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THE JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

# JBMW

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THE COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL  
MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

# The Danvers Statement

BASED ON OUR UNDERSTANDING OF BIBLICAL TEACHINGS, WE AFFIRM THE FOLLOWING:

- I. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18).
- II. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor. 11:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:12-14).
- III. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen. 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor. 11:7-9).
- IV. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen. 3:1-7, 12, 16).
  - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
- V. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal. 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).
- VI. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
  - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).
  - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).
- VII. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious, or civil—ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan. 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).
- VIII. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim. 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Rather, biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
- IX. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor. 12:7-21).
- X. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.



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## LIKE A STEERSMAN IN A STORM

Jason G. Duesing | Editor  
 Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood  
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Near the end of his life, the pioneer American missionary, Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), returned to America for the first time since he departed nearly 35 years prior.<sup>1</sup> The twice-widowed Judson along with his children came in need of recuperation and rest and were welcomed with virtual celebrity status all along the Eastern seaboard. Instead of rest, Judson was shuttled from meeting to meeting speaking to churches both north and south.

During his stay, Judson met and married his third wife, secured care for his older children, and prepared to return to his Burmese home to finish the gospel work he started. Before leaving America, he gave a parting address on June 30, 1846.<sup>2</sup> Surrounded by a new generation of church leaders and senders of missionaries who were not present when he left in 1812, Judson indicated he felt out of place.

1 For more about Judson see Jason G. Duesing, ed., *Adoniram Judson: A Bicentennial Appreciation of the Pioneer American Missionary* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2012) and Evan Burns, *A Supreme Desire to Please Him* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016). A version of part of this article was published in the *Nelson's Annual Preacher's Source Book*, Vol. 4. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014), 300.

2 "Dr. Judson's Farewell at Boston," in *The Baptist Magazine* (38:1846), 564-66.

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Yet, this did not deter him from challenging his audience to take up the mantle and press forward.

At the start of the address, he likened himself to “a steersman in a storm” who “must keep a steady eye to the compass and a strong arm at the wheel.” Judson’s self-portrait here actually describes quite well his lifelong courageous perseverance in the missionary task and in one way calls to mind the Apostle Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 16:13 for believers to “act like men.”

This three-word phrase “act like men” in English actually comes from a single Greek word and thus can also be translated as “be courageous.” Standing in the midst of four other commands that convey a military theme, Paul is directing the believers how to live as spiritual warriors (see also Eph 6). To “act like men” is a call to an offensive maneuver prompting believers to engage the culture not as fearful children but rather as courageous men. Judson’s life very much is a testimony to this type of courageous engagement, and it is there we see a fitting model of biblical manhood, though not exactly in all the ways one might expect.

The pairing of courage and manhood is a natural one for which even those not viewing the world through biblical spectacles can resonate. Yet, biblical courage is distinct and more defined than a typical rendering of a simple self-sacrificial action or standing to speak when everyone else is silent. To be sure, biblical courage contains these noble feats but is also marked by acts that are less visible, but are nonetheless just as effective for engaging the culture.

For example, Noah’s ark-constructing obedience to God in the midst of an age of great defiance (Luke 17:27) was courageous, but so was Job’s private covenant he made with his eyes (Job 31:1). Stephen preaching and falling before Saul of Tarsus was brave (Acts 7), but so was the steadfast intercession of Epaphras on behalf of the Colossians (Col 4:12). Biblical courage manifests itself in forms both visible and invisible, arrives on the biggest stages of cataclysmic events and resides in the quiet decisions of the mind. But the call to “act like men” is ever present and requires the gift of supernatural vigilance from the Spirit of God, a gift that Judson received in droves. While much is known of Judson’s remarkable courage in the face of deep tragedy, personal loss, and physical trial, here are two examples from Judson’s life of his display of significant, biblical courage in less known areas.

First, Adoniram Judson helped form the first missions sending agency in American history, despite initial opposition by the culture around him. While only a few were contemplating the idea of personal participation in the global missions task, and only a small group of churches in England had formally sent any missionaries by this time, Judson blazed a path that many would follow. As a student he read a sermon by an English preacher that moved him to “break the strong attachment I felt to home and country, and to endure the thought of abandoning all my wonted pursuits and animating prospects.”<sup>3</sup> This resulted in the following personal resolution: “The command of Christ, ‘Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,’ was presented to my mind with such clearness and power, that I came to a full decision, and though great difficulties appeared in my way, resolved to obey the command at all events.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, there was no one to send him.

Even though only a young man with young, supportive friends, Judson managed, by sheer courage and harnessed ambition, to persuade the older church leaders of the need to create a missions sending agency. Though he faced delays and criticism, eventually he saw the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arise out of a network of New England Congregationalist

3 Adoniram Judson to Stephen Chapin, 18 Dec. 1837, quoted in Francis Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Adoniram Judson, D.D.*, vol. 1 (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Company, 1853), 1:51-52.

4 Ibid.

churches.

Second, in 1832, Judson responded to an inquiry from the States to provide his advice to those considering missionary service. In his seventh of ten provisos, he stated, “Beware of pride; not the pride of proud men, but the pride of humble men—the secret pride which is apt to grow out of the consciousness that we are esteemed by the great and good.”<sup>5</sup> Judson knew that survival on the mission field did not solely come at the hands of physical health, wise diplomacy, and dogged commitment to the task. Here he spoke of another internal battle just as draining and every bit as dangerous. For even though the missionary may walk at the ends of the earth, he can neither escape the Spirit of God (Ps 139:9) or the prowling adversary (1 Pet 5:8). To serve with faithfulness in that place requires the biblical courage of self-control and the hunting down and harvesting of sins, like pride, that can easily entangle (1 Pet 2:24).

With this reminder of the call to biblical courage in both seen and unseen forums and despite the changing culture around us, this issue of *JBMW* begins with three essays. First, Thomas White, president of Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio, and CBMW board member, writes on feelings and the transgender experience; Sam Storms, lead pastor for preaching and vision at Bridgeway Community Church in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, kindly shares his thoughts on 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and the relationship between men and women in the local church in his “Ten Things You Should Know Series”; and Adam Kareus, associate pastor of River Valley Community Church in Fort Smith, Arkansas, gives a helpful call to discipleship within families and church families.

This issue also contains two unique studies. Todd R. Chipman, assistant professor of biblical studies at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and pastor of The Master’s Community Church in Kansas City, Kansas, provides a scholarly look at the use of military motifs in the prayer songs of women in Scripture. He is joined by Owen Strachan, director of the Center for Public Theology at Midwestern Seminary and CBMW senior fellow, who examines transgenderism from a moral and theological perspective.

Following the essays and studies, this issue contains a special address from our new CBMW President, Denny Burk entitled, “My Vision for the Future of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood.”

The *Journal* concludes with several significant reviews by Mary Kassian, Candi Finch, J. Alan Branch, William M. Marsh, Sarah Bubar, Katie McCoy, Drew Ham, S. Craig Sanders, and David Young. My thanks is extended to the able assistance and collaboration of assistant editors Candi Finch and Jeremy M. Kimble throughout 2016 and these two issues.

Finally, the *Journal* recognizes that the end of 2016 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of a significant publication known and appreciated by our readers. First published by Crossway in 1991 and edited by Wayne Grudem and John Piper, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* arrived to answer many questions evangelicals and others were asking about the roles of men and women in the church and home. Revised in 2006, this volume continues as a mainstay reference work, and many of the chapters still serve as significant starting places for consulting the topics addressed. Truly, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* is a volume that has stood like a steersman in a storm.

In that 1846 parting address to the next generation, Adoniram Judson reminded, “The obligation, therefore, on the present generation, to redeem the pledge given by their fathers, is greatly enhanced.

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5 Edward Judson, *The Life of Adoniram Judson* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 188), 579.

... Look forward with the eye of faith.”<sup>6</sup> The missionary father was pointing a way to the future, and his life and legacy left a model of steadfast biblical courage. Like a steady steersman in a storm, Judson was calling the next generation to “act like men” both in visible displays of timely heroism and perseverance as well as in the less visible but still vital battles of the mind and heart. When the culture around pulls or scoffs, believers are to act like men—standing like steersman in a storm. May this issue of the *Journal* aid readers in that noble task.

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<sup>6</sup> Adoniram Judson, “Parting Address of Mr. Judson,” in *Southern Baptist Missionary Journal* (July 1846): 31-33.

## FEELING THE TRANSGENDER EXPERIENCE

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Thomas White | President  
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Cedarville, Ohio

“But I don’t feel like it, Dad,” said my 5-year-old son, Samuel, in a high-pitched whine.<sup>1</sup> Memories of my father’s response echoed in my head just before the words came out of my mouth. “It really doesn’t matter what you feel like, son. You have to take a bath.”

My sinfully sweet son responded by drooping his shoulders and eyes. “But that will make me sad, and if I’m sad, I’ll cry.” Feeling the mix of emotions between laughter at the reminiscence of my own boyhood mischievousness and sadness at forcing the child I love to do something against his will, I controlled my expression and said resolutely, “You still have to take a bath. We can’t always do what we feel like in life.”

I found myself reflecting upon those words as I recently examined the transgender movement sweeping across our culture. This movement finds its foundation not in facts but in feelings, not in truth but in experience. Let me demonstrate.

Paul McHugh, university distinguished professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and former psychiatrist in chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital, wrote an article published in 2014 in the *Wall Street Journal* titled “Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution.” In the 1960s Johns Hopkins was the first American medical center to venture into sex-reassignment surgery. A study in the 1970s demonstrated that the patients “were no better than those who didn’t have the surgery.” He writes, “So at Hopkins we stopped doing sex-reassignment surgery.” He concludes his article by stating, “At the heart of the problem is confusion over the nature of the transgendered. ‘Sex change’ is biologically impossible. People who undergo sex-reassignment surgery do not change from men to

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<sup>1</sup> This article was first published in the *Baptist Bulletin* (September/October 2016). Copyright © 2016 by Regular Baptist Press. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

women or vice versa. Rather, they become feminized men or masculinized women. Claiming that this is a civil-rights matter and encouraging surgical intervention is in reality to collaborate with and promote a mental disorder.”

McHugh also notes a 2011 long-term study at Karolinska Institutet, a medical university in Sweden, that followed 324 people who had sex-reassignment surgery. The study found that about 10 years after surgery, those with transsexualism had an increase in psychiatric inpatient care and almost a 20 percent increase in suicide attempts.

Most recently the American College of Pediatricians issued a 2016 statement titled “Gender Ideology Harms Children.” That post includes the following statements:

1. Human sexuality is an objective biological binary trait: “XY” and “XX” are genetic markers of health, not genetic markers of a disorder.
2. No one is born with a gender. Everyone is born with a biological sex. Gender (an awareness and sense of oneself as male or female) is a sociological and psychological concept, not an objective biological one.
3. A person’s belief that he or she is something they are not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking.
4. Puberty is not a disease, and puberty-blocking hormones can be dangerous.
5. According to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition, as many as 98 percent of gender confused boys and 88 percent of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty.

This statement indicates that embracing transgenderism does not lead to a healthier mental state or lifestyle. While other studies may come to different conclusions based on worldview influences, the fact remains that every person at birth has either “XY” or “XX” genetic markers that identify sex.

When I looked in the mirror this morning, I saw the result of my genetics in the image of a six-foot-tall, 43-year-old white male. While I may feel like a 25-year-old, I am not. While I may wish that I were 6’6” so I could play basketball better, I am not. If I desire to be a different ethnicity, my feeling cannot change me. I may admire the beauty of femininity, but I will never be a woman. Biologically, I can never bear children, but after experiencing my wife give birth, I’m okay with that. The fact remains that I am a six-foot-tall, 43-year-old white male, and the sooner I embrace the truth, the better.

## **WORLDVIEWS AT WAR IN OUR SCHOOLS AND COURTS**

Believe it or not, declaring particular genetic markers as what delineates one’s sex is a declaration of war. This battle of worldviews has been building for some time. The secular humanistic worldview undergirding the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender movement embraces same-sex attraction and transgender orientation as being true to oneself. The biblical worldview, on the other hand, sees those actions as embracing our sinful nature in rebellion against our Creator, refusing the true peace and fulfillment found only in salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. The secular humanistic worldview focuses on humanity, defends sexual liberty, and denies a creator. The biblical worldview focuses on God creating men and women in His image and for His glory. These two worldviews will never agree.

As Chai Feldblum states, “There can be a conflict between religious liberty and sexual liberty, but

in almost all cases the sexual liberty should win.” In 2010, Feldblum, who was on a mission to advance the LGBT agenda, was confirmed as commissioner of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. She is currently in her second term, set to expire in 2018. On April 20, 2012, and again on Feb. 3, 2015, the EEOC issued memorandums instructing that transgender discrimination was accepted under Title VII and protected under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. While not law, these guidance documents are given significant consideration by federal courts in deciding court cases.

The Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights also issued a guidance document stating that transgender protections were included under Title IX. If they successfully add same-sex and transgender protections to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, then they avoid legislative battles. Should these guidance documents become accepted, state or federal funding of any religious high school, college, or university contending for the Biblical position on marriage and gender will be in question.

Additionally, in the case of Gavin Grimm v. Gloucester County School Board in Virginia, Grimm sued for students’ right to use their bathroom of choice. Judge Robert G. Doumar ruled in favor of the school board, but the United States Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals sent the ruling back down for further consideration. For the first time, a federal appellate court ruled that Title IX protected the right of students to use the bathroom corresponding to their gender identity. Moreover, the Office of Civil Rights has also ruled that forcing a student to use a separate locker room is discrimination.

These efforts to include same-sex and transgender orientation under Title IX compelled some religious organizations to apply for a Title IX exemption. The Human Rights Campaign responded by requesting the Department of Education to regularly report such exemptions. The HRC hopes that highlighting exemptions will increase pressure on religious schools to accept the LGBT position.

Currently working its way through the California legislature is Senate Bill 1146. This bill would eliminate the religious exemption and faith protections for Christian colleges and universities in California, affecting as many as 42 schools, including Biola University and The Master’s College. You can learn more about this bill and its status at [opposesb1146.com](http://opposesb1146.com).

In time, the legal precedent in this worldview collision will likely be decided by the Supreme Court. While our trust lies not in political parties or judicial systems, Christians, as good citizens, should make their voice heard on these issues in an effort to promote human flourishing by the spread of the gospel before it is too late. Rather than allow free marketplace of ideas, the LGBT worldview seeks to silence critics and eliminate voices of opposition.

## **TRANSGENDER STORIES GRIPPING OUR NATION**

At the popular level, most people do not follow Title VII, Title IX, or California SB 1146. Instead, the transgender movement’s compelling personal stories have begun to win popular opinion. While each experience is a little different, the stories bear similarities. Someone was tragically bullied or abused. Someone felt different. Someone was told he or she couldn’t do something he or she loved because it was too feminine or masculine. Someone felt isolated and alone in the struggle. Stories of individuals experiencing isolation, suffering, and ridicule produce emotions of compassion and a desire to help, as they should. The problem, however, comes in the nature of the help offered, with solutions often being worldviews apart.

Even before the Supreme Court decision in favor of same-sex marriage, *Time* magazine released an issue titled “The Transgender Tipping Point” in May 2014, telling the story of Laverne Cox. Then

in early 2015, Bruce Jenner, winner of the gold medal in the decathlon in the 1976 Olympics, revealed himself to the world as Caitlyn Jenner. Through television and print, Jenner divulged the struggle of female feelings trapped inside a male body. *Vanity Fair* reports that 16.9 million people watched Jenner communicate this experience in Diane Sawyer's ABC interview.

## HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Considering the decisions of governmental agencies, federal courts, and personal stories throughout the media, one must ask, How do we respond? In short, we stand for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. This means, among other things, following the Great Commandment to love God and others. We love God through compassionate conviction to stand for His Word. We love others through moving beyond generic stereotypes to help deal with real worldview issues and introducing them to the gospel.

For example, my daughter likes to occasionally go hunting with me. She likes riding in the front of my hail-damaged Chevy Avalanche truck. She helps me process deer meat. She puts her own worm on a hook when fishing. In days gone by, she might have been called a tomboy for such actions. But in reality, my daughter has a great sense of style, loves the dollhouse we built together, and displays an overall healthy balance. We Christian parents try to shepherd our children to embrace who God made them to be and use the gifts He has given them for His glory. Perhaps we should improve at supporting the boy whom God has gifted for ballet or given an eye for decorating to use his gifts for God's glory. Rather than submitting to society's stereotypes, perhaps we should raise our children and treat those we meet in accordance with the reality that they are made in God's own image.

As Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." From this, we can discern a few key points.

First, the Bible mentions three times that God "created." In a debate, this would be the memorable line. In popular culture, God dropped the mic and walked off the stage. When the Bible repeats something this frequently, it's important. God created. We did not evolve. As such, the creation versus evolution debate determines the trajectory of a worldview.

Second, the Bible declares twice that God created "in His own image"—as if God were saying, "Star this one because it will be on the test." Our worth and our value come not in our looks, talents, possessions, feelings, or experience, but in the truth that God created us in His image. While the Fall through Adam's sin affected the image of God, Genesis 6:9 indicates post-Flood that the image still remains. This provides the basis for unity across racial, social, economic, and all other dividing lines. God cares for the soul of the transgendered just as much as He cares for you and me. Our response must not include cruel jokes, demeaning tones, or intentional avoidance.

Third, the Bible states that God created in His image "male and female." Just a few verses later the Bible declares that "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Certainly the Fall has created challenges. We must fight against the male passivism that allowed Eve to eat of the tree while he apparently stood nearby, and we must fight against the domineering male chauvinism that seeks to rule rather than love as Christ loved the church. We must fight against the desire to usurp proper authority or to bow down to cultural mores like worthless doormats. God created male and female equal in essence, with difference in roles. Consequently, we must fight against sex trafficking, pornography, and other ideologies that see human beings as mere sexual possessions,

as well as ideologies that seek to blend the genders into an androgynous world. Altogether, we must clearly articulate a worldview that values the dignity of each human life as created by God, in His image, male and female.

If time and space allowed, we could consider Deuteronomy 22:5, which says, “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God.” That would beckon a discussion of the place of the law in modern Christianity. We should also be prepared to discuss how Galatians 3:28 relates to salvation and does not do away with gender. Finally, we could consult 1 Corinthians 6:9 and how *malakos* relates to those “of high station who wear soft clothing,” or the effeminate.

For this brief treatment, our response to the transgender discussion focuses on articulating a biblical worldview. The biblical worldview declares that God created humanity in His image, male and female. Adam and Eve rebelled against God so that all inherited a sinful nature. To embrace our inner feelings or to “follow our hearts” often means to embrace the sinful temptations resulting from the Fall. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus came to this earth, was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died a death to pay our penalty in our place, and rose from the grave so we might repent and believe in Him in order to be reconciled to our Creator. Through this reconciliation we find the peace and hope of the gospel along with the ability to resist temptation through the power of the Holy Spirit.

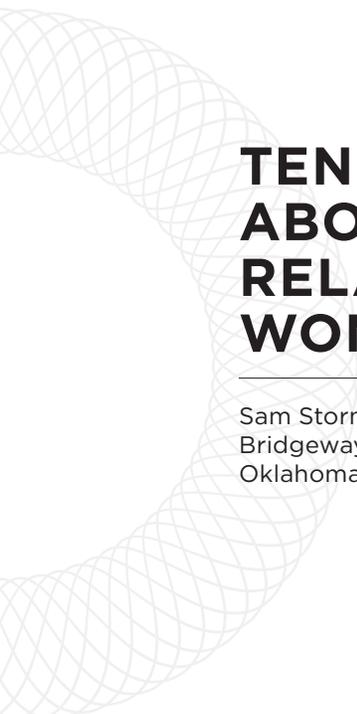
We have hope and do not despair because the gospel still changes lives. No court or government can put Jesus back into the grave. As pilgrims passing through this world, we work for the good of others knowing that our ultimate citizenship is in Heaven with King Jesus.

## CONCLUSION

Remember the story of my son not feeling like taking a bath? It took only a few minutes before those feelings of sadness transformed into the joy of bubbles, foam letters, and other bathtub toys. I listened from around the corner to an imagination delighting in the thrills of splashes inside what a few minutes earlier was a torturous tub of cleanliness. Feelings fade and emotions wither, but the Word of God will stand forever.

Similarly, I have found that sinful desires that at one time captivated my heart have given way to the contentment found in my relationship with Christ. As I grow in the Lord, I occasionally respond to my Heavenly Father’s promptings, with spiritual shoulders slumped, “But I don’t feel like it.” On the good days, I obey anyway to find that He knows best; and by denying myself to follow God, I find unimaginable delights filling my heart with true joy.

As we minister to those struggling with experience and feelings, let us remember how often we gave into sinful desires of different kinds. At the end of the day, let us remember that the right response to the person struggling with transgender issues is the same response to the person enslaved by pornography or engaged in an affair: It’s “the old, old story of unseen things above, Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.”



# TEN THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT 1 TIMOTHY 2:11-15 AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN THE LOCAL CHURCH<sup>1</sup>

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In this article we turn our attention to ten things we should know about the most controversial passage in the Bible when it comes to the role/relationship between men and women. In 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Paul writes: “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control” (ESV).

## **(1) THE TEXT NOWHERE SAYS THAT PAUL WAS ONLY PROHIBITING UNEDUCATED WOMEN FROM TEACHING MEN.**

The reason for his prohibition is stated in vv. 13-14. It is unwise to ignore the reason that is given in order to supply one that isn't. If the lack of education were the reason for the prohibition, Paul could easily have said: “I do not permit uneducated women to teach or to exercise authority over men.”

Since Paul prohibits all women from teaching men, the egalitarian view must assume that *all* the women in Ephesus were uneducated. But we know this isn't the case, as the example of Priscilla (in 2 Tim 4:19; Acts 18:24-28) would indicate. In fact, recent research has shown that it is not the case that

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<sup>1</sup> This essay first appeared at <http://www.samstorms.com/enjoying-god-blog/post/10-things-you-should-know-about-1-timothy-211-15-and-the-relationship-between-men-and-women-in-the-local-church>

all women in Ephesus were uneducated.<sup>2</sup>

**(2) IF THE PROBLEM WAS UNEDUCATED WOMEN, WHY WOULD PAUL FORBID THEM FROM TEACHING MEN BUT ALLOW THEM TO TEACH WOMEN AND OTHER CHILDREN?**

Furthermore, why would Paul only prohibit uneducated women from teaching and not also uneducated men? If the lack of education was the principal obstacle to teaching, then Paul should have extended the prohibition to both genders. Uneducated men would, in that case, be as unqualified as uneducated women.

**(3) PAUL WAS NOT MERELY PROHIBITING WOMEN FROM TEACHING FALSE DOCTRINE OR HERESY AT EPHESUS.**

Once again, this is nowhere stated in the text. The reason *is* stated in vv. 13-14. The grammar requires that the actions (“teaching” and “exercising authority”) be regarded as either both negative or both positive. Recent research (see below) has shown that “exercise authority” is positive in thrust. Thus, so also is “teaching”. If Paul had meant false teaching, it would have been quite easy for him to say so. He had a word that means precisely that.<sup>3</sup>

**(4) THE VERB “TO TEACH” IS ALMOST ALWAYS USED POSITIVELY IN THE PASTORAL EPISTLES (1 TIM 4:11; 6:2; 2 TIM 2:2).**

The only exception is Titus 1:11 where the context makes it clear that false teaching is in view. In addition, there is no evidence that the women in Ephesus were “teaching” false doctrine. Women are portrayed as being influenced by the heresy (1 Tim 5:11-15; 2 Tim 3:5-9) but not as teaching it. The only false teachers specifically named in Ephesus were men (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17-18; cf. 2 Tim 4:14). Why then didn’t Paul prohibit the men from teaching? If Paul’s prohibition was provoked by *some* women teaching heresy in Ephesus, why did he prohibit *all* women and *only* women from teaching?

It is true that some women were gossiping at Ephesus (1 Tim 5:13), but that is not the same as teaching false doctrine. We all know people who gossip but who don’t teach false doctrine. There were pagan religions in Ephesus where non-Christian men and women did a number of things that were not done by Christians. But to say that they did such things after becoming Christians is mere speculation, not evidence.

**(5) NOTHING IN THE PREVIOUS POINT IS MEANT TO SUGGEST THAT NO WOMAN ANYWHERE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD EVER TAUGHT FALSE DOC-**

2 S. M. Baugh, “A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century,” in *Women in the Church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, Third Edition (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 25-64.

3 See 1 Timothy 1:3-4; 6:3 for the use of *heterodidaskalein*.

**TRINE.**

There was false teaching by a woman named Jezebel in a different city, Thyatira, at a later time period (Rev 2:20), but that is not this time period and that is not this city. Jezebel shows the possibility of women teaching false doctrine, but many things are possible that never happen. As things stand, there is no evidence in Ephesus that this possibility was anything but a possibility.

**(6) ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THAT THE GREEK WORD "AUTHENTEIN" (TRANSLATED "EXERCISE AUTHORITY" BY THE ESV) MEANS "TO DOMINEER" OR "MISUSE AUTHORITY", OR PERHAPS "TO COMMIT MURDER" OR "TO COMMIT VIOLENCE", OR PERHAPS "TO PROCLAIM ONESELF THE AUTHOR OF A MAN"?<sup>4</sup>**

H. Scott Baldwin recently published the most extensive study of this word in which he examined every instance (82x) of its occurrence in ancient literature and papyrus manuscripts. He discovered that during the time of the New Testament the word is never used in any of the negatives senses suggested in the question above. Baldwin demonstrates that there is no example of *authentēin* meaning "to murder" until the tenth century AD, more than nine hundred years after the writing of the New Testament (and even that 10th century example is open to debate). There is evidence that the noun *authentēs* (not the verb, which is what we find in 1 Timothy 2) could mean either "master, one who has authority," or "murderer". But these two senses of *authentēs* probably have come from two different linguistic sources. In other words, the noun *authentēs* "probably represents two different words that happen to be spelled the same way."<sup>5</sup>

Let's assume, contrary to the evidence, that Paul used the verb to mean "to commit murder." If so, we are being asked to believe that Paul said, "I do not permit a woman to murder a man," as if to suggest that a woman murdering another woman is permissible? Are we to believe that it was permissible for a man to murder either a man or woman? Who in the NT church would ever have argued that it was permissible for a woman to murder a man? Such a view of the verb in question renders Paul's statement either utterly outrageous or utterly banal. "So, Paul, you're telling us that Christian women can't murder Christian men? Duh!"

The same arguments cited above weigh against the suggested translation, "to instigate" or "commit violence." Richard and Catherine Kroeger, well-known egalitarians, have argued that *authentēin* means "to proclaim oneself the author of a man." But none of the eighty-two examples of the verb have this meaning. The notion of "proclaiming" oneself anything is nowhere to be found. The bottom line is that "the Kroegers have produced no ancient texts that require this meaning. The meaning has been universally rejected by modern lexicographers as a mistake, since it is not found as even a possibility in any Greek lexicon for the last one hundred years. It is a meaning without support in any ancient text or any modern lexicon."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Grudem's extensive response to this argument in *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 304-322.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Scott Baldwin, "An Important Word: *Authenteō* in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, Second Edition (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 39-52. See also Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 310.

<sup>6</sup> Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 313.

**(7) ANDREAS KÖSTENBERGER CONDUCTED RESEARCH ON THE FIFTY-TWO OTHER INSTANCES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (AS WELL AS FORTY-EIGHT EXTRA-BIBLICAL EXAMPLES) OF THE GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION IN 1 TIMOTHY 2:12 AND DISCOVERED THAT ALL OF THEM FALL INTO ONLY TWO PATTERNS:**

- (1) Pattern One – two activities or concepts are viewed *positively* in and of themselves;
- (2) Pattern Two – two activities or concepts are viewed *negatively*.

There are no exceptions to this. This means that if the activity of “teaching” is found to be positive, so also must the activity of “exercising authority”. As I noted above, in the Pastoral Epistles Paul consistently refers to “teaching” in a positive sense (unless made explicit by the context, such as in Titus 1:11), thus making it highly unlikely, if not impossible, for *authenthein* to mean something like “usurp authority” or “domineer” or “misuse authority”.

**(8) PAUL’S USE OF THE PRESENT TENSE DOES NOT SUGGEST THAT THIS WAS ONLY A TEMPORARY COMMAND, RESTRICTED TO THE EARLY CHURCH.**

The egalitarian argument is that Paul’s statement, “I do not permit,” has a present tense verb in Greek. Perhaps we should then translate it, “I am not now currently permitting a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.” Once the temporary and unusual circumstances in ancient Ephesus that provoked the apostle’s words have passed, the command no longer applies. But Paul quite often uses the present tense in commands that are clearly applicable for all time. See, for example, 1 Timothy 2:1 (“I urge”), Romans 12:1 (“I appeal”), as well as 1 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:1; Titus 3:8; just to mention a few.

The present tense in Greek is often used in what is known as a timeless or gnomic sense. The point is that what he recommends or prohibits is a timeless principle obligatory for all believers in all ages. If we eliminated every instance in the NT where the author speaks in the first person (“I”) and employs a present tense verb, we would forfeit countless ethical and theological truths that are essential for Christian faith and living.

**(9) ISN’T THE WORD “AUTHENTEIN” (TO EXERCISE AUTHORITY) RARE IN THE NT? SHOULD WE PLACE SO MUCH EMPHASIS ON A VERSE IN WHICH AN UNCOMMON WORD IS EMPLOYED?**

Simply because a word is uncommon or rare in the NT doesn’t mean we cannot determine its meaning. There is extensive Greek literature from the time of the NT that enables us to discern with a high degree of probability what a particular word meant in any particular context. We must also remember that, in 1 Timothy, Paul uses 65 other words that are found nowhere else in the New Testament! In fact, there are 1,934 words that occur only once in the New Testament. But in the vast majority of cases, we are capable of determining their meaning.

**(10) FINALLY, WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THE INSIGHTFUL QUESTION FIRST RAISED BY DR. LIGON DUNCAN WHO ASKED:**

“By what hermeneutical or exegetical principle can ‘I do not permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man’ mean ‘I do permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man?’”



# SONS IN THE FAITH

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## FIRST EXPOSURE

4:30 in the morning in a parked truck outside of a fitness center, this was where I first encountered discipleship. My father worked out every morning before work at our local fitness center. And since he liked to be at work early, he was usually one of the first people inside the fitness center when it opened up at 5am. It was his routine to do his quiet time and Scripture memory while he waited for the doors to open. So when twelve-year-old me, his fourth son, expressed interest in growing in my relationship with God, my dad invited me along.

So there I was, memorizing Scripture for the first time and getting ready to work out. It was my first exposure to the NavPress's Topical Memory System, one I still use today. It was my first exposure to having a set apart time to dedicate to the Lord, which is a habit that I continue today (minus the working out at 5 am). Many patterns for my devotional life were started in a truck, waiting in a fitness center parking lot.

