern not to omit what he heard or to falsify anything in them.<sup>3</sup>

Justin Martyr (c. 100-165), a Christian philosopher in Rome, describes the second Gospel as "memo-ries" of Peter.<sup>4</sup> Irenaeus (c. 180-200) claims:

Matthew composed his gospel among the Hebrews in their own language, while Peter and Paul proclaimed the gospel in Rome and founded the community. After their death/departure (*exodus*), Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, handed on his preaching to us in written form . . . . (*Against Heresies* 3.1.1ff.)

Church historian Eusebius cites Clement of Alexandria (approx. 180):

And so a great light of piety shone upon the minds of the hearers of Peter that they were not satisfied with merely a single hearing or with unwritten teaching of the divine gospel, but with all sorts of entreaties they besought Mark, who was a follower of Peter and whose gospel is extant, to leave behind with them in writing a record of the teaching passed on to them orally; and they did not cease until they had prevailed upon the man and so became responsible for the Scripture for reading in the churches.<sup>5</sup>

Several of these memories take the form of domestic anecdotes—short stories featuring an authoritative saying of Jesus concerning the household.<sup>6</sup> One addresses divorce and remarriage (Mark 10:1-12), and is immediately followed by a blessing of children (10:13-16). Jesus takes the most stringent position recorded in Second Temple Judaism: "What God joined together no *man* may separate" (v. 9).

It is difficult to imagine any scenario but that Peter remembered something Jesus actually said. Why put such difficult words into his mouth? The context suggests Peter and the other disciples struggled with the teaching. Only twenty years or so after Jesus's departure Paul assumes the knowledge and authority of the saying among the Corinthian churches, but also feels compelled to elaborate (1 Cor 7:1-16).

<sup>3</sup> Cited in Eusebius, *Church History*, 3.39.15. Unless noted, translations are the author's responsibility.

<sup>4</sup> The phrase occurs twice in *1 Apol.* (66.3; 67.3) and thirteen times in the *Dial.* (e.g. 103.8). In *1 Apol.* (66.3). In *Dialogue with Trypho*, he mentions "the memories of the apostles and their successors" (103.8). By way of exception, he mentions "his memories" (106.3) in reference to Peter. Justin reveals he has the second Gospel in mind when he refers to the sons of Zebedee as "Boanerges, which is 'sons of thunder'"—a clear allusion to Mark 3:16.

<sup>5</sup> *Church History* 2.15.1.

<sup>6</sup> See Klaus Berger, *Formgeschichte des Neuen Testaments* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Myer, 1984), 80-84; Bruce D. Chilton and Jacob Neusner, "Paul and Gamaliel," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 14 (2004): 1-43.

## FORM

This domestic anecdote is comprised of a setting, question, counter-question, counter-response with a parable and interpretation.

### *Mark 10:1-2a—Setting*

And rising from there, he (Jesus) is going into the regions of Judea [and]<sup>7</sup> beyond the Jordan. And crowds again are gathering to him; and again, as was his custom, he was teaching them.

“Beyond the Jordan” places the ensuing debate in Perea, part of Herod Antipas’s tetrarchy. Mark has narrated the Baptist’s beheading after rebuking the tetrarch and Herodias for illegitimately divorcing their spouses to marry one another (6:14-29 // Lev 20:21).<sup>8</sup> Mark records only one journey to Jerusalem; this transition marks a final, southerly direction.

Jesus has been “teaching” in parables, “so that *watching, they might watch and not see; and hearing, they might hear and not understand so that they do not turn and it be forgiven them*” (4:11, citing Isa 6:9), including polemical contexts like this one (7:17). This Isaiah citation has been reapplied to the Pharisees and Herod, but also the disciples (8:18). According to this pattern, Jesus offers a public statement that will be clarified privately to his disciples. These signals emphasize hostility to God’s mission. In contrast, the preceding unit terminates with an exhortation to the disciples: “Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another” (9:50).

### *Mark 10:2b—Question*

[And having come, Pharisees]<sup>9</sup> were asking him if it is lawful for a husband to divorce [send away] his wife to test (tempt) him.

Mark has used *apoluō*, often translated “divorce” here, four times in the narrative—all describing the activity of “sending away” (6:36, 45; 8:3, 9). In this culture, divorce was a domestic matter, not requiring a local court. The Pharisees only assume the eviction of the wife.

Their question evidences collusion with Herod Antipas (3:6) and possibly the influence of Satan, who tempted (*peirazō*) Jesus in the area as a divine test (1:9-13). Jesus has said, “Get behind me, Satan” (8:33). The question echoes the Baptist’s rebuke of Herod: “It is not lawful for you to have the wife of your brother.” The “crowds” assure that however Jesus responds it will become public record.

<sup>7</sup> The conjunction is supported by the earlier Alexandrian codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus.

<sup>8</sup> See Josephus *Antiquities* 15.259-60; 18.1366:17. This is a common observation. F. Crawford Burkitt claims “the saying as reported in Mark clearly implies a reference to Herodias”: *The Gospel History and its Transmission* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1907), 101.

<sup>9</sup> Much of the Western tradition lacks “Pharisees,” making the crowds the understood subject. Although Matthew’s parallel may have influenced the passage, the earlier reading is preferred as the source of Matthew’s reading. The crowds do not tempt (test) Jesus.

**Mark 10:3-4—Counter-question and Response**

Now he answered and said to them: “What did Moses *command* you?” [Deut 1:3, etc.] Now they said, “Moses permitted writing a *contract of divorce* and divorcing [sending away].” [Deut 24:1 LXX]

Instead of replying, “Moses permitted *us*,” the Pharisees emphasize the command’s general application.<sup>10</sup> Without any discussion of justification—the Why—they focus on procedure—a position perhaps that would keep them in Herod’s graces and any husband seeking divorce.

The “contract of divorce” (*biblion apostasiou*, Hebrew *sefer keritut* “scroll of cutting off”), a distinctively Jewish practice, enabled a wife to remarry.<sup>11</sup> It was proof that she and her former husband were no longer having sexual intercourse.<sup>12</sup> One from Masada, where Jewish rebels fled after the Temple’s destruction in AD 70, reads:

. . . I divorce and repudiate of my own free will today, I Joseph, son of Naqsan, from . . . , living at Masada, you my wife, Miriam, daughter of Jonathan . . . , who have been up to this (time) my wife, so that you are free on your part to go and become a wife of any Jewish man that you please. And n[ow] you have from me a bill of repudiation and a writ of divorce.<sup>13</sup>

The contract focuses on the freedom the spouses have to go their separate ways and remarry. The language anticipates the modern “no-fault” divorce.

The Pharisees allude to the only implicit justification for divorce in the Mosaic Law: “the reason of nakedness.”<sup>14</sup> For the sake of argument, the contract proves the legality of divorce in principle. The Jewish historian Josephus took advantage of the privilege: he divorced (“sent out” *apopempō*) his wife because “she was displeasing in behavior” and married another.<sup>15</sup>

**Mark 10:5-7—Counter-response**

But Jesus said to them: “Because of your *hard-heart* he (Moses) wrote this commandment. [Deut 10:16 LXX] But from the beginning of creation *male and female he* [God] *made them*. [Gen 1:27] *Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh*. [Gen 2:24 LXX], so that they are no longer two, but

10 Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 708.

11 William Loader, *Making Sense of Sex: attitudes towards sexuality in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2013), 70.

12 Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.253.

13 Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Daniel J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994), 139.

14 Other laws presuppose divorce, focusing on remarriage (Lev 21:7, 14; Num 30:9).

15 Josephus, *Life* 426.

*one flesh*. So what God joined together no *man* may separate.

According to Mark, Jesus has just been talking with Moses. Only James, Peter, and John would be aware of this background, but the reader is given dramatic irony: “Listen to him!” the Father says right after Moses and the prophet Elijah disappeared (9:7). For Christians, Jesus is the final interpreter of the Mosaic Law and Prophets.

Jesus responds with a parable that is grounded in a literal interpretation of Deuteronomy and the linking of two verses from the biblical creation story—what rabbis call *gezerah sheva*.

Like an earlier argument over handwashing, Jesus places the Pharisees in the role of opponents to God’s Prophets (Isaiah, Moses).<sup>16</sup> The issue continues to be the heart: “*This people honor me with lips, but their heart is departing far away from me*” (Mark 7:6). “Hard-heart” (*sklērokardia*) is an unyielding frame of mind that alienates one from reality.<sup>17</sup> The term was coined while translating the Septuagint, occurring for the first time in Deuteronomy:<sup>18</sup>

You shall circumcise your hard-heart (*sklērokardia*) and shall not harden your neck any longer. (10:16)

*Sklērokardia* translates the indelicate Hebrew *orlat levavkem*, “foreskin of your heart.” Before discussing divorce, on the day Israel crossed the Jordan, Moses reminded the people that their inheritance was not due to their righteousness, but the wickedness of the other Nations (9:1-12). They were a “stubborn people” (9:6, 13), who had failed to love God with all their heart (10:12), making for themselves a golden calf (9:13-29). Genesis presents the congenital heart condition as a universal problem: “every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen 6:5 ESV).

Jesus views divorce as a postlapsarian concession to hardheartedness and, instead, privileges the creation story.<sup>19</sup> This rhetorical move had a biblical precedent. The prophet Malachi (c. 445 – 432 BC) opposes a divorce scenario by appealing to creation:

The LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. “For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless. (2:14-16 ESV)<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See 7:6. They are the most natural antecedent of “you.”

<sup>17</sup> In the New Testament, the word occurs here, Matthew’s parallel (19:8), and the longer ending of Mark (16:14), which is probably a later addition.

<sup>18</sup> We also find it in other translations (Prov 17:20; Jer 4:4; Ezek 3:7). The term also occurs in Sirach (16.10) and contemporary Jewish literature. But the Deuteronomy reference is first in *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

<sup>19</sup> Some interpret the concession as originating from Moses: Rudolf Bultmann, “History and Eschatology in the New Testament,” *New Testament Studies* 1 (1954-55): 5-16, 8. But most attribute it to God.

<sup>20</sup> The Hebrew and Old Greek are obscure in many points. Some versions actually make divorce a commandment, but

The rhetorical situation is the unjust dismissal of “the wife of your youth.” The Baptist’s rebuke of Herod and Herodias is a fitting application since both divorced their spouses to marry one another.