## SON IN THE FAITH—PAUL TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS

There is a reason that Paul calls Timothy and Titus his sons in the faith (1 Tim 1:2; Titus 1:4). It is that discipling and training the next generation is akin to parenting. Colin Marshall and Tony Payne describe it like this: "Training is parenting. It's loving someone enough to want to see him or her grow and flourish, and being prepared to put in the long-term, faithful work that will (in God's mercy) see

that happen.”<sup>1</sup> If we care about the next generation in the faith, then we should care for them like parents.

This is a call for a relational approach to discipleship. It is in this relationship that more than information alone is transmitted. You can have the privilege, honor, and responsibility to help guide a person through life. In a very real way this is where theology meets real life. This close relationship is also “a vehicle for one of the key elements of Paul’s training of Timothy—imitation.”<sup>2</sup> We are not training people in just knowledge, but also in how that knowledge is lived out. We are training Christians in a way of life.

## THE NATURAL FLOW

This training should naturally happen in our homes. Fathers and mothers should be passing down the “good deposit” to their children, pressing on them the truth of who God is and His love for them. There should be Bible reading and discussion happening in every Christian home. There needs to be family worship happening, which is a “neglected grace” according to Jason Helopoulos.<sup>3</sup> The church is to be supporting and encouraging the role of the parent as teacher and imparter of biblical truth. The church comes alongside families, helping and guiding, but never replacing.

This sounds daunting to many parents. They are pulled in numerous directions; they have responsibilities for work, as well as all the extra-curricular activities the kids are involved in. But this shouldn’t be daunting. It should be a natural outflow of your life in Christ. Start small, start reading the Bible and praying with your kids and as a family. Fold in other elements as they work and you are able. The main point is to not be passive in your children’s spiritual development. Be active, be aware, be present.

## NOT ONLY BIOLOGICAL

The objections or questions usually follow along the lines of “what about those who don’t live in a Christian home?” It is then the responsibility of their spiritual family to make sure they are loved and disciplined. Just as Paul counted Timothy and Titus as sons in the faith, so there are people we should bring under our care and count them as sons or daughters. The church as a whole needs to develop a concern and care for those who need guidance. And this can happen in many different ways. Here are just a few of them.

The youth group of the church is a natural place for those who are young to be connected to those who are older. Older volunteers give of their time and energy to be there for the youth, and relationships that nurture the younger members of the church should be the natural outgrowth. This means that there needs to be an emphasis on discipleship in your youth group. Each student should have the opportunity to walk through life with someone who is more mature. This might be the youth pastor or one of the volunteers that have been trained to invest in student’s lives. This is especially important for those who do not come from a Christian home. They need someone to invest in their lives.

Intentional discipleship is another place where this happens. When I say intentional discipleship, I

1 Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, *The Trellis and the Vine* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias, 2009), 75.

2 Ibid., 72.

3 Jason Helopoulos, *A Neglected Grace: Family Worship in the Christian Home* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2013).

am thinking of either one-on-one or one-on-a few meetings, where someone is intentionally investing in someone else so that he can grow in the faith. This usually happens when walking through material designed for this purpose. My church uses Greg Ogden's *Discipleship Essentials*. We have used this for about two years now, and there is now a large percentage of our church who have either gone through the material and are now leading others or who have gone through it and are looking for others to lead through it. Material such as this is good because it does emphasize that each one of us is a "link in the chain."

Small Groups can be another way in which people are cared for as part of a family. Those who are lacking a Christian family can find one in a small group. They live life together, share together, pray together, and study the Bible together. From these small groups deeper relationships can spring. In this sense, the church is what the church is supposed to be as it invests in small groups.

## THE CHURCH

Ed Shaw says, "When the church feels like a family, I can cope with not ever having my own partner and children."<sup>4</sup> He is addressing a different issue, but the truth of this statement holds for any number of scenarios. When the church grasps hold of the reality that it is the family of believers and looks after each other as such, people are taken care of, and they don't have to look elsewhere for what they think they need. When the church is a family, it makes sure that the younger members are taken care of and are taught what they need to know. When the church is a family, it makes sure that the individual families that compose it are connected and equipped to lead their families as part of the larger Christian family. When the church is a family, it can fill in the gaps for those who don't have a father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, or cousins. When the church is a family, all members can look back at "sons in the faith" and "fathers in the faith" and "mothers in the faith" and "daughters in the faith."

I will always remember my father taking the time to lead me in the faith, not just when I came to know Christ but when I expressed interest in growing in Christ. And this should be the natural flow. In a perfect world this would be how all people came to know Christ. Parents would be leading them and then inviting them along to follow their example. But we don't live in a perfect world. Sin has tainted all of our relationships and all that we touch. So the church, the light-bearer, needs to step up. The church needs to educate and guide families in how to lead within the family. The church needs to fill the gaps when a father or mother is not present. And the church needs to not just *say* they are a family, they need to *be* the family of God.

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<sup>4</sup> Ed Shaw, *Same-Sex Attraction and the Church* (Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity, 2015), 48.

# HOLY WOMEN, HOLY WORDS, HOLY WAR: INVESTIGATING THE USE OF MILITARY MOTIFS IN THE PRAYER SONGS OF WOMEN IN SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>

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It turns out that the raucous Republican primary debates may have an effect on the songs sung in some churches.<sup>1</sup> On February 18, 2016, Baptist News Global posted an interview with Brian McLaren regarding his songwriting ministry and especially his recent re-wording of Sabine Baring-Gould's 1865 hymn, "Onward, Christian Soldiers." "I had started a rewrite of Onward, Christian Soldiers lyrics awhile back," McLaren said in an email to BNG. "But after watching one of the Republican presidential ... debates and hearing several candidates in one breath speak of Christian faith and Jesus and in the next breath speak of carpet bombing and the like, I felt it was time to finish some alternative lyrics."<sup>2</sup> Baring-Gould's hymn begins:

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before!  
Christ the royal Master leads against the foe;  
Forward into battle, see His banner go!  
Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
With the cross of Jesus going on before.

McLaren's first verse reads:

<sup>1</sup> A portion of this article was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Antonio, 15 Dec 2016. I wish to express gratitude for comments received there.

<sup>2</sup> ([https://baptistnews.com/article/brian-mclaren-time-to-re-write-pro-war-hymns/#.WCYe\\_aIrKRt](https://baptistnews.com/article/brian-mclaren-time-to-re-write-pro-war-hymns/#.WCYe_aIrKRt)), accessed 11 Nov 2016.

Onward, all disciples, in the path of peace,  
 Just as Jesus taught us, love your enemies  
 Walk on in the Spirit, seek God's kingdom first,  
 Let God's peace and justice be your hunger and your thirst!  
 Onward, all disciples, in humility  
 Walk with God, do justice, love wholeheartedly.<sup>3</sup>

One week after Baptist News Global posted its interview with McLaren, Russell Moore, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, posted on his blog an article titled, "Are Our Hymns Too Warlike?"<sup>4</sup> Moore argues that in many hymns and choruses "the warfare imagery is derived not from our hymnbooks but from our Bibles."<sup>5</sup> Moore notes that some of those sympathetic to McLaren's views reject the Old Testament narrative and the pervasive Holy War metaphor of the Hebrew Scriptures. And I suggest here that women's voices play no small role in the Holy War tradition surfacing in in both testaments.

### HOLY WAR AND THE SONGS OF DEBORAH, HANNAH, AND MARY

Moore's comments serve as a point of departure for briefly identifying the frequency of military motifs in the prayer-songs of Scripture with special concern for the songs of women—words that many in the emergent and/or egalitarian movements would not question. In the Old Testament narrative, figures like Miriam, Deborah, and Hannah liberally employ violent, Holy War imagery. And the New Testament narrative launches with the same frame of thought dominating Mary's *Magnificat*.

Tremper Longman notes that, "the Divine Warrior theme is pervasive. Literally, it is used from Genesis to Revelation."<sup>6</sup> William Klassen observes similarly stating that, "the history of God's people could be told from the standpoint of the Messianic war. It could also be told from the perspective of God himself being the Warrior who overrules all that humans do."<sup>7</sup> Longman provides a brief overview of Holy War and Divine Warrior imagery in the Old Testament, noting Deuteronomy 7 and 20, 1 Samuel 23 and Joshua 6. The prayer songs of Moses (Exod 15:1-18; Deut 32:1-43), Miriam (Exod 15:21), and David (2 Sam 22/Ps 18; Pss 2, 110, et al.) likewise reflect militant imagery. These pre-exilic historical texts establish a frame of thought for the prophetic literature of the Old Testament, where Longman observes the connection between the Day of Yahweh and the concept of Holy War surfacing together in Isaiah 9, 13, 22; Joel 1, 2; Zephaniah 1; et al.<sup>8</sup> Longman concludes that, "salvation and judgment are two halves of the same great warring activity of Yahweh."<sup>9</sup> The Old Testament authors frequently present a military motif, but Klassen argues that in the Jewish mindset hopes for militaristic conquest or success find their fullest expression in Messiah's war, the war to end all wars.<sup>10</sup>

3 (<http://brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/q-r-onward-christian-what.html>), accessed 11 Nov 2016.

4 (<https://www.russellmoore.com/2016/02/24/are-our-hymns-too-warlike/>), accessed 11 Nov 2016.

5 Ibid.

6 Tremper Longman III, "The Divine Warrior: The New Testament use of an Old Testament Motif," *Westminster Theological Journal* 44.2 (1982): 306.

7 William Klassen, "Jesus and the Messianic War," in *Early Jewish and Christian Exegesis: Studies in Memory of William Hugh Brownlee*, ed. by Craig A. Evans and William F. Stinespring (Atlanta: Scholars, 1987), 159.

8 Longman, "The Divine Warrior," 292-93.

9 Ibid., 294.

10 Klassen, "Jesus and the Messianic War," 157.

This paper identifies the unique Holy War language and imagery in the prayer-songs of three women in Scripture: Deborah (Judges 5), Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-11), and Mary (Luke 1:46-55). The goal of this research is to identify how the situations of these women compelled them to portray themselves as participating in a meta-narrative of Holy War. I suggest that Holy War is so pervasive in Scripture that viewed together Deborah, Hannah, and Mary not only employed militant imagery, they expanded the traditional scope of Holy War to include activity unique to the female gender, *viz.* child-bearing. The Holy War metaphor is thus too pervasive to remove from our hymnody if our hymnody is to accurately reflect Scripture.

### **DEBORAH'S SONG OF PRAISE UPON VICTORY IN BATTLE (JUDGES 5)**

Deborah, wife of Lappidoth, judged Israel during the days when Jabin reigned over Canaan in Hazor. Jabin's army was commanded by Sisera, oppressing Israel for twenty years (Judges 4:3). Deborah exhorted Barak, son of Abinoam, to gather troops from Zebulun and Naphtali and advance against Sisera. Deborah exhorted Barak, "Arise! For this is the day in which the LORD has given Sisera into your hands; behold, the LORD has gone out before you" (Judges 4:14).

Deborah's song in Judges 5 plays a formative role in the Holy War tradition of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>11</sup> Her task in Israel's deliverance from Jabin was primarily that of speech, first prophecy and then poetic praise. In Judges 4, she exhorted Barak to organize troops and fight;<sup>12</sup> Judges 5 is Deborah's song reflecting first on the LORD's power and then His work through Barak and Jael, the intermediate agents through whom the LORD delivered His people. These two themes are explored in what follows.

#### *The Lord's deeds as the ultimate agent in Holy War*

Deborah described the LORD's entrance into the battle as the actual beginning of the fight. He is the warrior-God taking up arms against His foes. Webb writes that, "the main theme of the song is 'the righteous acts' of the Lord himself, who went forth as Israel's champion and overwhelmed his enemies (and Israel's) by unleashing the powers of heaven against them."<sup>13</sup>

In the Hebrew Bible, cataclysm and alteration of natural phenomena frequently signal the LORD's personal entrance into the depressed situation of His people (e.g., Exod 19:16-20; Ps 18:14; 29:3-7, 10-11; 68:7-8; 97:2-5; 144:5-9; Jer 10:13; Ezek 21:8-13; Hag 2:4-6).<sup>14</sup> And Deborah's lyrics in Judges 5:4-5 follow suit. She addressed the LORD in praise noting that when He marched

11 Barry G. Webb notes that songs like Deborah's were sung in public worship as a means of reminding future generations of God's faithfulness to Israel ("Judges" in *New Bible Commentary*, 4th ed., ed. Gordon J. Wenham, et al. [Downers Grove: IVP, 1994], 270).

12 James S. Ackerman ("Prophecy and Warfare in Early Israel: a Study of the Deborah-Barak Story," *BASOR* 220, [1975]: 5-13) suggests that Judges 4 is a conflation of two battles: (1) Naphtali and Zebulun against Jabin and (2) Deborah and Barak against Sisera (ultimately killed by Jael), but notes that the story related in the narrative of Judges 4 makes sense as a unit and has literary integrity. The analysis of Deborah's song in Judges 5 *infra* understands Judges 4 as a literary unit and the historical basis of her song.

13 Webb, "Judges," 270.

14 Trent C. Butler writes, "Here when war occurs in the poem, neither deity nor human volunteers take center stage, yet the poet strongly implies for the observant reader that Israel's God has defeated Canaan's kings on the field and with the resources that the fertility and war gods Baal and Anat should control," in *Judges*, Word Biblical Commentary 8 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 128.

to the battlefield, “the earth quaked, the heavens also dripped, Even the clouds dripped water (אָרֶץ רָעָשָׁה גַּם-שָׁמַיִם נָטְפוּ גַּם-עַבְיִים נָטְפוּ מַיִם). The mountains quaked at the presence of the LORD (הַרִים נָזְלוּ מִפְּנֵי יְהוָה), This Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel” (Judges 5:4-5).<sup>15</sup>

Deborah proclaimed that the earth, heavens, clouds and mountains were “moved” in some fashion as the LORD approached to fight the kingdom of Jabin and his captain Sisera.

The ancient rural watering hole was akin to the modern office water cooler, and Deborah understood that in years to come the LORD’s victory over the Canaanites would yet be the “gossip” of the day, writing, “At the sound of those who divide flocks among the watering places, There they shall recount the righteous deeds of the LORD, The righteous deeds for His peasantry in Israel (צִדְקוֹת יְהוָה צִדְקוֹת פְּרוֹזֵן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל). Then the people of the LORD went down to the gates” (Judges 5:11). Deborah’s poetic repetition of the righteous (deeds) of the LORD heightens the importance of how the following construct phrase פְּרוֹזֵן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל (“for His peasantry in Israel”) should be interpreted.<sup>16</sup> Deborah pictured the LORD as the warrior, Israel as the beneficiary of His might.

### *The Lord’s use of Human agency in Holy War*

The narrative of Judges 4 details God’s activity by means of an unlikely hero, Jael wife of Heber the Kenite. Deborah told Barak that a woman would deliver Israel (Judges 4:9), and in the balance of Judges 5, Deborah reviewed her own role in the deliverance and celebrated the LORD’s victory through Jael, Barak and those who fought with him. Deborah understood herself to be the LORD’s chosen spokesperson to deliver Israel from Jabin King of Canaan and Sisera the chief of his army.<sup>17</sup> In Judges 5:12 Deborah wrote: “Awake, awake, Deborah; Awake, awake, sing a song (עוֹרִי עוֹרִי דְבַר־יְשִׁיר) Arise, Barak, and take away your captives (קוּם בָּרַק וְשַׁבֵּה שְׂבִיִּי) O son of Abinoam.” The LORD used Deborah to initiate the battle, and through her hymn of praise to reflect upon His faithfulness to Israel in their victory.

Having described her own role in the battle, in Judges 5:23 Deborah cursed the people of Meroz, “because they did not come to the help of the LORD, To the help of the LORD against the warriors (כִּי לֹא-בָאוּ לְעֹזֶרֶת יְהוָה לְעֹזֶרֶת יְהוָה בְּגִבּוֹרִים).” While the location of Meroz is unknown, its spiritual posture was not, reflecting the reluctance of Reuben, Gilead, Dan and Asher. Analyzing the conflict among the tribes and the failure of some strategically positioned northern tribes to participate in the skirmish is beyond the scope of this paper.<sup>18</sup> In view here is Deborah’s statement that those who answered Barak’s call to fight assisted the LORD in battle against the Canaanites. Deborah’s description of the battle against Sisera and the Canaanites inverts the expected rubric of the עֲזָרָה (help, helper) in

15 Unless noted otherwise, all Scripture English quotations are from *The Holy Bible*, New American Standard Updated Edition, 1995.

16 The noun פְּרוֹזֵן (rural dweller, villager) is unique to Deborah, written in Judges 5:11 and previously in 5:7. Popular translations diverge in rendering the construct phrase. The CSB writes פְּרוֹזֵן as a subjective construct noun, “the righteous deeds of His warriors in Israel,” and the ESV (with the RSV) has the same idea, “the righteous triumphs of his villagers in Israel.” The NIV also places פְּרוֹזֵן in an active role, writing “the victories of his villagers in Israel.” The NASB, with KJV and NKJV, renders the construct of פְּרוֹזֵן as objective, reflecting the immediately preceding line of the poem, “the righteous deeds of the LORD.” Thus, those gathered around the rural well spoke not of their victorious power, but the righteous deeds of the LORD—those He had accomplished for His people.

17 Ackerman, “Prophecy and Warfare in Early Israel,” 10.

18 Ackerman suggests that the southern tribes were not summoned to war because, proximal to Deborah and knowing her leadership, they were already prepared to follow her to battle (“Prophecy and Warfare in Early Israel,” 7).

Holy War contexts. In those, God is exclusively the party providing assistance, humanity receiving His aid.<sup>19</sup> The psalmists frequently used עֲזָרָה and always to describe the LORD as the One able to aid His people (e.g., Pss 22:20; 27:9; 35:2; 40:14; 44:27; 46:2; 60:13; 70:2; 71:12; 94:17; 108:13). Psalm 38:23 typifies the occurrences of עֲזָרָה in the Psalms: תּוֹשֶׁה לְעֹזְרָתִי אֲדֹנָי תִּשְׁעָתֵי (“Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!”). Never do the psalmists aver their strength to assist the LORD in fighting their enemies. Isaiah uses עֲזָרָה four times (10:3; 20:6; 31:1, 2), indicating in each writing that any source of help but the LORD would prove a false security. Deborah’s unique paradigm of עֲזָרָה emphasizes humanity’s role in Holy War.

In Judges 4:9 Deborah prophesied to Barak that Sisera would be sold into a woman’s hand. Deborah’s statement was ultimately fulfilled by Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite. Deborah celebrated Jael with the climactic lyrics: “She (Jael) reached out her hand for the tent peg, And her right hand for the workmen’s hammer. Then she struck Sisera, she smashed his head; And she shattered and pierced his temple (וְהִלְמָה סִיסְרָא מִחֲקָה רֵאשׁוֹ וּמַחֲצָה וְחִלְפָה רִקְתּוֹ)” (Judges 5:26). In Judges 5:26, four active third person feminine verbs (חָלַף, הִלֵּם, מָחַק, מָחַץ) are arranged in staccato fashion, grammatically portraying the series of decisive moves Jael undertook to execute Sisera as he slept. Though Deborah celebrated Jael as the conqueror of Sisera, Robert C. Boling observes that, “Jael’s deed is presented as a part of Yahweh’s victory.”<sup>20</sup>

Deborah’s song exemplifies the Holy War rubric surfacing repeatedly in the Hebrew Bible. She recognized God’s faithfulness to His over-matched and oppressed people and called Israel to respond in faith. Deborah’s female prophetic voice in Judges 4–5 accentuates the concept of Holy War for Israel. She celebrated the LORD’s mighty acts through His people—especially Jael and Barak—as they assisted the LORD in delivering Israel from the Canaanites.

## HANNAH’S SONG OF PRAISE AT THE DEDICATION OF SAMUEL (1 SAM 2:1-11)

Holy War imagery frames Hannah’s song of praise, too, but Hannah sings of the LORD’s military might at the dedication of her son, Samuel. Hannah offered a unique perspective of Holy War, expanding the theme beyond Miriam or Deborah before her. Hannah’s language in 1 Samuel 2:1-4 and 9-10 parallels many psalms, and could have been spoken by David after one of his military victories. Between 1 Samuel 2:1-4 and 2:9-10, Hannah—from a uniquely female perspective—described the LORD’s military might. He is the LORD who alone enables the barren to give birth, demonstrating authority over life and death at every stage.

### *Holy War language in the introduction of Hannah’s prayer*

Three phrases in 1 Samuel 2:1-4 reflect imagery written also in Israel’s war songs. First, in 1 Samuel 2:1 Hannah wrote, “My horn is exalted in the LORD (רָמָה קַרְנֵי בַיהוָה).” In the Hebrew Bible, קַרְן (horn) is employed both literally and metaphorically. The literal uses include plural references where it is used in the books of Moses to designate the horns of an altar associated with Israel’s cult (e.g., Exod 27:2; 29:12; Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34).<sup>21</sup> The metaphorical use of קַרְנֵי, derives from the fact that in battle,

<sup>19</sup> Allan M. Harman, “עֲזָרָה,” *NIDOTTE* 3:378-79.

<sup>20</sup> Robert C. Boling, *Judges*, The Anchor Bible 6A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 115.

<sup>21</sup> Though, the physical horns of an altar could be understood as a metaphor designating the concept of power. Thus when Adonijah feared Solomon would avenge his subversive attempt to take the throne following David’s death, Adonijah fled

horned animals enjoy a natural position of strength over their foes, able to gore them even to death. As a metaphor, קֶרֶן locates frequently in the Psalms and the Prophets. It is often paired with verbs of exaltation like רָם, (to be high), signifying victory and on-going strength.<sup>22</sup> How would the human figure(s) in view enjoy this position of strength over their foe(s)? By the intervening power of the LORD. He is praised as the God who enables His people to fight, or Himself fights for them, bringing deliverance.<sup>23</sup> In David's song of praise in 2 Samuel 22/Psalm 18, recognized as the concluding frame of an *inclusio* for the story of 1–2 Samuel begun with Hannah's story in 1 Samuel 1-2,<sup>24</sup> David applied the epithet "the horn of my salvation" to God who saved him from his enemies (2 Sam 22:4).

Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2 concludes the drama of her struggle with infertility in chapter 1, a battle heightened by Peninnah's boast in her own sons and daughters (1 Sam 1:2-4). On the surface, Hannah's reference to an enemy in 1 Samuel 2:1, "My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies (רָחַב פִּי עַל-אֹיְבֵי), Because I rejoice in Your salvation," recalls her rival Peninnah. But the plural אֹיְבֵי (enemies) demands a wider sphere of interpretation. Hannah's enemies were the LORD's enemies,<sup>25</sup> and by deduction, the enemies of Israel. Hannah's song goes beyond mere motherly reflections. Once barren, Hannah went on to prophetically boast of the role her son Samuel would play in the nation of Israel. At the outset of her song, Hannah was already connecting the dots between her personal story and salvation history. Ultimately her son Samuel would participate in the war against Israel's enemies, anointing David—the LORD's chosen instrument to wage war against His enemies and establish Israel in His land—to be king.

Third, Hannah wrote, "The bows of the mighty are shattered (קִשְׁתֵּי גִבּוֹרִים חֲתִים) But the feeble gird on strength" (1 Sam 2:4). Throughout the Hebrew Bible, קִשֶׁת references a bow used in battle to shoot arrows at an opponent and is often paired with other weaponry, especially a sword.<sup>26</sup> Returning

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to take hold of the horns of the altar (1 Kgs 1:50-51). Holding these symbols of power was an explicit plea for mercy. Micah 4:13 encapsulates the imagery of the horns of an animal and their metaphorical use in battle as instruments empowered by the LORD. Other literal references of קֶרֶן include its use as a container for liquids, as when Samuel filled his horn with oil for anointing one of Jesse's sons, eventually identified as David, to be king (1 Sam 16:1, 13). The priest Zadok did the same when anointing Solomon king (1 Kgs 1:39). See also Psalm 92:10 for a combinative literal/metaphorical use of קֶרֶן designating both military strength and container for anointing oil.

22 Michael L. Brown, "קֶרֶן," *NIDOTTE* 3:990-92.

23 In Psalm 75:4 (75:5 MT) the psalmist exhorted the wicked, "Do not lift up the horn" and employed the imagery again in Psalm 75:10 (11 MT), stating "And all the horns of the wicked He will cut off, *But* the horns of the righteous will be lifted up." In Psalm 89, the psalmist proclaimed that by the LORD's favor Israel's horn was exalted (v. 17 [18 MT]), and through the LORD's name David's horn would enjoy the same (v. 24 [25 MT]). Similarly, in Psalm 132:17 the author writes that in Zion the LORD would make a horn grow for David His anointed one. Recognizing God's judgment against Israel, in Lamentations 2 Jeremiah mourned that the LORD had cut off every horn of Israel (v. 3) and raised up the horn of her enemies to come against them (v. 17). In his oracles against the nations, Jeremiah proclaimed that Moab's horn was cut off (Jer 48:25). Ezekiel prophesied the day when the LORD would raise up a horn from Israel to proclaim His greatness, despite the fact that in the present Israel was in the throes of the power struggle between Babylon and Egypt (29:21). Zechariah's vision of four horns scattering Judah and the nations (1:18-21 [2:2-4 MT]) rests on this metaphorical understanding of קֶרֶן.

24 David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 135.

25 *Ibid.*, 142.

26 When Jacob blessed his sons for the final time, he claimed to have fought using sword and bow, blessing Joseph from his military success (Gen 48:22). Reviewing Israel's history during his farewell speech, Joshua reminded Israel that the LORD made them successful in conquest; it was not by their sword or bow that their opponents were defeated (Joshua 24:12). After David defeated Goliath, Jonathan gave David his military gear, including his sword and bow (1 Sam 18:4). Lamenting the loss of Jonathan and Saul, David spoke of the might of Jonathan's bow and Saul's sword (2 Sam 1:22). An unnamed archer of the Aramean's struck King Ahab with an arrow and killed him (1 Kgs 22:34). Elisha warned the

again to 2 Samuel 22 as a bookend to Hannah's song of praise, David praised the LORD as the one who empowered his hands in war and made his arms strong to bend even a bow of bronze (v. 35). So readers of Hannah's song of praise would have grounds to interpret her phrase "bows of the mighty" (1 Sam 2:4) as a reference to military activity. Following her statement that "the bows of the mighty are shattered," Hannah wrote in 1 Samuel 2:4-5 several phrases each describing a reversal of fortune, likely referencing her special place as mother of Samuel *vis-à-vis* Peninnah. Hannah's opponent taunted her when she was barren, but the LORD looked upon Hannah's lowliness and shattered Peninnah's position of power.<sup>27</sup> In the first lines of her song, Hannah took up imagery specific to warfare and employed it generally to describe how God had reversed her fortunes as a barren woman.

### *Divine warrior motifs in the conclusion of Hannah's song*

Three phrases in 1 Samuel 2:9-10 typify a mindset that expects God to intervene on behalf of His oppressed people, giving them victory over their foes. First, in 1 Samuel 2:9, Hannah wrote: "He (the LORD) keeps the feet of His godly ones, But the wicked ones are silenced in darkness; For not by might shall a man prevail (כִּי-לֹא בִכְחַ יִגְבַּר אִישׁ)." Hannah's lyrics express her rationale as to why the feet of the godly are kept firm while the wicked falter and are silenced (1 Sam 2:9a). Hannah's declaration that the LORD raises His lowly ones to prevail over the mighty synthesizes her plight with that of Israel. Ralph W. Klein writes, "the warriors, the sated, the mothers of many children, and the rich are all apparently strong, but their strength or high position can be undone by the God who knows."<sup>28</sup>

Second, in 1 Samuel 2:10 Hannah wrote, "Those who contend with the LORD will be shattered (יִהְיוּ יִתְתּוּ מְרִיבוֹ)." In the concluding verse of Hannah's hymn of praise, militant motifs are grammatically arranged so as to emphasize the LORD's supremacy as a warrior fighting for His people. The verbal tense choices in the first phrase of 1 Samuel 2:10 combine to express a powerful theological conclusion to Hannah's song. Her use of the *nifal* of חָתַת (to dismay, shatter) is a divine passive; it is the LORD who will shatter His opponents.<sup>29</sup> And Hannah employed the *hifl* active participle of רִיב (to contend) as a way of picturing the robust opposition of those taking up a case against the LORD. As Klein notes, "the haughty and self-reliant are now seen as his perpetually defeated enemies."<sup>30</sup>

Finally, it is noteworthy that Hannah concluded her song, ironically, with the introduction of a new figure. In 1 Samuel 2:10, she wrote that the LORD "will give strength to His king," (וַיִּתֶּן-עֹז לְמַלְכּוֹ). Hannah's introduction of the motif of kingship follows her theological reflection that the LORD thunders from heaven, a motif Klein notes as typical of a deity's engagement in Holy War (cf. Judges 5:4-5 *supra*).<sup>31</sup> In 1 Samuel 2:10

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Israelite warriors not to kill the Arameans they had captured with the sword and bow (2 Kgs 6:22). In the prophets, Isaiah employed some of the same Holy War imagery as Hannah, prophesying that those from Arabia would flee from the drawn sword and bent bow (Isa 21:15). In a phrase reflecting Hannah's song, Isaiah prophesied that, "the remainder of the number of bowmen, the mighty men of the sons of Kedar, will be few (וְשָׂאֵר מִסְפַּר-קִשְׁתַּי גְּבוּרֵי בְנֵי-קֶדָר יִמְעָטוּ)" (Isa 21:17). In his prophesies against the nations, Jeremiah repeatedly spoke of the power of the bow in battle (46:9; 49:35; 50:14, 29, 42; 51:3, 56).

27 Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 145.

28 Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1983), 18-19.

29 "This vb. is used both to express fear and to depict a condition of destruction," (M. V. Van Pelt and W. C. Kaiser, Jr. "חָתַת," *NIDOTTE* 2:331).

30 Klein, *1 Samuel*, 19.

31 *Ibid.* The authors of the OT note time and again that God's powerful word transforms the natural world such that earthquakes, floods, and falling stars become means of God's judgment against His foes. God demonstrates His rule through lightning and thunder (e.g., Pss 18:14; 29:7; 97:2-4; 144:6; Jer 10:13; Ezek 21:8-13).