We also find antecedents of Jesus’s position in contemporary Jewish literature. Monogamy and lifelong fidelity are praised according to the pattern of creation in *Tobit*:

You made Adam and gave him his wife, Eve, a helper, a support. From these came the seed of humanity. You said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; let us make for him a helper like himself.” And now, Lord, not because of *porneia* [lust], but in truth, I am taking this sister of mine: grant that I and she be mercied and grow old together.<sup>21</sup>

The *Damascus Document*, part of the Dead Sea Scrolls, appeals to the creation story to discredit opposition to the community:

By unchastity, (namely,) taking two wives in their lives, while the foundation of creation is “male and female he created them” (4:20-21).<sup>22</sup>

The author is attacking polygamists as being sexually immoral.<sup>23</sup> The line, which is similar to Jesus’s response, may be formulaic: “But from the beginning of creation *male and female he* [God] *made them*.” As with Jesus, the opponents are probably Pharisees.<sup>24</sup> The Pharisees influenced currents in Judaism that rejected the prioritization of the creation story, instead absolutizing the Torah from Sinai, and did not outlaw polygamy until the thirteenth century.<sup>25</sup>

Jewish eschatology also looked to the creation story as mirroring the coming age.<sup>26</sup> This view cry-

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this cuts against the rhetoric of the unit. After extensive discussion, Richard Taylor and Ray Clendenon conclude: “the view that accounts best for the data of the texts understands the issue to be unjustifiable divorce, that is, for reasons other than ‘something indecent’ in the wife (Deut 24:1)”: *Haggai, Malachi*, New American Commentary 21a (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman and Holman, 2004), 368.

21 Geoffrey David Miller, *Marriage in the Book of Tobit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 1, 47. Tobiah notes her beauty (6:11-18), but claims he is not marrying her to gratify sexual desire. William Loader claims “the issue is not sexual desire, as if he is claiming that he has none, as some have read it. The point he is making is that she is an appropriate partner for him and he is not therefore engaging in sexual promiscuity or exploitation”: *Making Sense of Sex*, 33. His primary motivation is endogamy—“this sister of mine”—for godly offspring.

22 James H. Charlesworth, ed. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English translations, Vol. 2 Damascus Document, War Scroll, and Related Documents* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1995), 18-19.

23 See Gerson Brin, “Divorce at Qumran,” in *Legal Texts & Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Published in Honour of Joseph M. Baumgarten* (M. Bernstein, F. García Martínez, and J. Kampen, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 231-244, 236.

24 There is a near consensus that the code phrase “Seekers of Smooth Things” refers to the Pharisees: James H. Charlesworth, *The Pesharim and Qumran History: Chaos or Consensus?* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 97; David Flusser, “Pharisäer, Sadduzäer und Essener im Pescher Nahum,” in *Qumran* (ed. K. E. Krozinger; Darmstadt, 1981), 121-66; Daniel R. Schwartz, “MMT, Josephus and the Pharisees,” in *Reading 4QMMT: New Perspectives on Qumran Law and History* (eds. John Kampen and Moshe J. Bernstein; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 67-80.

25 Josephus notes, “it is our ancestral custom that a man have several wives at the same time” (*J.W.* 1.24.2). Justin Martyr criticizes the practice of Jewish polygamy: *Dialogue with Trypho*, 141. For the marginalization of the creation story, see the exegesis of Genesis 32:32-33 at *M. Hullin* 7:6.

26 See Thomas P. Rausch, *Eschatology, Liturgy, and Christology* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2012), 20-23. Ulrich W. Mauser notes: “The idea of correspondence of primal time and final time is introduced into the concept of human

talizes into the bookends of the Christian canon. Ezekiel promises a reversal of the problem legislated for and against in Deuteronomy: “A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (36:26).<sup>27</sup>

Employing *gezerah sheva*, Jesus cites from two parts of the creation story.<sup>28</sup> The first citation is from the seven-day summation of God’s creative activity: “male and female (*arsen kai thēlou*) he made them” (Gen 1:27). The second becomes inferential: *Because of this a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh* (Gen 2:24). The language and context presume sexual intercourse with its unitive and procreative effect.<sup>29</sup> Mark highlights this by immediately following the argument with parents bringing their children to Jesus (10:13-16).<sup>30</sup>

The climactic saying is parabolic: “what God joined together no *man* may separate.” It is similar in form to the short purity parable (*parabolē*) in the argument over handwashing (Mark 7:15, 17): they contradict conventional wisdom, but point to a deeper truth: If God joins a man and woman in marriage, how is divorce not a rejection of that act, a denial of ontology, even a disfiguring of the self?

We find biblical and contemporary support for the conviction that God joins the husband and wife. God brings the woman to Adam and, according to rabbinic tradition, even “fixed Eve’s hair and outfitted her as a bride.”<sup>31</sup> Later in Genesis, Abraham’s servant seeks “the woman whom the Lord appointed for my lord’s son,” a sentiment echoed in *Tobit*: before the foundation of the world, God intended marriage for Tobiah and Sarah and unites them through angelic mediation (6.18; 7.11). In *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, a Jewish expansion on Scripture, Reuben laments over sleeping with Bilhah, his father’s concubine, and advises his sons:

Do not devote your attention to the beauty of women . . . nor occupy your minds with their activities. But live in integrity of heart in the fear of the Lord, and weary yourself in good deeds, in learning, and in tending your flocks, until the Lord gives you the mate whom he wills, so that you do not suffer, as I did. (tr. H. C. Kee)<sup>32</sup>

According to this literature, the match-making God works primarily within the boundaries of patriarchy, endogamy, piety, and incest—values that also occur in Paul’s letters.<sup>33</sup> One had to ask for

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sexuality: With the coming of the kingdom of God as restored condition of the husband-wife relation has arrived that confirms God’s pristine order”: “Creation, Sexuality, and Homosexuality in the New Testament” in *Homosexuality and Christian Community* (ed. Choon-Leong Seow; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 39-50, 40.

27 The new heart complements the sprinkling of purifying water, which informs the eschatology of the Argument over Handwashing (Ezek 36:25).

28 We find similar conflation in *Jubilees*. There is no evidence that Jesus recognized two creations stories, an assumption of modern biblical scholarship.

29 *Jubilees* draws out the implication: God “brought her to him [Adam] and he *knew her* and said to her, “This is *now* bone of my bone and flesh from my flesh.” (tr. O. S. Wintermute); James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 2:59.

30 Joel Marcus notes: “The presupposition of this argument seems to be that sexual union creates a permanent ontological fusion of the individuals involved”: *Mark 8-16*, 710-711.

31 See *The Fathers According To Rabbi Nathan* A 4.

32 Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:783.

33 Lev 18:6-18; 20:14, 17, 19-21; Deut 22:30; 27:20, 22-23; see also, *Sir. 23:16-21*; *Ps. Sol. 8:9*; Josephus, *Ant. 3.274*. The high priest had to marry a Hebrew woman (Lev 21:13-15). For a helpful summary of Jewish perspectives on intermarriage, see David W. Chapman, “Marriage and Family in Second Temple Judaism,” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (ed. Ken M. Campbell; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 183-239, esp. 202-204.

a wife from her male guardian.<sup>34</sup> The father (or stand in) places his hands on the heads of the couple, invokes the Lord's blessing, turns them to one another to kiss, and announces the seven-day marriage feast.<sup>35</sup> Non-Jewish spouses usually converted.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes God does the unexpected, like marriage between foreigners, but not contrary to the clear boundaries of Scripture.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Mark 10:10-12—Nimshal***

And in the house the disciples were again asking him about this. And he says to them:  
 “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another (woman) is an adulterer against her.  
 And if she who divorces her husband marries another (man), she is an adulteress.

Jesus is probably staying in the house of a disciple or admirer. He had spent time in the region at the beginning of his ministry before travelling north to Galilee. As with the parables, he offers a private interpretation to his disciples. Mark used *eperōtaō* (“were asking”) for the interrogation of the Pharisees (v. 2), suggesting the disciples were unsympathetic.

Through parallelism, Jesus gives equal rights and responsibilities to the wife and husband. Adultery was normally “against” the woman's husband. Some believe Mark or the early church put words into Jesus's mouth because Roman law permitted wives to divorce their husbands, although this was uncommon in Judaism.<sup>38</sup> But the rhetorical situation is informed by Herodias, who divorced her husband to marry his more powerful brother, Herod Antipas. The practice was common in the royal family.<sup>39</sup>

Jesus classifies divorcing-to-remarry as adultery, a sin prohibited by the Ten Commandments and punished with stoning.<sup>40</sup> His citation of the creation story probably reflects a polemic against polygamy: The Masoretic (Hebrew) text reads “and *they* shall become one flesh”; the Greek, “and *the two* shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24).<sup>41</sup> Jesus and the author(s) of the *Damascus Document* expose two loopholes for the sanctioning of sexual immorality in the Pharisaic tradition: polygamy and divorce, respectively. Both appeal to a permanent ontological union between a male and female in marriage. The contemporary Jewish philosopher Philo also criticizes using Deuteronomy to justify a husband's lust.<sup>42</sup>

## **MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO JESUS**

Jesus's response fits within the logic and rhetoric of Second Temple Judaism. He was not the first to

<sup>34</sup> Josephus, *Contra Apion* 2.200.

<sup>35</sup> *Joseph and Aseneth* 21.5-8.

<sup>36</sup> Chapman, “Marriage and Family,” 203.

<sup>37</sup> See Josephus, *Antiquities*. 5.286; *Tobit* 7.11-12.

<sup>38</sup> Cicero, *Letters to His Friends* 8.7.2; Gaius, *Institutes* 7.137a; Justinian, *Digest* 23.2.45.5; 24.2.4.8.

<sup>39</sup> Salome, Herod the Great's sister, divorced her husband, Costobarus, by sending a bill of divorce (Josephus, *Ant.* 15.259-260). Drusilla, Berenice, and Mariamme divorced (*Ant.* 18.136; 20.143-44; 20.147).

<sup>40</sup> Exod 20:14; Deut 5:17; 22:22-24.

<sup>41</sup> Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 704.

<sup>42</sup> *Special Laws* 2.135-139.

privilege the creation story or to maintain that God brings husbands and wives together or to criticize the Pharisees for their progressive interpretations. But his position falls on the far conservative side of the spectrum. Why is Jesus so pro marriage after calling his disciples into a new family?<sup>43</sup>

The answer is in the parable, which on the surface addresses the rhetorical situation, but also, for those with eyes to see, reveals what God is accomplishing in Christ.<sup>44</sup> The husband and wife must stick together like Israel and Yahweh (Deut 10:20; 11:22). What God united, who can separate? Yet Israel committed adultery, which led to exile. According to Jeremiah (3:8), God has the right to a permanent separation, even evoking the passage in Deuteronomy, but instead offers reconciliation in Christ. The sinners and tax collectors, who recognize the separation, take advantage of the gospel. The Pharisees, the “blind leading the blind,” want to separate the bride and groom. In this context, Jesus offers the earliest yet veiled prediction of the cross (2:20). Jesus, who embodies God’s people, who identifies with sinners at his baptism, experiences the exile, the divorce, on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken (divorced) me?” But what God united, who can separate? The righteous, the faithful one, died in the place of the sinful, the faithless one (Mark 10:45). A new covenant is cut (Mark 14:24). After the resurrection, the wedding may commence.

Hardness of heart kept the Pharisees from seeing this reality. How can one divorce to remarry and understand the mercy of God in Christ?