Hannah introduced a king into the drama of her hymn, anticipating again David's royal song of thanksgiving in 2 Samuel 22 and messianic portrayals like those described in Psalms 2, 45, and 110. Hannah thus traced a frame for the future monarchy of Israel, calling the king the LORD's anointed. Tsumura suggests that though Hannah lived before the monarchial period of Israel, she would have known of the institution of kingship and the structure of political monarchy via the surrounding Canaanite nations.<sup>32</sup>

Her lyrics thus function prophetically. Hannah rejoiced that the LORD had lifted her horn (1 Sam 2:1), and in 1 Samuel 2:10 wrote emphatically, through the use of the *hifil* of רום (to be high) with horn, that the LORD "will exalt the horn of His anointed (וַיִּרָם קַרְנֵן מְשִׁיחוֹ)." )

### *Hannah's uniquely female participation in Holy War*

Within the matrix of Holy War expressed in 1 Samuel 2:1-4 and 9-10, Hannah exclaimed the LORD's power that enabled her to give birth to Samuel (1 Sam 2:5-6), the judge who would anoint David as king (1 Sam 16). By the LORD's might Hannah's womb had been brought to life, privileging her with a son who would figure prominently in God's unfolding plan of redemption. Two phrases encapsulate Hannah's perspective regarding how the LORD enabled her to participate in His battle. First, "the barren has borne seven (עַד-עֵקֶרָה יִלְדָה שֶׁבַע), but she who has many children is forlorn" (1 Sam 2:5). In the broader scope of Hannah's song, "the barren" (עֵקֶר) serves both personal/autobiographical and corporate/prophetic ends. The term describes the oppressed of Israel as the nations prevailed over them—until the day when the LORD would intervene. In Psalm 113, the author praised the LORD as the God exalted above the nations, holy and unique in power (vv. 4-5). The psalmist noted that the LORD is a God of justice for the oppressed—demonstrated by the fact that "He makes the barren woman (עֵקֶרָת) abide in the house *As a joyful mother of children*" (Ps 113:9). Second, in 1 Samuel 2:6, "the LORD kills and brings to life, He brings down to Sheol and raises up (מִזְרִיד שְׂאוֹל וַיַּעַל)." It may be that this verse encapsulates the logic and motivation of Hannah's praise song. She had personally come to know the LORD's power in a unique way, and through her experience began to view the religio-political situation of Israel.

Hannah's song of celebration at the dedication of Samuel depicts the salvation of Israel corporately via the LORD's victory over His enemies. The victory the LORD provided her over barrenness and Peninnah foreshadows the victories He would bring about for His people corporately. Hannah's prayer song functions prophetically, even recognizing a monarch who would be victorious as the LORD's anointed. Hannah framed the birth of her son in Holy War imagery as only the mother of Samuel could.

### **MARY'S SONG OF VICTORY: THE MAGNIFICAT**

Luke wrote that Gabriel was sent to inform Mary of her special place in redemptive history as mother of the Messiah (Luke 1:26-38). The balance of Luke 1 records the testimony of Mary and Zechariah concerning the messages they received from Gabriel. A common theme frames Mary's and Zechariah's songs: Jesus was the Messiah sent to deliver Israel, the descendants of Abraham (v. 55), from her enemies (vv. 71, 74) and provide salvation through forgiveness of sins (vv. 77-79). Mary's song thus provides a unique perspective on the events surrounding the coming of Messiah, but is just one of

<sup>32</sup> Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, 150.

several poetic arrangements in Luke 1–2.<sup>33</sup>

### *Mary's personal reflection and praise*

Like Hannah noted *supra*, Mary enjoyed the Lord's favor in conceiving a child.<sup>34</sup> But unlike Hannah, Mary was not yet married nor longed to be a mother. Where the author of 1 Samuel 1 empathetically described Hannah's lowly state, only Mary's self-reference of being a lowly slave accords Hannah's situation.<sup>35</sup> Mary recognized that God's great mercy and power had been showered upon her so magnanimously that all generations of those fearing Him would know of His mercy. Mary's expansive vision in Luke 1:50 serves as a launch pad for the second, corporate, phase of her poem.

### *Mary's reflection upon God's intervention to make Israel victorious*<sup>36</sup>

Luke 1:53, "HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed (πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς)," encapsulates Mary's reversal-of-fortunes paradigm. The surrounding lines in Luke 1:51-52 and 54 include language and imagery consistent with descriptions of Holy War noted already in this study. Based upon this arrangement, I suggest that Mary's Holy War phrases are in one sense superfluous. If Mary was simply an expectant mother writing a hymn of praise to God—even if we would allow for a miraculous conception—we should inquire as to what would compel Mary to direct her listeners to Israel's corporate plight and God's promises to make His people victorious over their political foes. Mary, I suggest, like Deborah and Hannah before her, described her special role in God's cosmic battle through Israel, purposefully employing motifs of Holy War along the way. But Mary, as mother of the Savior of the world, wrote with a uniquely intimate perspective of God's plan to intervene through Jesus. Two phrases of the *Magnificat* express Mary's paradigm of participation in Holy War.

First, Ἐποίησεν κράτος ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ, διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν ("He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart") (Luke 1:51). Κράτος (power, strength) occurs more than fifty times in the LXX, mostly in non-canonical books. The majority of the twenty canonical LXX uses of κράτος reference the

33 Darrell L. Bock synthesizes these stating, "the hymns in Luke 1-2 are classic praise psalms in terms of their form. God is the subject. They focus on what God's program accomplishes through sending Jesus...One of the key themes of the portrait of God in Luke-Acts is the note of joy and praise that should come to the Most High for what he has done," (*A Theology of Luke and Acts*, Biblical Theology in the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012], 102).

34 Mary's hymn begins with the present tense-form in Luke 1:46 but the remainder of her poem is dominated by aorist verbals, normally thought of as referring to past time. Since, in Luke's scheme of writing, Mary had not yet given birth, on the surface the use of aorist and not future tense-form verbals seems peculiar. Hugo Méndez ("Semitic Poetic Techniques in the *Magnificat*: Luke 1:46-47, 55" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135.3 (2016): 557-74) argues that this shift demonstrates Semitic poetic influence, providing variety to the parallel features dominating the initial phrases of Mary's poem. "The tense alteration creates tension and ambiguity in the reading. The reader can either proceed to the next line or linger on these lines to clarify the temporal sphere of each verb. That lingering, that pause, is key" (566), Méndez writes. How the aorist tense-forms function in the *Magnificat* is discussed *infra*.

35 In his monograph *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance* (JSNTSup 9 [Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985]), Stephen Farris suggests that parallels between Hannah's song and Mary's can be overdrawn, noting that the reversal of fortunes paradigm in the latter surfaces not only in Hannah's song but other ancient texts as well (116).

36 John Nolland comments, "the move from Mary's individual experience to what has been accomplished for all Israel, intimated already by the language chosen to express Mary's experience, is now achieved in the move from first person singulars to third person plurals" (*Luke 1—9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary 35A [Dallas: Word, 1989], 71).

unique power of Israel's God,<sup>37</sup> at times in Holy War contexts, as when Moses warned Israel that it was not their power but God's that would bring them into the land, clear their enemies, and grant them prosperity in Canaan (Deut 8:17).

In the New Testament, humanity is never the subjective reference of κράτος.<sup>38</sup> There is one occurrence, noteworthy for Mary's song, in which κράτος is used for a figure other than God.<sup>39</sup> In Hebrews 1—2, the author described the purposes for Jesus' entrance into the world. The author noted that the Son came as a man in order to participate fully in the plight of humanity held under sin, death, and the power of the devil. In Hebrews 2:14, the author of Hebrews wrote that as Jesus participated in the most essential human experience, i.e., death—and did so as God's powerful, eternal, sinless Son—Jesus defeated the devil, τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου (“him who had the power of death”).<sup>40</sup>

Mary's combination of the predicate nominative κράτος (“mighty deeds”) with the prepositional phrase ἐν βραχίονι αὐτοῦ (“with His arm”) in the first phrase of Luke 1:51 mirrors Israel's Holy War tradition.<sup>41</sup> The same frame of thought continues in the next phrase of Luke 1:5, διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους διανοίᾳ καρδίας αὐτῶν (“He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart”).<sup>42</sup> Διασκορπίζω surfaces repeatedly in Holy War contexts of the LXX,<sup>43</sup> stating what God had done or what a speaker was invoking Him to do. When Israel set out from Sinai and with the protection of the LORD's presence on the mountain, Moses would address the LORD with the vocative κύριε διασκορπισθήτωσαν οἱ ἐχθροί σου φυγέτωσαν (“Rise up, O LORD! And let Your enemies be scattered”) (Num 10:34). In the LXX, the psalmists employed διασκορπίζω to note God's activity on their behalf and behalf of His people.<sup>44</sup>

Second, Mary wrote, καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινούς (“He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble”) (Luke 1:52). Though the concluding motif in the parallel phrase, ὕψωσεν ταπεινούς, reflects a simple reversal of fortunes paradigm, the fact that it follows imagery of toppled leaders in the initial phrase of the verse suggests that the Magnificat has a specific scope: divine engagement in military conflict, *viz.* Holy War. The use of καθαίρειν (to take down, destroy) in the aorist and not the future accords the consistent use of the

37 Wilhelm Michaelis, “κράτος (Θεοκρατία),” *TDNT* 3:906.

38 *Ibid.*, 907.

39 *Ibid.*

40 See R. Leivestad, *Christ the Conqueror: Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament* (London: SPCK, 1954), 247-72; G. Johnston, “Christ as Archēgos,” *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 381; J. J. Scott, “Archēgos in the Salvation History of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29.1 (1986): 50; William Klassen, “Jesus and the Messianic War,” 159-64; Richard J. Bauckham, “The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll,” *Neotestamentica* 22 (1988): 17-20, 31; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God*; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 446-48; and Kenneth L. Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 28-32.

41 “What God has now begun to do, and Mary regards prophetically as having already come to fruition, is described in terms of what God actually did in OT times, as expressed in Israel's praise in the OT,” (I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*; [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], 84).

42 Nolland comments, “in OT idiom God scatters his enemies (Num 10:35; Pss 67[68]:1; 88[89]:10) and humbles or puts to shame, etc., the proud (Pss 17[18]:27; 118[119]:21, 78; Prov 3:24; Isa 1:25; 13:11; etc.). In a fresh coinage the two come together in the Magnificat's διεσκόρπισεν ὑπερηφάνους,” (*Luke 1—9:20*, 71).

43 Otto Michel, “σκορπίζω-σκορπισμός,” *TDNT* 7:418.

44 In 52:6 (53:5) the psalmist speaks of God scattering the bones of Israel's enemies; in 58:12 (59:11) the psalmist asks God not to kill his enemies but scatter them homeless that his followers would have a visual reminder of God's power; in 67:31 (68:30) the psalmist beseeches God to bring peace to Jerusalem and scatter those who take pleasure in warring against His people, namely the Egyptians.

aorist in Luke 1:51-54; Mary viewed God’s work perfectly, whole, though the conquering King was still in her womb.<sup>45</sup> In the Old Testament canon of the LXX, the subject of *καθαίρω* is depicted as aggressive, avenging a righteous standard or covenant that had been broken. Israel’s God is the subject of *καθαίρω* both when He was destroying Israel’s enemies (Pss 9:7 [9:6]; 27:5 [28:5]; 51:7 [52:5]; Jer 30:10 [49:16]; 49:10 [42:10]; 51:34 [45:4])<sup>46</sup> and bringing destruction upon His people (Pss 59:3 [60:1]; 79:13 [80:12]; 88:41 [89:40]; Jer 38:28 [31:28]).<sup>47</sup> Though *καθαίρω* has a range of subjects and direct objects, the verb nearly always implies violence of some kind, and it is observed that, “in the OT one of the clearest proofs of God’s work in history is that He overthrows the powerful who do not fulfill His will.”<sup>48</sup>

The antithetical statement, *καὶ ὑψώσεν ταπεινούς* (“and [He] has exalted those who were humble”) (Luke 1:52) resembles Hannah’s mindset noted *supra*. Hannah wrote that her horn was exalted in the LORD (1 Sam 2:1)—who would one day exalt the horn of His king (1 Sam 2:10). Parallels between Hannah’s and David’s songs of praise include the latter’s praise to the LORD for exalting him above his enemies (2 Sam 22:49). The Psalms and Isaiah have the greatest concentration of *ὑψόω*, together over seventy references. In the Psalms, *ὑψόω* nearly always surfaces in descriptions of some kind of a conflict.<sup>49</sup> Farris writes that in the *Magnificat*, “God is pictured again as a warrior, whose strong arm

45 As noted *supra*, the interpreter’s verbal aspect theory colors interpretation of the aorist tense-forms referring to future time events in the *Magnificat*. Mary’s use of the aorist in a prophetic context is not uncommon for acts which the speaker or writer believes secure in the divine will though not yet realized in temporal experience. Farris suggests that though the aorists of Luke 1:51-53 may refer to the Christ event, they are also eschatological, writing, “the coming of Jesus Christ was the guarantee that God’s purposes were, in principle, already worked out. The Magnificat speaks of a past event with future, indeed eternal, consequences” (Farris, *The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives*, 116). Raymond E. Brown writes that, “the aorists refer to a definite action in the past, namely, the salvation brought about through the death and resurrection of Jesus. That was the supreme manifestation of the strength of God’s arm. At that moment He scattered the proud and the mighty, the rulers and the princes who gathered together against His anointed, i.e., the Messiah (Acts 4:24-27); He did this by raising Jesus from death and *exalting* him at his right hand (Acts 2:33; 5:31). All this praise for what God *had done* could be reconverted and placed on Mary’s lips because Luke is interpreting the conception of Jesus in light not only of the post-resurrection Christology of the Church, but also of post-resurrection soteriology (italics original)” in *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 363. For further analysis of verbal aspect theory, see especially Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek 1 (New York: Peter Lang), 1989; idem, “Greek Linguistics and Lexicography,” in *Understanding the Times: Essays in Honor of D. A. Carson* (eds. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough; Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 19-61; Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); D. A. Carson, “An Introduction to the Porter/Fanning Debate,” in *Biblical Greek Language and Linguistics: Open Questions in Current Research*, eds. S. E. Porter and D. A. Carson, JSNT 80 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 18-25; and Constantine R. Campbell, *Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008); idem, *Advances in the Study of Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 105-33.

46 Nolland suggests that though the language of toppling enemies in Luke 1:52 is common to the OT, no connection grounds a definite allusion to one passage or another (*Luke 1—9:20*, 72).

47 “The overthrow of rulers who do not obey God’s will is a sign of his power at work in history, and is here ascribed to the agency of the Messiah,” (Marshall, *Luke*, 84).

48 Carl Schneider “*καθαίρω*,” *TDNT* 3:412.

49 Psalms 74 (75) and 88 (89) provide windows for understanding the use of *ὑψόω* in the Psalms. In Psalm 74:5 (75:4) the psalmist warned the wicked not to lift up the horn because Israel’s God is the one who both humbles and exalts (v. 8 [7]) giving the psalmist confidence that the horn of the righteous would be exalted (v. 11 [10]). Psalm 88 (89) represents a cry for God to demonstrate His righteousness to His people, restoring them though they had gone astray. The psalmist pleaded with the LORD, recounting: the LORD’s exalted right hand (v. 14 [13]), the exaltation of those who know the joy of the LORD’s righteousness (v. 17 [16]), the LORD’s power to exalt the horn of His people (v. 18 [17]), the exaltation of David as king (v. 20 [19])—including the exaltation of David’s horn (v. 25 [24])—all of which seemed for the psalmist

rescues his people and shatters his enemies.”<sup>50</sup> Mary’s use of Holy War language is consistent with her place in the broader storyline of Scripture: the One to whom she would give birth would strike the devil on his head, fulfilling the promise made to the serpent in Genesis 3:15. If Mary was just a celebrant of God’s goodness and favor, then Holy War imagery would be superfluous. But since she would give birth to heaven’s warrior come to earth to atone not only for the sins of Israel but all nations, rescuing humanity from the devil’s power of condemnation and death, militaristic motifs become indispensable. Because of the mission of Mary’s Son, her song of praise requires Holy War imagery.

## SONGS OF WAR IMAGINED AND REAL

This brief exegesis of Holy War tradition in the songs of Deborah, Hannah, and Mary reinforces Russell Moore’s argument that militaristic hymn lyrics are rooted in Scripture. But the use of military motifs in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Luke 1:46-55 expand the traditional scope of Holy War such that by giving birth, Hannah and Mary portrayed themselves as warriors in God’s cosmic battle to redeem lost humanity. Taken together, Deborah, Hannah, and Mary’s use of Holy War language addresses some of McLaren’s contemporary concerns. McLaren told Baptist news Global:

I think the real problem is imagination. The combined imagery of the songs we sing creates a kind of inner construct or lens through which we see the world. If the background music and imagery of our lives is predominantly hostile, fearful, aggressive, or dominating, if it sends us into the world primarily as warriors, then we will find ourselves encountering the world, including other people, in a certain way.<sup>51</sup>

I suggest that Deborah, Hannah, and Mary, by the Spirit, intentionally imagined Holy War and their roles in the battle. Judges 5 does not describe Deborah personally taking up weapons, but she nonetheless articulated Israel’s victory through Jael’s act of violence. Hannah and Mary seem even more creative; how did they move so quickly from the joy of motherhood to the destruction of Israel’s enemies? Imagination these women did not lack, and their choice of imagery was not vague: they described themselves as fighters enabled by God to participate in His war.

McLaren’s aforementioned lyrics do not lack reverence for God or exhortation to Christian discipleship. My argument here is not with McLaren’s lyrics *per se* but with his proposal to remove Holy War language from the lyrics of Christian worship, effectively neutering songs that reflect biblical texts. I counter McLaren’s thesis for two reasons.

First, since Adam and Eve’s sin in the Garden of Eden, a war-less world is not an offer. For hymns or songs to have meaning, they must display a conceptual framework consistent not only in terms of theology but also history and anthropology. As noted at the outset of this study, the world of the Old Testament was a constant series of battles and (temporary) peace agreements. The Old Testament narrative presents Israel’s wars in the shadow of the initial conflict between Adam and Eve and Satan; Israel’s wars were ultimately battles to trust God’s word. And they failed just as Adam and Eve had

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incongruous with the fact that the LORD had exalted the horn of David’s enemies (v. 43 [42]).

50 Farris, *The Hymns of Luke’s Infancy Narratives*, 121.

51 (<http://brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/q-r-onward-christian-what.html>), accessed 11 Nov 2016.

done.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, the world of the New Testament can hardly be understood apart from war,<sup>53</sup> and the authors of the New Testament epistles wrote accordingly.

Second, language and imagery of human military combat thus materialize the meta-historical battle between God and Satan. To Israel's plight God sent His Son, as the author of Hebrews wrote, to destroy the devil by accomplishing forgiveness of sin (Heb 2:14-18). Paul wrote similarly that through Christ's cross the demonic forces had been defeated (Col 2:15), but noted also that spiritual forces would oppose God's people on earth until the time of Christ's return (1 Cor 15:24-28). Peter likewise wrote that, "your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8; cf. Eph 4:27; James 4:7). The conclusion of Moore's response to McLaren provides a fitting exhortation for this study:

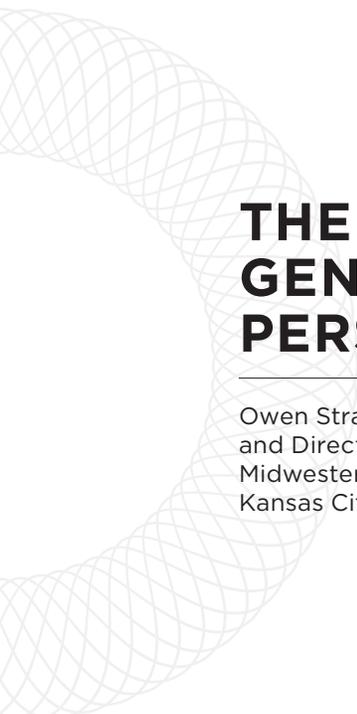
We become peacemakers not by avoiding warfare language but learning what kind of war God's people fight, and that's not with carnal weapons. If we don't recognize the spiritual nature of the warfare around us, we will scrap and fight with those around us, just like the pagans who have no hope. We are able to be a joyful happy throng precisely because we know that we are an army—a victorious one with a triumphant King already in the heavenly places. That's why we can love and forgive and bear persecution. That's why we can move onward, into the future. We should sing that, and sing it loudly, like an army marching as to war.<sup>54</sup>

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52 Gerhard Von Rad's theory of Holy War (*Holy War in Ancient Israel*, trans. Marva J. Dawn and John H. Yoder [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991]) observes three constituent elements: (1) amphictyony: various tribes of Israel gather together with a common purpose of defending the nation; (2) a war cry summons the troops to the LORD and to battle, giving confidence that the LORD would deliver the enemies into Israel's hands, and (3) as a result, Israel was not to fear but believe the LORD's word of promise (45). Because Adam and Eve failed to trust God's word in the garden, conflict and war came upon all humanity—and in war Israel would be called to trust God's word. Their failure to do so anticipated the coming of Christ, the defeat of the devil and the consummation of God's kingdom at the second advent.

53 M. M. Austin writes, "The Hellenistic period as conventionally understood is framed by two military conquests: the first, the Macedonian invasion of the Persian Empire under Alexander, rapid and deliberate (334-323 BC), the second, the Roman take-over of much of the Hellenistic world, hardly deliberate but a long-drawn process, which started in the late third century BC but was not complete till 30 BC with the overthrow of the Ptolemaic dynasty after the battle of Actium. War in this period was a constant presence which shaped the history of the times in many ways. Conquest and empire are the leading themes," in *The Hellenistic World From Alexander to the Roman Conquest: A Selection of Ancient Sources in Translation*, Second Augmented Ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

54 (<https://www.russellmoore.com/2016/02/24/are-our-hymns-too-warlike/>), accessed 11 Nov 2016.



# THE CLARITY OF COMPLEMENTARITY: GENDER DYSPHORIA IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

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*He wanted to watch wrestling; I wanted to watch the Food Network.*

*Seven months prior to my short-lived relationship with the guy who won the battle over the remote, I was a lesbian. My long black hair neatly tied into a ponytail. My jeans sagging just enough to show off the boxer briefs I wore faithfully. My white t-shirt covering the breasts that I worked diligently to keep flat, lest I look too much like the woman God made me. And beneath it all lay a soul that God died to save.*

*Born with an inherent disposition to sin mixed with fatherlessness, molestation, and limited-to-no examples of trustworthy men led me into a lifestyle of homosexuality. It was a way of life I willingly embraced. My style of dress and behavior was somewhat indicative of my personality. A girly-girl could never be used to describe Jackie. An aggressive tom-boy was more like it. Therefore, the girls I attracted were typically everything that allowed me to become what I thought I wanted to secretly be: a man.*

**S**o wrote artist Jackie Hill-Perry in a 9Marks essay about her experience of gender dysphoria and later conversion to Christ.<sup>1</sup> Hill-Perry's testimony sheds helpful light on a tough issue facing the church today: how do we approach gender dysphoria? When people feel like they have the "gender identity" of the opposite sex but not the body, what kind of counsel do we provide them?<sup>2</sup>

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1 Jackie Hill Perry, "From Lesbianism to Complementarianism," *9Marks*, March 11, 2015, accessible at <https://9marks.org/article/from-lesbianism-to-complementarianism>.

2 I am using the terminology that has caught on in recent years in the broader culture. My use of these terms does not necessarily imply agreement either with the definition or the broader worldview(s) responsible for them. For one secular

Or, to sharpen the question: does the church of Jesus Christ have anything unique, anything distinctive, anything worth saying, in the modern conversation over gender dysphoria? Are we to sit quietly in the corner as this conversation transpires, offering little but affirmation?

For my part, I believe that the church has something to say on this matter. More than this, we have the wisdom our world desperately needs but utterly lacks. We are staked upon Scripture, the very power of God unto salvation, and Scripture norms our understanding of all of life. The Bible does not merely give us the discrete spiritual formula by which we may be saved. The Bible sets humanity in proper light. It tells us who made us, what we were made for, and how we are to live as enchanted but fallen creatures under the rule of God. This has great import for the conversation surrounding gender dysphoria, gender identity, and transgenderism. My view is not merely that the church has some helpful words on these convulsive matters, but that the church has the *fundamental* and *most important* testimony to offer here.<sup>3</sup>

In what follows, I will be addressing one specific question: is embracing the identity of the opposite sex an amoral or moral act? It has been my observation for some time now that the discussion of gender dysphoria, gender identity, and transgenderism among evangelicals has belonged more to a psychological framework rather than a moral-theological outlook. This is not to say that all who engage this matter do so from a purely or merely psychological cast; it is to say, however, that transgenderism—and related issues like cross-dressing and gender dysphoria—are sometimes approached as a subject that Holy Scripture either does not address or does not authoritatively address. To put a point on it: Scripture is not sufficient for these matters.

In this article, I will respectfully counter this view, and show that in order to minister grace and compassion to sinners like us who experience gender dysphoria, we must fundamentally and foundationally view it in light of a comprehensive moral-theological perspective. This perspective, of course, in no way denies the psychological dimensions of gender dysphoria, but it sees such dimensions as the outworking of a moral-theological choice that fallen human beings make.

My primary conversation partner here is professor Mark Yarhouse, whose book *Understanding Gender Dysphoria* (InterVarsity, 2015) offers much food for thought.<sup>4</sup> Yarhouse is ahead of his movement in addressing his subject; I am thankful for his pioneering efforts as a Christian leader. The counseling experience that Yarhouse possesses, and the compassion that he clearly exudes in his text, are commendable. I do, however, have some concerns with Yarhouse's model. In this article, I will not attempt an exhaustive analysis of his important book, though I will summarize it. Further, I am not able in this piece to attempt a thoroughgoing overview of the causes, effects, and phenomena of transgenderism, gender dysphoria, and cross-dressing. Instead, my purpose here is to zero in like a laser on the one specific question mentioned above: does the Bible present the personal expression of gender dysphoria as a neutral matter? My answer is that it does not.

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source's definition of "gender identity," see <http://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions>.

<sup>3</sup> This paper is a considerable expansion of a paper delivered at the 68<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in San Antonio, Texas (November 2016). In days ahead, I will publish a good bit more on these topics, first as part of a multiple views book on transgenderism (information coming soon), and more fully in a scholarly biblical anthropology that I am writing for B&H Academic entitled *Reenchanting Humanity: Biblical Anthropology for the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Church*.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2015). Due to the extensive nature of my interaction with this book, I have left page numbers in the text for ease of reading.

With those words in mind, we turn first to a consideration of the viewpoint advanced by Yarhouse. Following that, we shape a collegial response to Yarhouse with reference to several crucial biblical texts. We then conclude with a few brief reflections for those ministering grace to people who experience gender dysphoria. In sum, it is my hope that this brief and necessarily non-exhaustive interaction will yield a strengthening of the church's witness and work among people who experience gender dysphoria.

## HOW YARHOUSE APPROACHES GENDER DYSPHORIA

Before we cover Yarhouse's handling of gender dysphoria, we note his biblical-theological moorings. This is of great import, as we shall see. Yarhouse quotes Millard Erickson on the relevance of Scripture in his second chapter. He affirms that Scripture is "fully truthful in all its teachings" and is a "sure source of guidance" on matters of faith and life. (29) He goes on to cite Genesis 2:21-24 and note that "Christians have historically understood there to be two biological sexes, and gender sexuality is a reflection of that distinction and complementarity seen in the creation narrative." (36) This is a sound statement.

A bit further, Yarhouse argues that while we "affirm two different sexes," we must also recognize that "our gender identity and gender roles are often shaped by our current cultural context" such that we need to work "to avoid adherence to rigid stereotypes of what it means to be male and female." (38) In discussing how Christians address gender dysphoria through our knowledge of the fall, he calls for believers to "retain convictions" while offering "a thoughtful response rather than a knee-jerk reaction." (43) He goes on to say that our doctrine of redemption leads us to seek "to restore one another" and to see that "God is at work redeeming these experiences," which includes gender dysphoria.

Yarhouse considers the conservative evangelical approach to transgenderism to be situated in an "integrity framework" that calls struggling people back to the sure coherence of God's design. (46) He introduces the "disability framework," which sees "gender incongruence as a reflection of a fallen world in which the condition is a disability, a nonmoral reality to be addressed with compassion," and then the "diversity framework" and takes care to note how Christians will struggle to see either of these two systems as the overarching structure of their engagement with gender dysphoria. (see 52) He says that he sees "value in a disability framework" that views dysphoria as "a nonmoral reality." (53) The church should "reject" the view that "gender incongruence is the result of willful disobedience," for this places "the blame on the person navigating gender identity concerns." (54)

The matter of shame is a controlling concern; Yarhouse indicates that people who experience dysphoria struggle greatly with shame due to the church's expectations. In later chapters (ch. 3), Yarhouse will share that he does not believe that counselees choose gender dysphoria—they have just experienced it, though the ultimate "cause is still unknown." (61) He encourages those dealing with dysphoria to consider a range of responses, noting that

Different behaviors or dress may not be ideal, but the person identifies the least invasive way to manage their dysphoria so that it does not become too distressing or impairing. This places such management on a continuum from least to most invasive and recognizes that hormonal treatment and sex reassignment could be the most invasive. (123-24)

Elsewhere, he calls for the Christian community to "recognize the conflict and try to work with the person and with those who have expertise in this area to find the least invasive ways to manage the

dysphoria.” (144)

In framing a response for churches, he points to the need to help people belong, for this process is “messy and much more complicated” than many believers know. (148) Accordingly, the church must be careful: “Even the message of belonging can be lost when a person wants to serve—let’s say as a greeter—but is transgender and others in the church raise concerns about what message is being sent to the community.” (148) After all, “many people who know and love Christ have besetting conditions that have simply not resolved as a result of their belief in Christ as their Savior.” (148) Yarhouse holds out three basic possibilities for people who experience gender dysphoria: 1) resolving it in accordance with their biological sex, 2) engaging in cross-dressing behavior intermittently to manage dysphoria, and 3) adopting the cross-gender role through possible hormonal treatment or sex-reassignment surgery (153). This threefold response grid should have our full attention.

According to Yarhouse, the church should avoid “rigid stereotypes” that reflect “cultural concerns” more than “biblical concerns.” (155) Such congregations risk “not being hospitable” due to their focus on “conveying biblical truths to those on the inside.” (156) Indeed, the stakes are high. If the church does not warm to an “integrated framework,” Yarhouse believes that “speaking solely with reference to the integrity framework will increasingly isolate evangelicals from a cultural context in which the diversity framework is emerging as most salient.” (160) In the end, “Christians can benefit from valuing and speaking into the sacredness found in the integrity framework, the compassion we witness in the disability framework, and the identity and community considerations we see in the diversity framework.” (161)

We will leave off our engagement of Yarhouse’s material here. By this point, several things are clear. First, Yarhouse believes that gender dysphoria necessitates compassionate Christian treatment. Second, he recognizes that the Scripture teaches, at least to some degree, that manhood and womanhood are God-designed realities, and that redemption is needed for broken sinners. Third, he believes that individuals experiencing gender dysphoria may choose various means of navigating their personal experience. This includes cross-dressing and even gender-reassignment surgery. Fourth, he views the actual experience—and resultant choices—of gender dysphoria as non-moral; it is not the result of “willful disobedience.”

Yarhouse has given us much to respond to, and his substantive material requires a biblical-theological answer. What follows is an attempt at such a Scripture-shaped response. We will look at five key biblical sections.