Jesus is out of step with the twenty-first century as he was with the first: Greeks and Romans did not view sex as becoming one flesh.<sup>45</sup> For men, the only boundary was another man’s wife. Divorce is an enduring reality in Church history—a proof that hardness of heart persists. Polygamy remains at the margins (literally so in my state), but advocates are employing the same strategy that normalized same-sex marriage in the popular imagination.<sup>46</sup>

Many insist God works outside the boundaries of *male and female* and the *two shall become one flesh*.<sup>47</sup> A Baptist pastor, referring to his officiating of same-sex marriages, says, “It will be a joy to celebrate what God has done in these lives.”<sup>48</sup> But a man and a man or a woman and a woman cannot become one flesh in the way Jesus describes. Justice Kennedy’s “two people” may form any number of relationships, but they cannot become one flesh unless they are male and female. Indeed, a fair reading of the Gospels shows that Jesus actually narrows sexual expression in light of the Kingdom where the only union will be Christ and his Church.

Jesus preserves marriage between his resurrection and final coming for at least two reasons. First, this is how God populates the Kingdom. The deeper, salvific meaning of marriage and children in Mark’s Gospel does not preclude the literal sense. Second, as Sue Patterson notes, “the reconciliation

43 See especially Mark 3:31-35.

44 For a development of John Donahue’s notion of parable as reading strategy for the entire Gospel, see Laura C. Sweat, *The Theological Role of Paradox in the Gospel of Mark* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 20-21.

45 Roman men had no qualms about marrying divorced women: Paul Veyne, ed., *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium* (tr. Arthur Goldhammer; Cambridge / London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 40.

46 In this case, the unitive dimension of marriage needs to be emphasized. Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones note that if the goal were simply to be fruitful and multiply, additional wives makes sense: *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 43.

47 Cheryl B. Anderson, *Ancient Laws and Contemporary Controversies: The Need for Inclusive Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). She claims that “the condemnation of homosexuality is a plausible reading of the Bible, but it is also an ethically invalid reading” (152).

48 [http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/why-christians-should-support-same-sex-marriage/article\\_fcb191b6-e74b-58f3-8b1e-1d680a824146.html](http://www.stltoday.com/news/opinion/why-christians-should-support-same-sex-marriage/article_fcb191b6-e74b-58f3-8b1e-1d680a824146.html). Accessed September 17, 2015.

of humankind to God must involve the reconciliation of men and women *together* because men and women together in community form the image of God in humanity.<sup>49</sup> Jesus does not ground marriage in the emotional needs of consenting adults or in the “highest” of “ideals,” but ontology, an actual union. That many no longer see marriage this way is symptomatic of a culture that struggles to see God at all.

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<sup>49</sup> Sue Patterson, “Between Women and Men,” in *The Theology of Reconciliation* (Colin E. Gunton, ed.; New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 125-140, 133.

## ORDERED LOVE: AN EXPOSITION OF 1 PETER 3:1-7

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**W**e are all accustomed to seeing fairytale weddings. Every so often, somebody very famous marries another very famous person. Despite the cynicism of our age, we collectively gasp at the lavish affair. The very famous groom looks handsome; the very famous bride is resplendent in finery that sparkles.<sup>1</sup>

The imagery, even in a celebrified age, is unmissable: the man and woman are distinct, but united. He is tall and strong, his well-cut jacket emphasizing his strong shoulders—he is made for action, and ready for protection. She is radiant and feminine, and her white dress speaks, at least in theory, to purity, the true beauty of a woman entering the high and holy covenant of marriage.

Not long after, the celebrity-watching websites break in with an exclusive: *The marriage is over!*, they scream. *Get all the details in our special coverage of this earth-shaking event.* The populace follows along, dutifully clicking on articles that lead to voyeuristic snooping into someone else's tragedy (the spectator sport of modern culture). Many people, learning of this sad news, shake their head. "How could they go wrong?" they murmur. "They were such a good match. So attractive. So rich. So happy."

There are many reasons why marriages break down. Here, though, is the preeminent cause of modern marital ruin: the "fairytale wedding" failed to proceed from any sense of how wedded union is supposed to work. The couple was committed to one another, they were drawn to one another, but as to the structure of the relationship, they had no plan. From day one, they lived interchangeably, Spouse A and Spouse B, and inevitably clashed in all sorts of ways.

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<sup>1</sup> This sermon was originally preached in the chapel services of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary on February 16, 2016.

This is true not simply of the fairytale marriage, but common ones. It's even true in the church. Many couples have heard precious little about God's design for wedded union. Love in the biblical sense, contra what we hear today, has shape and definition. Playing off legal terms—"ordered liberty," for example—you could say that marriage is "ordered love."<sup>2</sup> God in Scripture has provided us with a plan for covenantal union, in other words. He calls men and women to certain roles. When men and women own the biblical pattern, they step into a truly storybook marriage, one that images Christ's love for his blood-bought church (Eph 5:22-33).

Our passage today, 1 Peter 3:1-7, helps us figure out what "ordered love" looks like. It helps us work toward the grand project of a God-honoring marriage, a lifelong endeavor that depends on divine grace and requires great self-sacrifice. In this portion of God's Word, we discover three main points:

1. The Power of Godly Conduct (1-2)
2. The Beauty of Submissive Womanhood (3-6)
3. The Risk of Selfish Manhood (7)

Hear now the Word of God.

[1] Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct. [3] Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—[4] but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. [5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet 3:1-7 ESV)

## **POINT ONE: THE POWER OF GODLY CONDUCT (1 PET 3:1-2)**

[1] Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, [2] when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

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<sup>2</sup> For more on "ordered liberty," see discussions of *Palko v. Connecticut* (1937); as one example, Cornell University Law School has a breakdown of this case and its implications here: <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/302/319>.

This section continues that began in 2:13 and covers another group that is called to observe an authority-submission dynamic. Peter's instructions for couples mirror the apostle Paul's in Ephesians 5-6 and Colossians 3, but Peter's focus is more on the secondary party rather than the leader (unlike Paul's focus). Peter does address husbands, but his major concern is to outline the attitude and behavior of a godly wife.

Women of God, Peter explains, are to submit to their husbands, to follow them as their God-appointed domestic head. "*Be subject to your husbands.*" The verb for submit, *hupotasso*, is in the imperative form, showing that this is not an optional practice for Christian woman but an apostolic command. The woman's husband is in view here: "to your own husband" the wife must submit, indicating that they have a special covenantal relationship. Marriage images the greater love of God for his people. Christianity is at base about taking universals and making them particular, about applying cosmic truths at the granular level.

In Peter's mind, a woman submits to her husband whether he is a spiritual all-star or not. Of course, women never submit to abuse or sin. But outside of such wicked behavior, even if he "disobeys" the word, she is to follow his leadership, and by her conduct seek to win him to godliness. Disobedience, as Tom Schreiner has noted, is a key theme of Peter's. 1 Peter 2:8 also refers to disobedience to the word; 4:17, to those who disobey the gospel; and 3:20, to those who disobeyed during the days of Noah. The "word" (*logos*) here, as in 2:8, refers to the gospel.<sup>3</sup>

All disobedience, of course, stems from unbelief. The emphasis here is on the rebellion of husbands who refuse to adhere to the gospel. This sets things in context, for Peter is speaking to husbands implicitly as he speaks to wives. Husbands who disobey the gospel of Christ place their wives in a very difficult situation. They fail to cultivate their wives, celebrate their godliness, and encourage them. Let me ask you this: Husbands, are you disobedient to the word?

As we consider verse 2, "respectful and pure conduct" which Peter calls for, we are reminded that the contrast between the world's understanding of submission and Peter's is striking. I am reminded of what happened recently to my friend Gavin Peacock. He tweeted the following some months ago: "Wives: one of the primary ways you are to respect your husband is by gladly submitting to and encouraging his leadership." He basically quoted Scripture, as you can see, nothing more, nothing less. In response, he got the following scorching replies from leading UK media personalities:

Mof Gimmers posted: 'Remember Gavin Peacock who played for Chelsea? He's found God and he's tweeting some DELIGHTFUL things about women.'

Nigel Adderley also once worked with Peacock and wrote about his surprise over the remarks: 'I used to really enjoy working with Gavin Peacock on the radio but won't be implementing his views on marriage at home...'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Tom Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 149.

<sup>4</sup> Matt Morlidge, "Gavin Peacock faces Twitter backlash after former Chelsea and Newcastle star turned Christian Pastor says wives should 'gladly submit to husband's leadership,'" *Daily Mail Online*, January 6, 2015, accessible at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-2898771/Gavin-Peacock-faces-Twitter-backlash-former-Chelsea-star-turned-Christian-minister-accused-sexism.html#ixzz41IzvW1ec>. Baptist Theological Seminary on February 16, 2016. services of Midwesterners have awaited will beg The solution to domineering m

We see in this visceral exchange that the world views womanly submission as bad, even evil. Some Christians might even fall prey to this thinking. But not Peter. Peter views womanly submission as God-honoring and even evangelistic.

In Peter's apostolic thinking, submission is so potent, so rebellious against Satan, that it can strike an arrogant man down where he stands, turning him to Christ, and all "without a word." As evangelicals, we spend a lot of time looking for the next evangelistic secret, the apologetic tool to pick the lock of unbelief. Here is one staring us in the face: womanly submission. It wins stone-hearted men *without a word*. How's that for evangelistic effectiveness? And why does it have this Copernican effect? Because even disobedient husbands cannot deny the power of "respectful and pure conduct."

We must not miss Peter's emphasis on obedience. There is a parallel here with 2:12—when the church lives "among the Gentiles" in righteous conduct, they will see and glorify God. Modern evangelicalism has downplayed obedience. We talk for days about brokenness but are quick to label any determined pursuit of God as "legalism." That's what Peter says is the secret sauce, though: obedience.

Wives need to take these words to heart. Your labor will sometimes feel like it is in vain. But it is not. There is something more effective than the best argument you could make to dislodge your husband from his stubborn arrogance: it is the work of God in you. There are going to be times in every marriage when a wife feels like she has hit the wall. Her husband is officially not Jesus and seems to fail in area after area. He may not pursue the Lord with the zeal that Scripture calls for; he may not pursue his spouse with tenderness; he may opt to focus on silly things rather than eternal things. But you must not lose heart. Obey the Lord, pray constantly, and leave it to the sovereign God to work in his heart.

## **POINT TWO: THE BEAUTY OF SUBMISSIVE WOMANHOOD (1 PET 3:3-6)**

[3] Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—[4] but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. [5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Peter next warns women about "external adorning" (v. 3), which he isolates as a fancy hairstyle, gaudy jewelry, and fancy clothing. As Paul Achtemeier has shown, this was a common form of moral exhortation in this era, with figures such as Seneca, Dio Chrysostom, and Tacitus voicing their disapproval of immodesty.<sup>5</sup>

The Greco-Roman world was rife with immodesty, even as our age is today. Women today embrace Botox as a savior and sexiness as an identity. They believe that owning their sexuality—showing their body off to gain power over men—is what brings fulfillment. "Empowerment" of a sexual kind, women are told, will solve one's self-esteem issues and allow one to take power over one's fears and

<sup>5</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1996), 212.

shortcomings. But this is not so. Feminist notions of aggressive sexuality and narcissistic empowerment are lies.

True beauty is so much greater than physical appearance. It is God himself, the fountain of beauty. I think of the words of master pastor-theologian Jonathan Edwards:

God is infinitely exalted above all created beings in excellency and loveliness. It all runs upon infinities in God: so great as is his duration, so great as is his being and essence, so great is his excellency and loveliness. His excellency excels all other excellencies that ever were seen or heard of, as much as his being exceeds created beings in greatness. . . . He must have all the glories, perfections, and beauties of the whole creation in himself in an infinite degree, for they all proceed from him, as beams do from the sun, and [he] is as much more excellent than they all, as the whole sun is than one single ray.<sup>6</sup>

Edwards helps us recover a divine foundation for beauty. His words show us that when we strain to be beautiful, we are competing with God. As believers, women are called to strive for spiritual beauty that emanates from the inmost parts outward—“*the hidden part of the heart*,” as Peter calls it.<sup>6</sup> The solution to our appearance-obsessed culture is not first to embrace our body image, or tell ourselves we’re all shatteringly attractive, or any other self-focused solution. It is to recall the words of 1 Sam 16:7: “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

We need a theocentric vision of womanhood today. On this rock, God-approved identity, crash a thousand enemy ships that desire to assail women. These threats to women include the following: self-loathing that causes them to hate themselves, envy that drives them to compete with other women, and the desire to be attractive such that they lose themselves in a never-ending spiral of inadequacy, anger, depression, and more.

Women: I do not know God’s plan for you, but I know this: you have a Father who tenderly made you. God has made you beautiful. I mean this not in the Oprah way, the Disney princess way, but in the blood-bought orphan child now cleansed and loved and protected way (Ezek 16:1-14). Think about this: God the Father approves of you. He welcomes you. He smiles on you. He does not ask you to make him look good by dressing provocatively, as wicked fathers do. He does not demean you, belittle you, abuse you. He loves you and cherishes you.

This status, this bestowal of beauty, means that you not only see yourself differently from the world, but that you display a “gentle and quiet spirit” (v. 4). Typically, if someone teaches on this, they spend most of their time talking about what it’s not: you don’t have to be gentle and quiet. To be sure, this passage is not saying women must be non-energetic and mute. But it is calling for a markedly different posture than what we often find in a secular culture. Let’s list out what this entails:

- The Bible calls for gentleness, not aggressiveness, in women.
- It calls for quietness, not brashness.

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<sup>6</sup> See Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 154.

- It calls for submissiveness, not an authoritarian posture.
- It calls first for helpers, not CEOs.
- It calls for leaning into family when God gives children, not career, per Titus 2:5.

As is apparent, biblical womanhood is strange and beautiful and, ironically, powerful. Did you miss that? This whole passage is in some ways a commentary on power.<sup>7</sup> Peter is saying: Women, you want to be influential? You want to change the world around you? You want to accomplish tremendous spiritual good? Here's the way to do all these things: live as God made you, a woman, one captivated by God. This is what God loves: a submissive, gentle, quiet spirit is very precious to God himself. God sees it and it is "precious" to him (v. 4).

[5] For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, [6] as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.

Instead of focusing on externals, "holy women" (v. 5) put on beautiful character by embracing submission. These women are identified by their holiness. Their identity is that of women of the Lord. Note again how Peter is at pains once more to contrast a worldly view of submission with a Christian one. Submission for him is not life-taking. It is hope-giving. If you *hope* in God (v. 5), you submit to your husband. This is a key part of the Bible's "Happiness Project" for women: submit to your husband.

Sarah embodies this attitude, for when she is told of her pregnancy in Genesis 18:12, she refers to her husband as her "lord": "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?" Sarah was not perfect in following Abraham, to be sure. But she models an attitude of respecting and following her husband. Peter desires, as verse 6 makes clear, that the women of his era emulate this godly matriarch: "*And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening.*"

Sarah's own life is instructive here. Her life was not quiet and tame. It was a bit wild. With Abraham, she was called to respond to the Lord's bewildering call, move far away, and become the cornerstone family of the covenant people of God. Faced with such a prospect, Sarah easily could have given into feelings of fear. But she had a son when she was old, she trusted Abraham with him, and she watched as the Lord used her husband to make a new people for Yahweh's greater glory.

The Bible's depiction of a godly life is not breezy and easy. It is often bold and breathtaking. This is true not simply for men, who are called to lead and take action. It is fully true for women. There are all kinds of things to fear in this life:

- a husband leading you astray,
- your plans going up in smoke,
- your children not doing well,
- persecution from the outside.

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<sup>7</sup> Donald P. Senior notes that this teaching is simultaneously "conformative and subversive." See Senior, *1 Peter*, Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, S. J. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical, 2003), 88.

It is easy to live in fear. It is easy for anxiety to slide around you like a cloak and always rest on your back. But note Peter's admonition: *do good*. Here we hear echoes of the call to obedience from earlier. Is your life feeling like it's spinning out of control? By the power of the crucified and resurrected Christ, do good. Go back to the basics. Obey God. Still more, pray for obedience to God.

### **POINT THREE: THE RISK OF SELFISH MANHOOD (1 PET 3:7)**

[7] Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

Here Peter shifts to husbands, and lands a major point for men to consider. It is amazing just how spiritual significance a clause can have in the Bible: "*Live with your wives in an understanding way.*" Here is a summons to attentiveness, kindness, empathy, understanding, much patience, graciousness, listening, and more. We see in this charge how counter-cultural biblical manhood is, just like biblical womanhood. Biblical manhood calls forth kindness, gentleness, tenderness. This is the world's greatest counter to sinful, abusive manhood we'll ever see. There is no message that will more train men to treat women with dignity, propriety, and empathy. The solution to domineering manhood is gospel manhood.

This does not mean, of course, that Peter wished to drain men of all testosterone. Far from it. Peter is the same figure who will say the following about false teachers:

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly ... the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. (2 Pet 2:4-7, 9-10 ESV)

In other words, obeying 1 Peter 3:7 in the Spirit's power does not leave you a rain puddle of a man. *Live with her in an understanding way* does not mean you give up conviction. It does not mean you fail to make decisions, set a vision for your family, take on hardship to provide food and shelter, defy wicked influences that would creep into your home, correct wrong thinking on the part of your wife and children, teach the truth in your family by turning off the TV and throwing the iPhone across the room, and more.

But it does mean this: people who observe you leading in your home observe that you are kind, patient, and empathetic to her. You listen to her. You honor her as a woman, living with knowledge of

her God-made femininity and God-given role.<sup>8</sup> You draw her out in conversation. You don't shut her down. You put aside your own interests to invest in her and care for her. You turn off ESPN, video games, action movies, and whatever else you enjoy, and you plug into life with her.

The Bible's word to both men and women is deeply counter-cultural. To men, God says, *Be kind and live with your wife in an understanding way*. To women, God says, *respect and follow your husband*. Both sexes are to do so in a deeply doxological way. It is the character of God that is bound up in the way we live as men and women. We display the divine design of God when we treat our spouses as God intends.<sup>9</sup> We honor the Lord's creative intent and disclose a greater world to our unbelieving neighbors.

Now we come to one of the most controversial matters in the NT: "*showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel*." The woman, Peter says, must be shown honor. Some commentators note that this is an unusual admonition in Greco-Roman literature. It is not only the woman who honors the man in the biblical mind; the man honors his wife. Think about how counter-intuitive that is. He does not sigh exasperatedly at her, or get mad at her, or turn his back on her. Even as she is a weaker vessel, he sticks with her. He honors her. She is on average weaker than him physically, and she is oriented to nurture and complex emotional care in a way he is not. She is also under his headship, and thus subject to his influence.<sup>10</sup>

A godly husband is not to take these differences as bad or annoying. He is to honor her as weaker. He is not better than her; they are coheirs of divine grace, as Peter says: "*she is an heir with you of the grace of life*" (v. 7). There simply is no framework here for superiority in the man's mind. On the contrary, the sexes are called to esteem and even reverence one another. If the man fails to do so, the Lord will frustrate his life. He will not hear his prayers. He will shut him down. This is a profound call to us husbands to sacrificially, intentionally, and with great care love our wives. Men: are you living up to this standard?

## CONCLUSION

This passage thus ends where it began: highlighting the high stakes of masculine disobedience. The sexes as seen here are deeply enmeshed. 1 Peter 3:1-7 is about "ordered love." It shows us that we do not simply hitch up with somebody of the opposite sex that we think is neat. As believers, we are called to a certain structure in the home that honors the Lord and brings bliss. We do not have any ability to countermand or soften this picture of wedded union. We receive this portrait of Christian matrimony as impossibly good.

The world seeks after fairytale love but cannot find it. It is only in gospel-shaped marriages that God's will for husband and wife is expressed and realized. We are not perfect, unfortunately; but we are able by the aid of divine grace to taste marital pleasure that no one else can. As we prayerfully work on our marriages, fine-tuning them, and repenting of sin in light of passages like 1 Peter 3, we experience the satisfaction that can only come from living in the will of God.

The marriage that humanity dreams of and still dares to believe in is possible to find. But you

<sup>8</sup> See Schreiner, *1 Peter*, 159-60; also Wayne Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 143.

<sup>9</sup> For an introductory resource on God's intention for manhood and womanhood, see Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Surrey: Christian Focus, 2016).

<sup>10</sup> See Grudem, *First Epistle of Peter*, 144.

cannot enter into it by virtue of good looks, a swollen bank account, a picturesque setting, or any other earthly device. It is only through the cross of Christ that we may discover *ordered love*. It is only when we know the Savior by confession and repentance that we may savor his affection for us, his bride, the church. Through faith, we may honor God as husbands and wives according to his wise, pure, and sin-killing plan.

This covenantal framework the world now disdains. Christian matrimony seems a bygone part of a halcyon past. But this is not reality. Soon, very soon, all the cosmos will gape as the Son, the strong protector of his people, returns in splendor, routs his enemies, and ushers his bride into the place he has prepared for her. Ordered love will overtake all the earth, and the marriage feast the saints and apostles and martyrs have awaited will begin, and endure, stretching into all the ages of time and beyond.

**A Review of Wayne Braudrick.**  
***Whatever Happened to Manhood:***  
***A Return to Biblical Manhood.***  
**Silverton: Lampion Press, 2015. 139pp. \$14.99.**

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The war against boys has been going on for several decades now, and it is beginning to bear its bitter fruit. Fewer and fewer young men are willing to stand up and be leaders, to take responsibility for their actions and those of others, to be the spiritual heads of their families and the role models of their communities. They prefer to remain adolescents forever: not men, but guys or dudes or “bros.”<sup>1</sup>

The deck has been strongly stacked against them. Even as schools have beaten the fight out of their male charges, television sitcoms have trained the fathers of these emasculated boys to view themselves as comic figures with no real authority. Their job is to drink beer, watch sports, and horse around with their buddies, while their wives do the real work of holding the home together. They’re nice guys, good for a laugh, but they are not to be taken seriously.