## **A SYNTHESIS OF BIBLICAL TEXTS ON THE SEXES**

### ***1. God makes “male and female” in Genesis 1 and 2.***

Genesis 1 is not merely informative for understanding God’s plan and expectations for humanity. It is formative. The Lord creates two sexes on the sixth day. The apex of his creation is the man and the woman:

[27] So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.

Genesis 2 fills out our understanding of this divine work, as it portrays the Lord making the man from the dust of the ground and the woman from the rib of the man (Gen 2:7, 21). There is much to unpack here, but for our purposes, the Lord is showing us that manhood and womanhood are the product of his super-intelligence, and his desire to be glorified by unity (one human race) in diversity (two sexes). The Trinity itself is the ultimate ground of this concept (Gen 1:26). The human race is an intentional reflection of the divine symbiosis. We cannot thus see manhood and womanhood as evolutionary outcomes, but rather as the very intention of God from the beginning of our world. Commenting on this material in Genesis, Ray Ortlund says it well: “It is God who wants men to be men and women to be women; and He can teach us the meaning of each, if we want to be taught.”<sup>5</sup>

This passage shows us that manhood and womanhood are essential properties. We do not see them as fluid, but in fundamental terms as fixed. There is a substance, a God-made reality, called manhood, but it is not abstract, but rather embodied by men. Likewise, there is a substance, a God-made reality, called womanhood, and it is lived out by women. The fact that Genesis 2 reveals God as the maker of the sexes leaves us with the unmistakable conclusion that they are called to own their God-given identity as a matter of obedience. They cannot, for example, fulfill the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 without living in marital union. They *must* act as a man and a woman in their God-created marriage; they have the joyful duty of being “naked and not ashamed” in one-flesh union (Gen 2:24).<sup>6</sup> The man and woman have no way to fulfill this mission without full-fledged recognition of their distinctive design, their complementary physiology. Manhood and womanhood as essential realities are the ground for the survival and growth of humanity, the enactment and sustenance of marriage, and the faithful pursuit of the *missio dei* in its early form: populating and ruling the earth *coram deo*.

The significance of this material for understanding gender dysphoria is difficult to overstate. If we deny or only distantly affirm Genesis 1–2 in our handling of this challenge, we surely will have precious little guidance to offer people who experience it. If, however, we locate Genesis 1–2 as vital to our understanding of God’s purposes for humanity, we are queued up to offer real and substantial help to people who need it.

## ***2. The fall of Genesis 3 represents an attack—a successful one—on God’s plan for the sexes.***

All sin is rooted in the real historical fall of Adam and Eve as recorded in Genesis 3:1-13. We will not interrogate this passage at length, but can note one major truth of this passage: Satan, acting as the serpent, seeks nothing less than the overturning of the created order that the Lord has established. He, a creeping thing, takes dominion over the woman, whom God made from the man’s body. The Lord had signaled to Adam by making the woman from his own flesh that he had the responsibility to protect and lead his wife, even as the Lord had made his leadership role in the marriage plain by having Adam name Eve (Gen 2:23). Yet Adam, in the moment of testing, failed to step in and crush the serpent’s head. He passively received the forbidden fruit from his wife, and then, when called to account for his double failure—the failure to obey and the failure to lead—by God, he blamed both

<sup>5</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006 [1991]), 99.

<sup>6</sup> See Andreas and Margaret Köstenberger, *God’s Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 31. The authors helpfully note that “God delegated to humanity as male and female the power to rule and to procreate. He put humans on the earth to take care of it for him, requiring them to reproduce as male and female.”

God (who made the woman) and the woman (Gen 3:12). So it was that the fall was a successful attack on the sexes, and God’s design for them, by Satan.<sup>7</sup>

Here in this terrible text is the ground of all sin. Here is the ground of all manly abuse, womanly insubordination, and every other form of sin (Gen 3:16-19). Here is the ground of all disobedience and creaturely rejection of the Creator and his intentions for creation. All the sin and brokenness that we taste in this cursed world is a result of the fall. All gender dysphoria, transgender instincts, and cross-dressing impulses stem from the fall. Because of this historical testimony, Christians, and Christians alone, know why people go through confusion, pain, and rejection regarding their gender. All such broken behavior and thinking begins here, in a darkened Eden. Take away this terrible scene, and you can describe and diagnose gender dysphoria, but never truly understand and redress it.

### ***3. God forbids cross-dressing in the old covenant law.***

The point at which the Scripture most addresses the matters covered by Yarhouse comes in the Deuteronomic discussion of various non-Israelite practices.<sup>8</sup> The people of God, we see in Deuteronomy 22, are called to be a set-apart people in big and small ways. One of the markers of God-fearing Israelites is that they will wear clothes appropriate to their sex:

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. (Deut 22:5)

Yarhouse recognizes that this verse has import—of some kind—for the discussion surrounding gender dysphoria. He comments here: “The passages from Deuteronomy are certainly important, and we can see different ways in which we might understand them.” He continues by both softening and backing up this observation: “We can also see that even where we might demonstrate some restraint and caution, we see a reaffirmation of gendered distinctiveness that Christians would want to understand and support.” (31-2)

I do not know all that Yarhouse might mean by sounding out “different ways” in which this prohibition could be understood. It is true, in my view, that we are not bound by the old covenant law. That aside, the will of God regarding ancient cross-dressing could not be clearer.<sup>9</sup> To embrace such a practice is to commit an “abomination” against God.<sup>10</sup> The reason why this behavior is immoral is due to

<sup>7</sup> Denny Burk insightfully points out that “The apostle Paul indicates that it was indeed the undoing of this order that was the basis for the fall of humanity into sin (1 Tim. 2:13-14).” Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 166.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Tigay introduces a possible tie to ungodly Amorite sexuality in his discussion of this passage: “Pertinent to the suggestion that it was a pagan practice is a Babylonian adage, according to which a person who is apparently an Amorite says to his wife, ‘You be the man and I’ll be the woman,’” a fascinating possibility. Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 200.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Bratcher and Howard Hatton suggest that the prohibition could include “Anything that pertains to a man: this seems to include other things besides clothes, such as adornments and weapons.” Robert G. Bratcher and Howard A. Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 366.

<sup>10</sup> See the illuminating words of Jason DeRouchie here: “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. We must conclude, therefore, that something about transgender expression and gender confusion directly counters the very nature of God.” Jason S. DeRouchie, “Confronting the Transgender Storm: New Covenant Reflections from Deuteronomy 22:5,” in *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 21:1 (Spring 2016): 65.

the biblical testimony referenced earlier. Because in Genesis 1–2 God created the sexes and gave them a plan for glorifying his name and subduing the earth—a mission that can only proceed by the sexes living according to God’s design—it is wrong for the sexes to blur lines that God has himself drawn.<sup>11</sup>

Separating Deuteronomy from Genesis 1–2 leaves Deuteronomy without meaning. Connecting the two texts, however, brings fresh light. God created men to present themselves as men and women to present themselves as women. The Israelites glorified their Maker by their personal presentation. Jason DeRouchie says it well: “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 path is defined in Deuteronomy 22:5.”<sup>12</sup> So is the teaching of Deuteronomy, teaching that endures and instructs even today.

#### ***4. Jesus affirms the goodness of man and woman in Matthew 19.***

In a discussion of divorce, Jesus reinforces the ancient view of the sexes in Matthew 19. In his divine logic, to understand divorce, one must understand marriage; to understand marriage, one must understand the sexes. So we see in this text:

[3] And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” [4] He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’ [6] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matt 19:3-6 ESV)

Too often, Genesis 1–2 matter little for evangelicals when it comes to sorting out our practical anthropology. But these chapters matter greatly for Jesus, the Lord of the church. The creational design for the sexes is marriage (a lifelong covenant most believers will enter). Marriage, however, depends on men being men, and living out God’s plan for them, and women being women, and living out God’s plan for them. If we wanted to use modern terms here, Christ—not shockingly—held an “essentialist” or “integrity” perspective on the sexes. Marriage is not whatever we make of it, just as the sexes are not whatever we perceive them to be. The sexes and marriage are fixed and formed by God.<sup>13</sup>

This passage has great import for understanding gender dysphoria. We are not free to remake marriage, as Jesus teaches; we are not free to remake the sexes, for marriage depends upon the essentialist foundation of two sexes. This text does not speak directly against the inborn instinct to cross gender boundaries, but it does help to build a foundation, a backdrop, by which to reason our way to a biblical

<sup>11</sup> Eugene Merrill notes the problem of “mixtures” in this broader passage, suggesting that God wants creation to function as he intends it to function. “Another linkage between the verse and its context is the chiasm connecting vv. 5–8 with 9–12: dress (v. 5), animals (vv. 6–7), house (v. 8), field (v. 9), animals (v. 10), dress (vv. 11–12). There is thus a strong tie-in between death and mixtures, that is, between the expositions of the sixth and seventh commandments. The sin in improper mixtures is brought out in the laws of purity that follow (22:9–23:18).” Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 4 of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 297–298.

<sup>12</sup> DeRouchie, “Confronting the Transgender Storm,” 64.

<sup>13</sup> David P. Nelson says it well: “Jesus based his teaching on divorce and the sanctity of marriage on God’s purpose in creation and also affirmed that marriage is, by definition, the union of a man and woman.” Nelson, “The Work of God: Creation and Providence” in *A Theology for the Church*, ed. Daniel L. Akin (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 265.

perspective on “gender identity” and gender dysphoria. Those looking to the teaching of Christ himself for a softening of old covenant theology find none; instead, Jesus not merely underlines the ancient witness, but adds the fullness of his doctrine-norming authority to it.

Here we should add that the apostle Paul will build off of Christ’s testimony in Ephesians 5:22-33. The imaging of the Christ-church relationship in earthly covenantal union depends upon a fixed understanding of manhood and womanhood. Only one man and one woman are able to fulfill God’s ultimate intention for marriage, namely, the portrayal of the divine salvific drama. You cannot support Ephesians 5, and the eschatological realization of Revelation 21, without a correspondent man-woman union. By contrast, the same-sex activity prohibited in texts like Romans 1:22-27 depends upon a blurring of the sexes. There is an indissoluble connection between owning our God-given sex and entering a God-made union.

From numerous corners of Holy Scripture, we learn that it is vital that we embrace an essentialist vision of the sexes. The very glory of God, and plan of God, rests on this sturdy and beautiful bedrock. From such an understanding, we may help sinners like us experiencing gender dysphoria to understand just how much the Lord wants us to savor the goodness of his design—and just how troubling and sinful it is to reject, to not inhabit for any reason, the vision of manhood and womanhood he unfolds in the story of his people.

### ***5. Paul calls men and women to represent their given sex in 1 Corinthians 11.***

I once heard Alistair Begg say that he feared Song of Songs like no other text. Many preachers do. Another text that modern preachers might edge away from is 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, a biblical passage filled with counter-cultural insights. In this section of Scripture, the apostle Paul affirms an order to earthly marriage that is dependent upon the order and functioning of the Godhead (1 Cor 11:3). He also teaches that men and women are to present themselves in distinct ways so that the divine plan of Genesis 1–2 may be upheld:

[7] For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. [8] For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. [9] Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. [10] That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. [11] Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; [12] for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. [13] Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? [14] Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, [15] but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. (1 Cor 11:7-15 ESV)

This passage has sparked much discussion, and rightfully so. It is material to our purposes, for it shows us that the new covenant vision of the sexes is precisely the same as the old covenant vision, in that it accords with essentialism. Men and women are not the same. They are united as God’s creation but distinct from one another. Men are called to be the head of their wife even as God is the head of Christ in verse 3. They are to honor the Lord by showing the distinctive glory of their God-given sex. The glory of a woman is her “long hair” in a way that is not true for a man.

Writing in the *Calvin Theological Journal*, Branson Parler comments on the latter part of this section:

1 Corinthians 11:14-15 can and should be understood as stemming from the same moral logic that undergirds the biblical prohibition of same-sex sexual activity, namely, the creational difference of male and female. When Paul names same-sex sexual activity as a sin, he does so because God created humans as male and female, when Paul argues that hair length ought to properly differentiate male and female, he does so because God created humans as male and female.<sup>14</sup>

This is quite right. It matters for handling gender dysphoria rightly. Paul clearly taught that men and women are called to own their God-given sex in order to glorify their maker by the power of Christ in them. We do not know, of course, the specific hair length that the apostle desires in his teaching on differentiation between the sexes. We feel some cultural tension here. But we must be careful not to press too quickly the “First-Century Teaching Only” button here.<sup>15</sup> An apostle of the new covenant cut in Christ’s blood reinforces the kind of sex distinctions found in the formation of humanity and the teaching of the old covenant.<sup>16</sup> It is to the glory of God that men and women display the distinctiveness of their sex.<sup>17</sup> This is a matter of obedience; it is also a matter of joyful, satisfied, God-blessed Christian living.

All through the Bible, we are confronted with an essentialist vision of the sexes. From the first pages of the Scripture, to the witness of the old covenant law, to the words of Christ, to apostolic counsel from the apostle Paul, we learn that God cares about his people owning their God-given sex. In no era do the people of God have freedom to blur the sexes; at no point in holy writ does God soften or modify his anthropological design due to overwhelming neo-pagan cultural pressure.

From the beginning of God’s creation until its consummation, the Lord has one design for the sexes, and one desire: for them to receive their body, and thus their sex, as a gift. He wants men and women to treasure their body, their bodily identity, and to honor God by owning it in a spirit of thankfulness, modesty, and joy. Being a man or a woman is not incidental to God’s plan; it is essential to it. This is true for single men and women. This is surely true for those who enter into marriage and consciously display together the theistic aesthetics of the Christ-church covenantal union. Living according to the wisdom of biblical complementarity is not an option for God’s people; it is a matter of doxological obedience.

It always will be, even unto to the end of the age, and beyond.

<sup>14</sup> Branson Parler, “Hair Length and Human Sexuality: The Underlying Moral Logic of Paul’s Appeal to Nature in 1 Corinthians 11:4,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 51 (2016): 135.

<sup>15</sup> I concur with Mark Taylor on this point. He argues that “Paul’s use of the intensive construction (“nature itself”) and his prior appeal to the created order in 11:7–10 suggests that mere human convention is not Paul’s meaning here.” Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 28, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 265–266.

<sup>16</sup> See Anthony Thiselton on this point: “...gender differentiation relates to that which God wills, decrees, and expresses in creation or in the creation order.” Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 836–837.

<sup>17</sup> Craig Blomberg asserts regarding verses 7-10 that “For a Christian man to appear gay or pagan dishonors God; for a woman to appear lesbian or unfaithful dishonors her husband. Obviously husbands also dishonor their wives and wives dishonor God when they act in these inappropriate ways, but if an authority structure is implicit in this passage, Paul’s less inclusive wording becomes understandable.” This is sound. Craig Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 211–212.

## SYNTHESIS AND TAKEAWAYS

In the foregoing, I have attempted to build out the beginnings of a biblical-theological framework by which to understand gender dysphoria, gender identity, and transgenderism. More than this, I am trying to help believers confused by a pansexual, gender-neutral age recover a meaningful doctrine of humanity. There is no area of modern public life that more exposes the lack of theistic thinking, or even simple common-sense living, than our handling of the sexes. This is true in the secular public square; this is, regrettably, all too true even in the church. Too many Christians either take the sexes for granted, assuming they are only of the merest biological importance (the procreation and feeding of children, for example), or are of no real importance at all.

As a result, when challenging public and personal realities like gender dysphoria become a national conversation, evangelicals in particular may have precious little to say. They may have learned, however unwittingly, a hermeneutic of silence regarding such inquiries. The Bible, they may think, has no real perspective or guidance to offer in this realm. Only psychologists, therapists, and doctors can speak to anthropological issues.