One would have expected a concerted outcry from the church followed by a flood of books, seminars, and workshops calling on men to shake off these stereotypes and become again the men God created them to be. But that has not happened. There was, of course, Promise Keepers, and thank God for that group, but its influence has dwindled. Focus on the Family and the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood have ministered powerfully in this area, as have the filmmakers who gave us *Fireproof* and *Courageous*, but their work has not been taken up by the church and society as a whole.

It was, therefore, with a great sigh of relief that I discovered Wayne Braudrick’s *Whatever Happened to Manhood: A Return to Biblical Manhood*. Finally, someone was speaking out clearly and boldly

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<sup>1</sup> This review was originally published at [theimaginativeconservative.org](http://theimaginativeconservative.org). “Whatever Happened to Manhood,” accessed February 17, 2016, <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2016/01/a-review-of-whatever-happened-to-manhood-a-return-to-biblical-manhood.html>.

about this issue. In the midst of a billion dollar self-help industry, someone had written a book with the sole purpose of helping men be men. Not helping them to get rich, or win friends and influence people, or find their best life now—just to be the men God created them to be.

Mr. Braudrick, senior pastor of Frisco Bible Church in Frisco, Texas, spares no punches in calling men to live up to a biblical ideal: one which expects them to be focused servant leaders who are true to their word, who fight for the right, who commit themselves to life-long learning, and who form strong, lasting friendships.

Mr. Braudrick, thankfully, does not overwhelm us with statistics; still, he does do well to begin with a few revealing stats on the issue of trustworthiness. According to a 2009 study by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, whereas “51% of teenagers 17 and under believe that lying and cheating are necessary to succeed,” only 10% of people over 50 share that belief (12). This shift in attitude has been particularly strong amongst men, rendering them less likely (and able) to live up to God’s call to honesty and integrity.

How quaint it sounds today to praise someone for being a man of his word. Yet that is the biblical ideal from which our culture has fallen. Though it is certainly true that a good man is hard to find, I must agree with Mr. Braudrick that “a reliable man is hard to find” (25). The fault for that lies not only with dishonest men but with a society that no longer expects men to be honest: that, sadly, takes for granted that they will lie and cheat.

This is even more the case, Mr. Braudrick argues, with the lost virtue of focus. We live in “a time and place where males are *expected* to lose focus and are *applauded* for being distracted. Our current culture produces male losers greatly because it reinforces lack of focus in men” (34). Then comes the sting in the tail: “Wonderfully, the common culture generally admires the focused woman. Yet the focused male is considered a threat” (34).

Mr. Braudrick notes this irony—that women are celebrated for embodying masculine virtues while men are ridiculed or attacked for doing so—several times throughout his book; but he never does so in a way that denigrates women. His goal is not to “put women in their place,” but to call men to return to their proper, God-given place. Why, he asks, does our culture applaud diversity in everything except the diverse gifts and natures of the sexes?

For too long, our society has allowed men to slip into narcissism, pornography and hurriedness, afflictions which Mr. Braudrick wisely treats as intoxicants. The sirens of self-centeredness, porn, and false urgency cause men to loathe themselves, to lose their capacity to think, and to sacrifice their freedom and their peace. In the end, such insecure, addicted young men become cynical, crotchety old men.

Robbed of their integrity, their focus, and their will to lead and serve, men abdicate their responsibility to be the “point man” and “primary scout” of their family (58). Ceding all control to their wives, they retreat into their “man cave,” leaving their wives not only to fight the battles of the family but the battles of the community as well.

Holding up Boaz from the Book of Ruth as the supreme male role model of a kinsman-redeemer who is both kind and powerful, Mr. Braudrick challenges his fellow men to revive their lost passion to “do justice; love mercy; walk humbly; [and] fight to protect the weak” (99). Let us think of ourselves again as heroes and warriors, but thoughtful ones who act rather than react, who learn from their mistakes, and who know how to put their own lives and actions in the wider perspective of eternity.

Finally, Mr. Braudrick counsels men to invest themselves in committed, intimate male friendships. Rather than give in to the social stigma that labels close male friends as closet homosexuals, we

must boldly reclaim the kind of life-changing, courage-enhancing bond that formed between David and Jonathan. Men need strong, fearless men to lift them up, even as they need themselves to lift up men who are younger or weaker or less sure of themselves.

Over a decade before he began his famous collaboration with Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein wrote the lyrics for a song that, though Mr. Braudrick does not reference it, sums up powerfully his vision for what men can do when they bond with other men and, together, live out the fullness of their God-given masculinity:

Give me some men who are stout-hearted men,  
Who will fight for the right they adore.  
Start me with ten who are stout-hearted men  
And I'll soon give you ten thousand more.  
Oh! Shoulder to shoulder and bolder and bolder,  
They grow as they go to the fore.  
Then there's nothing in the world can halt or mar a plan,  
When stout-hearted men can stick together man to man.

That is the call. Let us pray the church will both invite and challenge men to live up to it. And, by so doing, sweep away the false sitcom stereotypes and destructive educational initiatives that doom would-be stout-hearted men to a perpetual adolescence.



**A Review of Joe Rigney.**

***The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts.***  
**Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 272 pp. \$14.99.**

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**A** generation has been influenced by voices such as John Piper and David Platt to recognize that God is supreme and glorious, our delight should be rooted in him above all things, and these realities are to result in a lifestyle that aims to sacrifice for the sake of loving others and reaching the nations. This vision has captivated the hearts of many in our day and rightly so. It does, however, lead to some questions upon further reflection. When I get beyond Bible study, prayer, and the gathering of the church, how do I live the rest of my life under this vision? Am I allowed to enjoy things other than God, or is that always constituted as idolatry? How can playing with my kids, loving my spouse, eating delicious food, playing sports, or doing a job be done in such a way as to make much of God? Building on the vision of a God-centered worldview, Joe Rigney sets out to answer these very questions.

Rigney, Assistant Professor Theology and Christian Worldview at Bethlehem College and Seminary, wrote this book “for people who sincerely want to glorify God in all they do but find themselves wrestling with what the God-centered life actually looks like in practice” (20). In other words, what are we to do with the things of earth? Renounce them? Enjoy them? Both? Rigney’s basic thesis runs as follows: “And in and through all these things [of earth], I want to work with you for your joy in the living and personal God who gave you all these things and delivered you from sin and death through the work of his Son and Holy Spirit that you might enjoy him and them, and him in them, forever” (25). With an emphasis on Scripture and many dialogue partners (the main four being Jonathan Edwards, C.S. Lewis, John Piper, and Doug Wilson), the author sets out to show how we can glorify God by enjoying him *and* his gifts.

Much of Rigney’s reflection is Trinitarian. The author says, “Much of the content of this book might be viewed as an application of the Trinity to various aspects of practical theology and Christian living” (35). The connection to the book’s subject is seen in the relationship between God’s glory, the

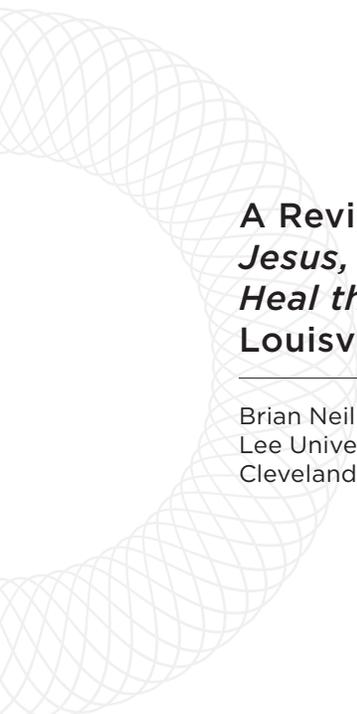
Trinitarian relationship of the Godhead (*perichoresis*), and the created world (chapters 1-4). The glory of God, says Rigney, is the “Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit knowing, loving, and rejoicing in each other from all eternity” (41). This love God has for himself pours forth ultimately in the creation of the world and this world is a narrational communication of his glory. As creatures who are finite in nature, we are called to love God and enjoy the good gifts he has given us to enjoy.

With that basic framework in mind, Rigney helpfully guides the reader through discussion about how to do this without being idolatrous (chapter 5), the rhythms of direct and indirect Godwardness (chapter 6), relating to the world as man made in God’s image (i.e. prophet, priest, and king; chapter 7), and what it looks like practically to enjoy things that are not God for the glory of God (chapter 8). He also wisely answers several potential objections to his argument, dealing with sacrifice, self-denial, and generosity (chapter 9), the “wartime” lifestyle (chapter 10), and issues of loss, suffering, and death (chapter 11). We are encouraged in the end to embrace our creatureliness, glorify God, and enjoy his gifts appropriately.

Thus, Rigney seeks to show how enjoying God’s gifts is an extension of our worship of him without becoming idolaters or ascetics, and this is an immensely helpful contribution. Some readers may be slowed down by certain points of theological foundation, but it is absolutely necessary to his argument and shows how all of these matters of glorifying and delighting relate back to God who knows, loves, and delights in himself as Trinitarian. In other words, it shows Christians another reason why it is so crucial to be well-versed in Trinitarian theology. Rigney’s chapter on “Desiring Not-God” was also immensely insightful, giving practical vignettes on how this vision of the Christian life works itself out in practical living. Many readers will relate to this author, who expresses the tensions he has had to work through biblically and practically to make this vision a reality. It is good to not simply be given a list of laws regarding how one is to do this but also to struggle through, pray over, and work diligently before God to honor him in the ways written in these pages.

One minor question I would raise for the book came in chapter 7 dealing with “Naming the World.” Rigney, here and elsewhere, conceives of the image of God as functional in nature, seeing us as priests, kings, and prophets here to fulfill the cultural mandate (Gen 1:27). I see the warrant for this, but expanding on these points, Rigney argues there is a progression we should pursue, where we start as priests (basic transmission and exposition of God’s law), mature into kings (making wise decisions as we internalize God’s law), and eventually become full-fledged prophets (tearing down old kingdoms and building new ones with visionary words; 142-43). While I understand the logic of this progression, it seems to be lacking in biblical warrant and pushing the analogy for the image of God a bit far. Also, it seems he could have made his argument within this chapter just as effectively without using that particular point. On the whole, this is a very minor quibble regarding a book that will benefit readers immensely on a number of levels.

While challenging at points, Rigney’s work should enjoy wide readership from laypeople, pastors, and students alike. Those who have delved into Piper’s corpus (as well as Edwards and Lewis to some degree) will see this as a worthy extension of that theology. And while written in a similar vein to works such as *Becoming Worldly Saints* by Michael Wittmer and *Ordinary* by Michael Horton, Rigney’s work goes further in providing theological foundation for such a worldview. God has called us to love him supremely, fully, and expansively, and one of the main ways he does this is through the divine grace and glory mediated to us through his gifts (114). May this book faithfully lead readers to understand that we do not have to choose between a passion for God’s glory and a passion for our joy, nor do we need to choose between a love for God and a love for his gifts.



## A Review of Jack Rogers.

*Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church.* Revised and Expanded Edition.

Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009. 208 pp. \$18.00.

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Jack Rogers's revised edition of his book *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality: Explode the Myths, Heal the Church* was originally published in 2006 by Westminster John Knox Press. In the new revised and expanded edition of 2009, Rogers has added an eighth chapter ("All Are One in Christ Jesus"), an Appendix, and a Study Guide for using the book written by David Maxwell. While traditional reviews tend to summarize each chapter's content, in what follows I will instead offer an article of critique of various aspects of Rogers's book. With the Supreme Court's ruling in June of 2015 legalizing same-sex marriage, a renewed look at Rogers's arguments seems in order, especially in light of the fact that Rogers continues to influence at least the Presbyterian Church in America. What is more, Rogers himself acknowledges, positively mind you, that "We are witnessing a profound transformation in attitudes toward people who are LGBT throughout many American denominations" (144).

Rogers's book begins in a very benign fashion. He traces his progression of thought on the same-sex issue beginning with a brief history of his life starting in 1930's Nebraska and continuing to his tenure at Fuller Theological Seminary while also working in the Presbyterian Church. Rogers's opening salvo into the discussion is already fraught with difficulties when he moves the discussion from the sphere of biblical "authority" to the realm of "interpretation" (6, 10–11). Of course he may not word his approach in this fashion, but in fact this is the heart of his thesis and approach. Directly connected to this thesis is his attempt in chapter 7 to show how the historic Confessions of the Reformed tradition also have gotten it "wrong" on the issue of allowing full "rights" and "equality" for practicing same-sex parishioners and clergy.<sup>1</sup> It is Rogers's extended discussions on how to interpret the Bible and where

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<sup>1</sup> Rogers insists that the *Constitution* of Presbyterian churches, which is made up of the *Book of Order* and *Book of Confessions* are flawed (see esp. his focus on §4.108; 7.248; 7.249). Eleven theological documents comprise the Book of Confessions.

authority lays that is most troubling.<sup>2</sup> By dismissing the authority of the passages of the Bible dealing with same-sex issues, Rogers feels all the more emboldened to rework the historic confessions where needed to push his agenda.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the use of the phrase “Heal the Church” in his sub-title is misleading. In fact, Rogers’s focus is on the post-1958 merger of the Presbyterian Church US (PCUS) and the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) and their subsequent movement towards full acceptance of practicing same-sex parishioners and clergy. Rogers by no means speaks for the “Church.” A clear example of this is seen in the statistics of the Presbyterian Church alone. With the PCUSA numbering approximately 1.66 million adherents, the Presbyterian Church worldwide dwarfs Rogers’s “church” with membership numbering approximately 75 million. As is common of many mainline denominations in the US (e.g., Episcopal/Anglicans) the PCUSA may have caved to the pressure to allow practicing same-sex people at all levels of the church, but they do not speak for the Presbyterian Church worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Ironically, since 2005 (one year before Rogers published his first edition), until 2014 the membership of the PCUSA has dropped 35 percent!<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is quite clear that most Presbyterians do not share Rogers’s optimism and interpretive approach to the Scriptures.<sup>6</sup>

The next major concern I have with Rogers’s book is his lack of any novel approaches to the Bible and the interpretation of the main texts dealing with same-sex concerns. His idea of “Exploding the Myths” (another part of Rogers’s sub-title), at least when it comes to the key biblical texts, rests predominantly on secondary sources and scholarship. As I read through his biblical arguments I found them lacking in depth. Indeed, he only devotes ten pages to cover all the main texts dealing with the topic (pp. 67–76).<sup>7</sup> What is more, his parroting of the conclusions of affirming scholars while downplaying the counter arguments of non-affirming scholars is problematic to say the least.<sup>8</sup> One of the

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Rogers addresses specifically the Heidelberg and the Westminster Larger Catechisms and how they have been “misunderstood” in the same-sex discussion. His goal is to reinterpret or amend them to support same-sex “equality.”

2 In chapter 4, Rogers lays out seven guidelines for interpreting the Bible based upon the historic confessions of the Reformed church. These for the most part are sound in principle but not applied equally by Rogers. In essence Rogers seems to give preferential treatment to guideline 5 and the rule to interpret the Bible with a view toward loving one’s neighbour. Again, while sound, loving one’s neighbour does not connote turning a blind eye to sin.

3 Of course Rogers is not alone in this agenda. I merely use him as the spokesperson because of his stance in his book. Rogers’s insistence that the creeds and confessions do not address/condemn the issue of homosexuality and that therefore neither should the Church is misleading. As a rule the creeds were never meant to discuss sexuality directly. Sexuality is an ancillary topic in the creeds. Note specifically that the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed do not address sexuality but rather basic tenets of faith and doctrine. The irony in Rogers’s desire to point out the “flaws” of past culturally conditioned interpretations of the confessions is that he fails to consider that perhaps current culturally conditioned interpretations may also be flawed (cf. pp. 109, 126).

4 A poignant example of the hubris of western churches vis-à-vis more conservative churches such as those in Africa is the recent development within the Anglican Church. As a result of the large and growing numbers and influence of African Anglicans in comparison to the dying Episcopal Church in America, the Primates of the Anglican Communion voted to discipline the Episcopal Church for their heterodoxy on same-sex marriage.

5 These statistics are according to <http://www.layman.org/pcusa-continues-membership-decline-92433-members-gone-in-2014/> and the PCUSA website <http://www.pcusa.org/news/2015/5/12/pcusa-membership-lies-medium-sized-congregations/>.

6 Of course causation may be due to many factors, but across the board in the US, many mainline churches continue to hemorrhage members. Many people feel this is directly related to the general loosening of ecclesial standards and a rejection of biblical authority. Rogers himself notes the loss of congregations from the PCUSA and the internal turmoil created when the church voted to allow practicing same-sex members and clergy (e.g., pp. 11–13, 53, 112).

7 Rogers does add another seven pages for his critique of Robert Gagnon’s positions but the biblical texts are addressed more tangentially here.

8 Rogers’s extended attack (pp. 91–98) on Jerry Falwell and James Dobson under the heading “Male Gender Superiority

leading voices on the same-sex discussion from the non-affirming side is Robert Gagnon. Even though Rogers interacts with Gagnon's work (see esp. pp. 77–83), he consistently misrepresents Gagnon's arguments and conclusions (the “straw man” fallacy) found in his seminal work *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon, 2001). I have read Gagnon's book and Rogers's characterization of Gagnon's points are in many cases taken out of context and in other cases are simply false.<sup>9</sup> Because this is a “revised and expanded” edition, one would think that it would have behooved Rogers to have at least attempted to respond to Gagnon's rebuttals of his work. On this Rogers is silent. Rogers's minimal focus on the biblical texts relating to the topic is perhaps reflective of the fact that he is foremost a theologian and not a biblical scholar (pp. 6–8). Nevertheless, when writing such a book one must be prepared to offer more than a mere regurgitation of positions held by other scholars, positions in many cases that have been debunked by even non-affirming scholars.<sup>10</sup>

Another logical fallacy is Rogers's extensive appeal to faulty analogies in chapters 2 and 3 as a means of defending his position (I will handle his analogies in chapter 8 below). As is common of many “affirming” scholars, Rogers appeals to the analogies of slavery, women's rights, and divorce and remarriage to justify his acceptance of same-sex practices in the Church (I will handle the divorce and remarriage issue in a moment).<sup>11</sup> With a desire to bring about justice and love for all people, his basic assertion is this: in the same way the Church got it wrong on these key social issues due to a flawed interpretation of the Text, so too the Church is now getting it wrong today by not accepting practicing same-sex people as members and clergy. Now while the slavery and women's rights issues are indeed a terrible blot on America's and the Church's past, these injustices are by no means the same as the issue confronting the Church today vis-à-vis homosexuality. Space will not allow for a full unpacking of the problems with Rogers's logic but suffice it to say that three major premises push against Rogers's conclusions. First, at no point in the Bible does being a slave or a woman equate to inherent sinfulness. However, despite Rogers's attempts to prove otherwise, the Bible is very clear that God views same-sex acts in any form as sinful. On this point alone the analogy breaks down. Second, in both the cases of slavery and women's rights the Bible is already laying the groundwork for their demise and abolition. Genesis 2 shows complete equality between the sexes. It is only the Fall that undermines that. Yet, despite the Fall, God still called women as leaders throughout the OT and NT (e.g., Miriam, Deborah,

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and Opposition to Same-sex Marriage” is a key example of Rogers's animosity towards those holding a traditional interpretation of Scripture. The irony of Rogers's attack on Dobson in particular is that he berates Dobson for admitting he is not a “biblical scholar” (p. 94) yet Rogers himself is not one either yet asserts his position as correct.

<sup>9</sup> I will not attempt to engage in discussing Rogers's numerous misrepresentations of Gagnon's work seeing how Gagnon himself has rebutted Rogers's conclusions at length in no less than five extensive online posts. See for example <http://www.robagnon.net/RevRogers.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> See for example p. 67 n. 3. Here Rogers's offers the problematic argument that the Hebrew word *yada* in Genesis 19 means literally “to know” socially, not sexually. This theory proposed by D. Sherwin Bailey (*Homosexuality and the Western Tradition* [London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955], 1–8) and revived by John Boswell (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], 93–94) has been rejected by a number of scholars on both sides of the discussion.

<sup>11</sup> Another problem with the slavery and women's rights analogies is that these two cultural conventions (i.e., rooted in patriarchy and general oppression) were not viewed as sin in the Bible but have moved to the realm of being sinful in today's discussions. Conversely same-sex activity, which is clearly condemned as sin in the Bible, is now being moved into the realm of cultural preferences.

Jael, Esther, Huldah, the female leaders noted at the close of Romans, Priscilla, etc.). As for the slavery issue, I actually agree with Rogers (pp. 18–25) that the Church misread the Bible (especially Genesis 9:20-27). The Bible nowhere says that God relegated Africans to slavery. This is purely reading into the text something that is not there. While the practice of enslaving people is indeed a sad moment in the Church's past, especially in the South, this does not equate with the same-sex argument. Again, slavery was a result of the Fall and the hardness of people's hearts in their treatment of their fellow person. The overall trajectory of the biblical witness betrays God's desire to rid the world of the institution of slavery, especially in the teaching of Paul (cf. Gal 3:28; Philemon).<sup>12</sup> Third, the premise that justice and love must prevail in all of these cases does not mean that the authority of God's Word has to be subordinated to a cultural agenda. It is true that love should be extended to all people, regardless of orientation; however, today's concept of "justice" does not trump the authority of the Bible, especially for those practicing sin.

Next, even though the issue of divorce and remarriage is actually a closer analogy for what Rogers is arguing, it too is not an accurate parallel. Divorce is actually allowed in the Scriptures for infidelity or desertion (Matt 19:9; 1 Cor 7:27-40) and was allowed by Moses even though God hated it (cf. Deut 24:1; Matt 19:8; Mark 10:4). The dominant issue for the Church has always been the ability of a divorcee to remarry. Unlike the passages dealing with same-sex concerns, this is truly a gray area where interpretation as opposed to authority comes into play. I think the Church has been too harsh with those who truly fall into the category of a biblically allowable divorce and at the same time too lenient with those who have divorced for reasons not noted in biblical teaching. Regardless of what one's thinking is on this, the reality remains that the Bible supports the union of a man and a woman, but not those of the same sex.

Finally, as noted in my opening paragraph, chapter 8 is one of the additions to this revised edition. Rogers's analogies in this chapter are the most hermeneutically problematic. His comparison of the modern-day acceptance of practicing same-sex people to the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), Jesus' teaching on marriage, divorce, and eunuchs (Matt 19:10-12), Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-39), and the inclusion of Gentiles in Acts 15 is not at all convincing or hermeneutically sound. First, as with the issues of slavery and women, being a Samaritan or a Gentile is not inherently sinful. Second, Rogers's assertion that Jesus' first category in his trifold categorization of eunuchs (i.e., those born eunuchs) was Jesus' way of including sexual minorities is a clear example of eisegesis (reading into the text). In the context Jesus is speaking of those who remain celibate, not practicing "sexual minorities" (p. 130). Finally, the inclusion of the Ethiopian Eunuch does not equate to the acceptance of practicing same-sex people. Rogers's matter-of-fact presentation in this chapter is simply lacking on so many levels.

While I could continue giving example after example of Rogers's faulty logic and troubling positions embraced within his book, I will conclude by pointing out a few truly flawed perceptions promulgated by Rogers. First, his use of pejoratives to demean his opponents is unfortunate. Throughout his book he states that those who oppose his view on allowing same-sex people access to full membership and leadership in the Church are in fact denying these people their full "rights" and "equality" (e.g.,

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<sup>12</sup> The hardest text to deal with in the Bible in relation to slavery is found in Lev 25:44-46. The context seems to intimate the enslavement of conquered nations surrounding Israel. It is possible that the enslavement of these foreigners was better than killing them. Interestingly, Deut 23:15-16 undermines even this provision by allowing escaped slaves to remain free and unoppressed.

pp. 16, 17, 70, 72, 76, 78, 82–84 etc.).<sup>13</sup> This is again misleading. Most Christians do not want to take away same-sex people’s rights and equality when attending church, being members, or becoming clergy; however, they do want to make sure that any person practicing sin openly and unrepentantly are not allowed to be members and clergy. By this logic, the Church would have to allow full access to unrepentant pedophiles, adulterers, fornicators, etc. to membership and clergy (cf. 1 Cor 5). Second, Rogers’ elevation and endorsement of the conclusions of secular institutions such as the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in regards to same-sex activity is problematic (p. 95–97). The Church should not allow secular institutions to set our moral standards.<sup>14</sup> Third, Rogers constant use of anecdotal evidence as a reason for allowing practicing same-sex people full access to all levels of the Church must be rejected (see for example pp. 1–3, 12, 17, 101–4).<sup>15</sup> Emotional appeals are coercive.<sup>16</sup> Finally, Rogers’s assertion that same-sex relationships and marriages are equal to heterosexual marriages is simply not true.<sup>17</sup> His citations of the data are incomplete and selective. Evidence has been given proving just the opposite.<sup>18</sup> In light of these and many other issues, I cannot recommend Rogers’ book. If anything, it is a sad reflection of the state of western churches.

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13 Rogers really means “practicing” and unrepentant same-sex people, not just those who struggle with same-sex attractions.

14 It is a well-known fact that when dealing with same-sex concerns, these secular institutions are agenda-driven as opposed to allowing the true findings of science to inform their policies. See for example the extensive discussion in Gagnon’s book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 395–429.

15 Rogers (pp. 89–90) uses the sexual sins of some “straight” clergy members as a reason for allowing same-sex activity within the Church. While the Church’s failure to deal properly with sexual sin by its clergy is troubling, two wrongs do not make a right!

16 We all know of same-sex couples that appear to have all the trappings of a “regular” family. While there are always exceptions to the rule, it is by far too early to know what the long term effects are going to be on society now that same-sex marriage has been affirmed by the Supreme Court.

17 Rogers would be well-served to read Rosaria Butterfield’s book *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert, Expanded Edition: An English Professor’s Journey into Christian Faith* (Pittsburgh, PA: Covenant & Crown Publications, 2014) for a perspective of a same-sex person’s journey from being a radical lesbian feminist to a person endorsing and living a biblical model of heterosexual marriage.

18 See for example the studies cited in Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 416–29 and the work of Michael Brown, *Can You Be Gay and Christian?* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2014), 186–200.



**A Review of Courtney Reissig.**  
***The Accidental Feminist: Restoring Our Delight  
in God's Good Design.*<sup>1</sup>**  
**Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015. 176 pp. \$14.99.**

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Megan Hill | Pastor's Wife  
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**W**hen I was a young girl, my friends and I spent our time acting out epic stories. My friend Courtney and I were undiscovered and extremely talented ballerinas who were often held captive by an evil dancing mistress. Ami and I played women in the grand tradition of *Little House on the Prairie*. We dressed up in bonnets and shawls and parked my little brother outside the door with his toy shotgun. At Katie's house, we were modern teens, orphaned and abandoned to survive in whatever harsh wilderness we could imagine that day. In a girlhood's worth of Saturday afternoons, we constructed elaborate narratives for our imaginary lives as artists, pioneers, and survivors.

My life today as a suburban pastor's wife and mother of three is hardly the exciting story I imagined when I was 10. No spotlights and stages or wolf attacks and imminent starvation here. Just laundry, dirty dishes, and more laundry. Still, there's a narrative if I think about it.

The fact is we all have stories to tell. And this is precisely the point of Courtney Reissig's new book *The Accidental Feminist: Restoring Our Delight in God's Good Design*. Whether we dance or do laundry, Reissig wants women to ask themselves what story they're telling with their lives.

## **TWO KINDS OF STORIES**

It's a good question. Recently, I re-read the introduction to Lena Dunham's new memoir, *Not That*

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<sup>1</sup> Megan Hill is a pastor's wife and writer living in Massachusetts and is the author of *Praying Together: The Priority and Privilege of Prayer in Our Homes, Communities and Churches* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016). This review originally appeared on The Gospel Coalition's blog (<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-accidental-feminist>) and is reprinted here with permission.

*Kind of Girl*. Dunham, creator of the HBO television series *Girls* and a pioneer of this generation's feminism, writes, "There is nothing gutsier to me than a person announcing that their story is one that deserves to be told, especially if that person is a woman."<sup>2</sup> The story Dunham tells is quintessentially modern—unapologetic and intensely personal. Such is the spirit of our age: I tell my story because it proves something about me. It says who I am, what I'm capable of, and what I want to accomplish. I'm the meaning of my own story.

Feminism like Dunham's may come naturally to us as self-focused sinners (hence, the *accidental* in Reissig's title), but only God's good design for womanhood truly enables us to thrive and see ourselves as part of a bigger story.

In *The Accidental Feminist*, Reissig traces the assumptions of feminism in its several historical phases ("waves"). She reveals a feminism that tells the story of an individual—who I am, what I'm capable of, and what I want to accomplish. In contrast, she presents womanhood as a story about God—who he is, who I am in relation to him, and what he is accomplishing in my life. As Reissig explains, "God cares about what story we tell with our lives. We are his image-bearers. Our very lives, for better or worse, tell a story of him." (133)

## DIFFERENT HERMENEUTIC

The language of life-as-storytelling may sound familiar to readers of Christian feminists like Rachel Held Evans (*A Year of Biblical Womanhood*) and Sarah Bessey (*Jesus Feminist*). Bessey, for example, writes: "As a Jesus feminist, I believe we are part of the trajectory of the redemption story for women. . . . We are the people of God, and we are moving forward."<sup>3</sup>

Reissig's propositions, though, are guided by a different hermeneutic. Bessey proposes an unfolding story, one that reimagines itself in the life of every woman and advances what she sees as God's inclination toward greater equality and authority for women. Reissig, on the other hand, argues in reference to an unmoving source—God's infallible and authoritative Word. While Christian feminists may seek to tell a new story with their lives, Reissig advocates retelling God's story.

As she unpacks the biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption, authority, and community, Reissig prompts readers to consider what story they're telling with everything from their homes to their families to their clothing choices. She asks, for example, "Based on the biblical standards for purity and the fact that your body is not your own, are there any pieces in your closet that tell a different story than the one you are intending to tell with your body?" (111) Reissig fearlessly tackles tough subjects like marital submission and authority in the church, while appealing to relevant Scripture passages and setting the issues in the context of God's big-picture design.

## THE STORY OUR WOMANHOOD TELLS

Unlike some other books on womanhood, *The Accidental Feminist* is applicable to women in all seasons

<sup>2</sup> Lena Dunham, *Not That Kind of Girl: A Young Woman Tells You What She's "Learned"* (New York: Random House, 2014), xvi.

<sup>3</sup> Sarah Bessey, *Jesus Feminist* (New York: Howard Books, 2013), 30-31.

and circumstances of life. Each of her seven chapters concludes with practical words to both single and married women and lays out a way of life all women can embrace. Readers won't find pat solutions to the work-life dilemma, but they will find a rich framework to help them make wise and God-glorifying choices:

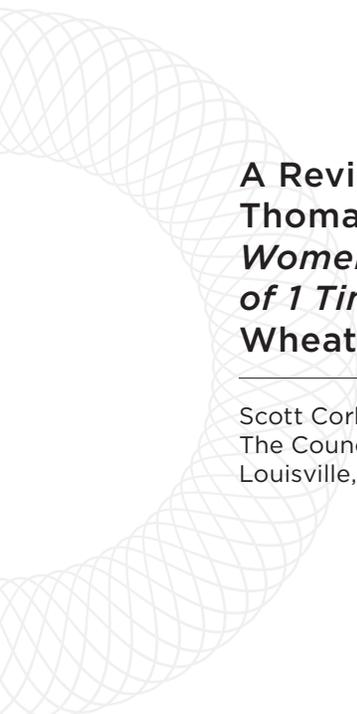
If our womanhood is meant to tell a story about God and his glory in creation, about God and his good design, about God and his purpose in making us image-bearers, then womanhood matters significantly. It has eternal and spiritual implications that go beyond our mere ability to preach on a Sunday morning or whether we submit to our husbands. (154–55)

Much of the time no one is listening to the stories we tell with our lives. Why I purchase one shirt at Target rather than another may go totally unnoticed. Why I say one thing to my husband and not another or why I cook this and not that or write this article and not that one often has no effect on anyone but me. Ultimately, I do these things because I belong to God and answer to his command: “You shall be holy for I am holy” (1 Pet 1:16). My family and friends may never appreciate the story I tell with my womanhood. Thankfully, my success as a godly woman does not depend on it. “At the end of the day,” Reissig writes, “we can trust that God’s Word has spoken clearly on the matter of womanhood. And we are not God’s interpreter. He is.” (154)

### **THE VERY BEST STORY**

In C. S. Lewis’s *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lucy Pevensie discovers a story in a magician’s spell-book on a page marked “For the Refreshment of the Spirit.” As she reads, Lucy finds herself drawn into the narrative, absorbed by its glorious plot and forgetting herself altogether. This story affects Lucy so much that thereafter she compares every other story to that one.

Reissig offers such a story. It’s not a story of autonomy and independence. It’s not even a story of trajectory or reinvention. It’s the old, old story—the very best story, the story on which godly women live and act out everyday with our lives. For women tired of looking for meaning in themselves and their own stories, tells a story that refreshes our spirits—a story in which women can find true meaning and lose themselves for a lifetime.



**A Review of Andreas Köstenberger and  
Thomas R. Schreiner, eds.  
*Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application  
of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*. Third Edition.  
Wheaton: Crossway, 2016. 432pp. \$18.99.**

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**O**n the writing of books on gender there is no end. Book after book passes through bookstores, into personal libraries, and back into used bookstores in karmic circularity; first editions become seconds, seconds become thirds—and does anyone really want thirds?

The other curious fact is that for those huddling together under the complementarian banner—as one of the editors of this volume has suggested elsewhere—the arguments for the complementarian position have changed little since the clunky term found a home in the late 1980's. Why then a third edition of *Women in the Church*? Does anyone really want thirds?

In this third edition of *Women in the Church: An Interpretation & Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, Köstenberger & Schreiner are hoping to introduce a “substantially new” edition of *Women in the Church* because they “believe that as those committed to historic Christianity, we cannot afford to take our cue from the rapidly changing culture.” Indeed, “being a Bible-believing Christian in this world—or taking one’s cues from Scripture alone—means swimming upstream and being counter-cultural.” (21)

What one finds, then, is not merely old chapters with new typesetting but a substantial revision indeed. Whereas the second edition clocks in right around 180 pages, readers of the third edition will traverse 350 pages (including an appendix) of densely argued, textual evidence for the contributors’ complementarian rendering of a most difficult passage. Virtually every chapter has been updated and expanded to include recent scholarship.

## **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS**

On a structural level, this book helpfully moves from “behind the text” reconstruction (chapter 1), to

textual and syntactical issues related to interpretation (chapters 2 and 3), engagement with reception history and recent scholarship (4 and 5) and then current issues and application (6 and 7). In that way, the book has a hermeneutical movement from “behind the text” to “in front of the text” discussion, helping to highlight the interpretive issues at each level.

The table of contents for the third edition of *Women in the Church* closely corresponds to the second edition, the main difference being the replacement of Dorothy Patterson’s chapter on what women can do in the church with a chapter by Denny Burk on the history of rendering ἀϑεντεῖν (*authentēin*) in Bible translation. The following is a brief summary of the unique contribution of each chapter.

S. M. Baugh explores the first-century background of Ephesus and seeks to highlight the Sitz im Leben to help unpack the context of 1 Timothy. In chapter 2, Al Wolters argues for the meaning of ἀϑεντέω (*authentēo*) as neither pejorative (i.e., “domineer”) or ingressive (i.e., “assume authority”), but rather, either positive or neutral. In addition, Wolters surveys the usage of ἀϑεντέω (*authentēo*) in Christian literature after the apostolic period and finds that the word is often used toward the divine persons, clearly in a positive manner. Wolters’ chapter covers a massive amount of data and will need to be reckoned with by those who dispute his conclusions. In fact, the editors believe that the inclusion of this chapter alone “warrants the production of a third edition.” (20) Köstenberger’s chapter builds on his previous work for the rendering of 1 Tim. 2:9-15 by exploring other uses of the conjunction οὐδέ (*oude*) and arguing that Paul must either be arguing for a positive or a negative function for both teaching (διδάσκω, *didasko*) and exercising authority (ἀϑεντέω, *authentēo*). Köstenberger concludes his chapter with a discourse analysis on 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

Schreiner has substantially re-worked his chapter, engaging with arguments that have developed since recent editions. Schreiner’s ultimate point is that Paul, rooting male-female roles in the creation order, seeks to exhort men and women to live in light of those roles in their churches. Robert Yarbrough’s chapter is also substantially reworked engaging critically with recent scholarship, and dealing with certain hermeneutical “defeaters” levied against the complementarian position. He also spends time highlighting certain figures writing from a complementarian perspective in recent years. He concludes his chapter with a fascinating contextual interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in a non-Western, Islamic context.

In chapter 6, Denny Burk discusses the history of translation for ἀϑεντεῖν (*authentēin*) wherein he considers Linda Belleville’s assertion that the predominant rendering in history is primarily pejorative—an assertion that Burk shows to be specious. Burk also discusses the NIV translation committee’s failure in their rendering ἀϑεντεῖν (*authentēin*) as having an ingressive sense. Because of the decisive work of scholars like Köstenberger and Wolters, this rendering does more harm than good. Burk concludes his chapter with a plea for the committee to reconsider. In the last chapter, “Application: Roundtable Discussion,” the editors join a panel of women and men (including Rosaria Butterfield, Gloria Furman, Mary Kassian, Darrin Patrick, Tony Merida, and more) to discuss various implications for the application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15, with a view toward application in the local church.

There is so much good, helpful material to chew on. The editors have given a thoroughly updated edition that considers new scholarly evidence; re-worked, tightened arguments; and a view to help readers with contemporary issues. Because of these benefits—and not to mention the reception of this volume for a new generation of readers—the publication of this book is welcomed and warranted. Every chapter, building upon the previous chapters, helps the reader to see unequivocally what Paul meant for the conduct of the earliest apostolic communities. Köstenberger and Schreiner have cultivated a tremendous resource that brings light to darkness—clarity to confusion—on an issue of the

utmost importance for ecclesial order and the testimony of the gospel.

## **CRITICISM**

While there is much more to commend than criticize, at times it can be hard to discern who the primary intended audience is. It seems that the authors are trying to write for multiple levels at the same time. Certain chapters seem especially for the wider academy (e.g. Wolters, Köstenberger), others for pastors seeking to understand how to teach the text (e.g. Schreiner, Yarbrough), and some for a wider evangelical constituency (e.g. to some degree Burk, and especially the panelists in the conclusion). When one thinks of the various aims and goals in one volume, it can feel at times to be a bit too ambitious. For instance, there are all sorts of potential readers who might find the conclusion helpful, yet not even be able to engage with Wolters' or Köstenberger's chapters as one needs nothing short of a remedial knowledge of Greek to understand their arguments. Indeed, if one isn't familiar with the minuscule script, they will have a difficult time working through the text—this is to say nothing of understanding things like complementary infinitives or the genitive case.

## **JUDICIOUS COMPLEMENTARIANISM**

The Apostle Paul charges Timothy to guard the good deposit entrusted to him and follow the sound words of Paul's gospel. This calling has likewise been entrusted to those of us who seek to lead others in executing this task as well. While God's word can often be difficult to understand—as the text under consideration surely displays!—it is still good and brings delight to those who have been united to Christ by the Spirit. Pastors and elders are called to defend this divine address not just in its form, but also the direction in which this address seeks to shape the triune God's churches. Christians ought not blush at texts that can frankly feel strange to Western eyes; rather, they ought to delight in the word that communicates the reality that God was in Christ reconciling himself to the world. This grace doesn't merely change hearts, it restores the natural order and helps men and women see the distinctive role given them in order to witness the glory of God cover the face of the earth as the waters cover the sea. This volume will help men and women to articulate and defend just that.

Nevertheless, egalitarian sisters and brothers will no doubt disagree with the conclusions reached in this volume. Yet, one can't walk away from reading this volume with a sense of sympathy for opposing views. The authors offer judicious argumentation and sober exegesis. There's not even a remote sense that these authors are schismatics, arguing for a parochial patriarchalism. Rather, they display love for their egalitarian interlocutors through faithful representation of their arguments, while also leveling their disagreements—which are no doubt resolute—with charity.

It is the hope of this reviewer that discourse surrounding this often explosive and controversial issue within evangelical theology will continue to exhibit such grace in disagreement. May all come, with open Bible, to reason with one another and seek a spiritual unity under God's word that seeks to honor the text wherever it may lead.



**A Review of Robert L. Plummer and Matthew D. Haste.  
*Held in Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage From  
Voices of the Past.*  
Fearn, Highland, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2015. 144 pp.  
\$13.99.**

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**T**here are so many books on marriage.<sup>1</sup> There are a lot of good ones and a lot of not so good ones. Each has their focus and many of them are helpful. When couples read them they are often times looking to them for their wisdom. What can they tell me about marriage that I don't know yet? What can they tell me about how to deal with this or that issue?

With the proliferation of marriage books today one might come to the conclusion that the church has only been offering marital wisdom in the last generation or so. But this would be wrong. The church has had much to say about marriage since its inception.

This is exactly what Robert Plummer and Matthew Haste want to share with Christians in their new book *Held In Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage from Voices of the Past* (Christian Focus, 2015). "Many approach marriage as if it were an adventure into the unknown." (13) While not intending to, marriage couples can act as if they were the first to be married and have a sense of loneliness amidst their marital problems and struggles.

When we study history we find that the questions and struggles we are having today are the same ones other Christians were having centuries ago. The times may be different but the struggles of marriage are always the same. Plummer and Haste draw upon centuries of Christians who have spoken to the realities of marriage. Though there is much wisdom to gain from contemporary voices, the voices of the past have much to say as well.

*Held In Honor* is structured as a devotional. Each day has a short passage on marriage from the past along with a brief historical introduction on the person who wrote it and the context for what

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<sup>1</sup> This review was originally published at [craighurst.wordpress.com](http://craighurst.wordpress.com). "Book Review: Held in Honor," accessed February 18, 2016, <https://craighurst.wordpress.com/2015/11/27/book-to-note-held-in-honor-by-robert-l-plummer-matthew-d-haste/>.

they wrote. Then a short devotional is written based on their advice. The authors are chosen from five eras in Christian history beginning with Iganitius of Antioch in the early 100's and ending with John Piper from the present day.

What is striking about the selections is that the authors have not just chosen the best of the best marital wisdom. They have included some advice that is unwise or unbiblical in order to point us to the truth fund in Scripture. For instance, Ambrosiaster, writing in the 4th century, gives us a window into how the early church viewed marriage as opposed to singleness. The authors point out that singleness was held above marriage and to be preferred. In the accompanying devotional the authors show how marriage is to be valued as an institution of God and how to properly view singleness as a gift from God.

*Held In Honor* is an easy to read devotional drawing on the wisdom of the past concerning the many issues related to marriage and how Scripture speaks to them. This is an enjoyable read and proves that Christians of the past have as much to teach us about marriage as those in the present. This book will help you gain a greater appreciation for voices of the past in regards to the churches teaching on marriage.