Yarhouse himself voices a version of this view in *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*:

There is a need to balance between two hazards when we turn to the Bible to inform our discussion about gender dysphoria. The one hazard is to look to Scripture for answers it is not prepared to provide. The other hazard is to fail to critically reflect on the sociocultural context in which we live and make decisions about gender identity and dysphoria. (30)

While Yarhouse does engage Scripture in places in his book, he does not do so exhaustively or even substantially. Scripture, he implies above, “is not prepared to provide” answers to a good portion of the material dealt with in counseling those who experience gender dysphoria. Further, the implication of his words is that we are far more socioculturally influenced than we know, and thus face the frightful “hazard” of counseling people to embrace a model of the sexes that owes to cultural archetypes, not what is best for them personally.

Let us be clear: we should be aware of the potential pitfalls Yarhouse mentions. The Bible does not directly answer every tough question we face on this or any subject. Further, we do need to take care that our vision of humanity is shaped by what Francis Schaeffer called “true truth” and no other source. With these points noted, however, we need to point out that Yarhouse has not put the mark where it needs to be. Walking with people through gender dysphoria will take great care and compassion, it is true. But we have to go well beyond Yarhouse’s troubling rendering of biblical sufficiency (or lack thereof). His characterization of the Scripture’s role in handling gender dysphoria treads close to what we might call “biblical insufficiency,” in fact.

We have to take a different stance here. Those who know the Lord have no greater authority than the Bible. We must affirm with fullness of confidence the sufficiency of Scripture for all of life and godliness. 2 Peter 1:3 tells us that it is through knowledge that we possess all we need to honor Christ. 2 Timothy 3:16 reminds us that all Scripture is God-breathed and useful for teaching, training, rebuking, and instruction in righteousness. Because of this, the Christian pastor is equipped to deal with all matters that bear on life and godliness, and the Scripture is what equips him to do so. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. speaks to our role in this tumultuous time:

We are called to be the people of the truth, even when the truth is not popular and even when

the truth is denied by the culture around us. Christians have found themselves in this position before, and we will again. God's truth has not changed. The holy Scriptures have not changed. The gospel of Jesus Christ has not changed. The church's mission has not changed. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and tomorrow.<sup>18</sup>

Surely we exercise compassion in tone and demeanor and conversation when we counsel people experiencing gender dysphoria. Yarhouse calls for such a posture, and he is right to do so. But we mark this as well: truth and compassion are not distinct, but one. As we have seen, the Bible speaks to gender dysphoria, to the duty to own our God-given sex, and thus by extension to the fallen reality of the person who suffers from gender dysphoria. While making clear that such individuals require deft pastoral care, we must set our mark by this: the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has *the* means of helping people through these matters. It is the gospel of grace. We undertake what the Puritans used to call "the cure of souls" by the Word and the gospel. The good news of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation" and thus the means by which sinners of every kind, bearing every burden a cursed world lays upon their backs, may taste wholeness, forgiveness, and redemption to the uttermost (Rom 1:16).

The church does not merely have a place in the discussion over gender dysphoria. Because we stand upon Scripture and believe it, we of all people know most of all why people experience gender dysphoria. The fall has disordered every person. We all fell in Adam; our hearts in him are "desperately wicked" (Jer 17:9). In truth, we are both the victim of sin and the willing conspiratorial partner of sin. Wickedness is done to us, a sobering and horrifying truth. We do not choose that which is acted upon us. But no human being responds to unasked-for by living in perfection. In other words, we who are victimized by sin go on to produce wickedness ourselves. If we live in a home wracked by confusion and turmoil, we may become anxious, not finding our security in God. If we are bullied, we may become angry, lashing out at others. If we are sexually abused, we may become warped, acting out ungodly behaviors.

This is the terrible chain of original sin. This is what Adam's fall begets: the generational inheritance of a sinful and God-denying nature. No one, tragically, can avoid this linkage. No one can opt out of a depraved heart. We all die in Adam, and we may only rise in Christ.

These words bear on counseling of struggling individuals. In many situations, including the problem of gender dysphoria, it may be hard to find the precise cause and origin of our feeling that we do not fit in our body. Skilled pastors and counselors will work hard and graciously to identify the roots of our suffering, but they will also help people see that there is a wildness that runs in our hearts, a *desperate wickedness* that extends not merely to behavior but to "corrupt desires" (2 Pet 2:10). As fallen beings, we may not even know we are sinning against God and dishonoring his design, but if we are missing the mark he has set for us, we are sinning nonetheless.<sup>19</sup>

Gender dysphoria may be the result of unasked-for events and acts. We may desire to own the body and bodily identity God has given us. But for reasons deeper than we can fathom, we may also want to cross-dress, to identify with the opposite sex in some unbiblical and unnatural way. From the smallest such inclination (a fleeting desire contained to our mind) to the greatest (undergoing a medical

18 R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage, and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 183.

19 See Owen Strachan, "A Referendum on Depravity: Same-Sex Attraction as Sinful Desire," *Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* 20:1 (Spring 2015): 24-34; Denny Burk and Heath Lambert, *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says About Sexual Orientation and Change* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2015).

“transition” to take on an opposite-sex identity), we must know and preach and counsel that all such expressions run counter to the plan and wisdom of God, and demand all the repentance we can offer. We are not free by Scripture to encourage and allow individuals experiencing gender dysphoria to cross dress, to take on an opposite-sex identity, and to surgically “transition” out of our natural body. Here I must break, and break strongly, with Yarhouse.<sup>20</sup>

I come to this position not because of censoriousness, but because of hope. To repent of all our ungodly inclinations and desires is not to bury hope in the ground. To repent in the manner I have just outlined is the very genesis of hope. It is the beginning of newness. It is the first step in a long walk of obedience powered by the grace of Christ. It is essential material for those who experience gender dysphoria. As with all sinners, the world, the flesh, and the devil tell people who know this struggle that they cannot change, that there is no goodness in them, and that they are trapped. The journey of every man or woman to the celestial city will vary, and we all must navigate our own ups and downs on the way to the new Canaan, to lasting and permanent wholeness. But we must unmask the cultural wisdom that tells us we cannot change as no wisdom at all. To tell people that they cannot change and cannot overcome their flesh by Christ’s power is to feed them a lie, a damning and destructive lie.

Gender dysphoria may proceed from a range of fallen experiences and behaviors. Though we should carefully and compassionately probe the background and narratives of those who face it, we should also recognize that finding the root may prove difficult in some cases. Wherever we can, we unspool what people are experiencing. We ask good and searching questions; we listen well; we show empathy; we help our friends see that we are fallen just as they are. But our counsel to people who struggle with gender dysphoria is not merely psychological or emotional. It is preeminently biblical, moral, and theological. To resist God’s good design, to move out of step with God’s gift of our sex, is to dishonor and disobey God. It is only when sinners like us hear this that they can begin to heal, for they may step out of the darkness of sin and walk in the light of Christ.

Again, this flies in the face of modern secular wisdom. We are told that transgender individuals cannot help themselves, but this is not true. Transgenderism, after all, is nothing other than a belief in change. Ironically, it still holds to gender essentialism, for it is premised upon the idea that some individuals must change to a different fixed sex to become who they truly are. One way or another, it seems, humanity cannot escape a fixed vision of the sexes. The question before us all is this: will we embrace the fixed sexual reality God has given us, however little we may feel we identify with that reality, or will we adopt a different fixed sexual reality? Even a kind of neutral “genderqueer” identity—a third possibility in a world of multiplying options—is itself fixed in a way.

In truth, we have no freedom to choose from 78 different gender options, as Facebook suggests. The desire to overhaul one’s body and one’s gender expression is not a problem isolated from a lack of faith in Christ. It is sin that leads us away from Christ; it is a lack of Christ that leads us to reject all of God’s goodness, including his design for humanity; it is Christ who brings us back to God and to his creative intentions. When individuals experience the desire to act against the grain of their biological sex, they are acting out their fallenness, as each and every sinner does. They are disobeying new covenant teaching. They are, wittingly or unwittingly, moving out of step with God’s design. They are not entering a different class of human persons in doing so. They are acting out on desires from a heart that is wicked as every human heart is wicked.

In our day, the church must go back to Scripture. We must know that Scripture equips us to lend

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<sup>20</sup> We should point out that some people are born with the condition called “intersex,” meaning that they possess from birth genitalia of both sexes. With others, I read this condition as a symptom of the fall, not as a normative state. For wisdom regarding care and counseling for individuals in such situations, see Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?*, 169-76.

gospel aid to people who experience gender dysphoria. It is compassionate—profoundly compassionate—to do so. The cross-dresser of ancient Israel needed to hear God’s word about this behavior. The Corinthians enticed to bend their gender in Paul’s day needed to return to the clarity of God’s design. The men and women told they will find healing and wholeness in the cyclone of gender-confusion need us to speak warmly and firmly in our time. They need the clarity of complementarity; they need the gospel of transforming grace.<sup>21</sup>

In the end, it is not that transgenderism is a radical behavior. It is that it is not radical enough. God wishes to remake us not to a degree, but in full. This is transformation the world cannot understand, and the sinner can scarcely believe.

## CONCLUSION

The story of Jackie Hill-Perry, introduced earlier, does not end with her anger and sexual confusion. It continued for a time, to be sure:

*I always saw men as being something to envy. They seemed strong, powerful, in control. Femininity, or the skewed view of it that I held, seemed weak. Part of my embracing masculinity and rejecting femininity was my own way of protecting myself from pain—pain that I believed men were capable of subjecting me to. After all, that’s what my father did to me. That’s what I saw men do to my mother. That’s what I witnessed my guy friends do to the women they claimed to love. All I knew of men was that they used their manliness as a means to inflict pain. And us women—us “weak beings”—were target practice.*

But then God in his mercy reached out to Jackie and saved her. As a result of her conversion, Jackie found not only her spiritual desires changing, but her anthropological desires. Here is where she finds herself today:

*I haven’t been on this journey for too long, and it has definitely been a difficult one. But God is faithful. He has sent me a husband who is not a lover of wrestling but a basketball fanatic who doesn’t fight with me over the remote but humbly offers to watch Food Network with me. He leads me in humility in the small and large things of life. God has given me a gift in my daughter Eden Grace, who is slowly bringing out the gentle parts of me that I tried for so long to hide.*

*I am a Christian, a wife, a mother, and a woman who is being made strong in her weaknesses, and I love it.<sup>22</sup>*

So may it be for all of us.

21 For more on the biblical vision of the sexes, see Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock, *The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2016).

22 Jackie Hill-Perry, “From Lesbianism to Complementarianism”; for a similarly powerful testimony, see Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert, Expanded Edition: An English Professor’s Journey into Christian Faith* (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant, 2014).

## MY VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE COUNCIL ON BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

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Denny Burk | President  
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Last Summer, the CBMW board chairman invited me to consider coming on board as the new president of the organization. As I began praying about this unexpected opportunity, my thoughts turned very quickly from whether to accept the position to what CBMW needs to be and to do in the days ahead. A very clear vision began forming in my mind. I shared that vision with the board of directors before they elected me last summer, and I would like to share that vision with the readers of JBMW.

The vision I articulated very much aligns with CBMW's vision statement, which reads:

The vision of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood is to see the vast majority of evangelical homes, churches, academic institutions, and other ministries adopt the principles of the Danvers Statement as a part of their personal convictions and doctrinal confessions and apply them in consistent, heart-felt practice.

This remains CBMW's vision, and I intend to pursue this vision as president. But to do so, CBMW will need both to affirm and to advance.

### AFFIRM

The Danvers Statement must define the mission and vision of CBMW. Danvers is our true north. At the heart of that statement is a biblical conviction about what it means to be created in the image of God as male and female:

Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood. . . Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.

As Danvers makes clear, these truths have immediate implications for leadership in the home and in the church. We believe this to be a faithful summary of biblical teaching.

There is room in the complementarian coalition for differences in application, and indeed we know that individual ministries and churches will carry out the Danvers vision in ways not specified by Danvers. Nevertheless, we welcome all evangelicals who affirm Danvers into a coalition to advance this biblical vision.

We also wish to affirm that the Danvers Statement promotes the full equality of women as co-heirs of the gospel and co-laborers in advancing the Kingdom. We want to affirm that a biblical view of complementarity blesses, honors, and protects women. To this end, I would like to revisit CBMW's Statement against abuse, to reiterate that the abuse of women is a serious crime, and has no place in a complementarian framework.

## **ADVANCE**

The church in every generation needs to be taught what Scripture says about the complementary differences between male and female and how those differences impact family and church leadership. That has been and always will be at the heart of CBMW's work.

But in the thirty years since the drafting of the Danvers Statement, challenges to this biblical vision have not abated. In fact, the challenges have only increased and broadened. Western culture has embarked upon a total revision of sexual and gender norms. It has evicted the male-female complement from the definition of marriage. Indeed, with the transgender challenge, it has thrown into question the meaning of the sexual binary that God has encoded into every cell in our bodies.

As a result, churches find themselves facing questions about manhood and womanhood that were barely imagined when the Danvers Statement was written. Nevertheless, the theological vision of Danvers has implications for the current challenges we are facing. For that reason, I believe that CBMW needs to address these challenges explicitly, and we need to do so in some specific ways.

First, we need Danvers evangelicals to come together to produce a new statement of conviction concerning these current challenges. This will be hard work and will likely take some time. But it will be worth the effort to produce a statement of evangelical unity on these matters that can serve as a reference point for churches and Christian organizations that are looking for confessional language on these issues. We will need all hands on deck for this effort, and I am hopeful that a broad coalition of like-minded brothers and sisters will come together to have a hand in this work. I am confident that we can achieve this.

Second, CBMW will not be backing away from or revising Danvers. Danvers is an historical document and should be left as is. Our aim, however, is for CBMW to adopt this new statement in addition to Danvers to define the parameters of our work. The organization would then work to produce resources, conferences, etc. in order to equip churches and organizations to face these current challenges within the vision of both statements. The church needs fresh scholarship and pastorally

focused contributions on these matters, and that is what we aim to foster and produce.

None of us are free of the consequences of living in a broken, sinful world. We want to come alongside those brothers and sisters who are dealing with painful gender and sexual identity issues and who wish to know what God would say to them. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ speaks to all of our deep-felt needs, offers us hope, and sheds light on the path that leads to life. At the end of the day, this is the good news we aim to communicate.

I want to thank the CBMW board of directors for their support and for the opportunity to serve an organization that I care so deeply about. I also want to thank my friend and outgoing president Owen Strachan for the faithful labor that he put into this work over the last four years. Owen has built a platform and organization that did not even exist at this time four years ago, and we are the beneficiaries. Truly we reap in fields others have planted, and we give thanks.

Christians are facing unprecedented challenges to the Bible's teaching on gender and sexuality, and CBMW has its work cut out for it. I am eager to help advance the biblical conviction reflected in the Danvers Statement in order to meet those challenges. I hope and pray that many of you will join us.

**A Review of Ruth A. Tucker.**  
***Black and White Bible, Black and Blue Wife: My Story of Finding Hope after Domestic Abuse.***  
**Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016. 208 pp. \$16.99<sup>1</sup>**

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“Can we come together as a Christian community and recognize that the doctrine of male headship has sometimes been used as a cover to perpetrate violence against women?”

—Ruth Tucker

**T**he problem of violence against women is one that I care about deeply.<sup>2</sup> I've helped battered women get out of abusive relationships. Their stories are heart-wrenching. Disturbing. Frightening. I think of the woman whose face and arms were shredded by flying glass when her enraged husband pulled the china cabinet down. Or the husband who rolled up and immobilized his wife in their living room area rug, and then proceeded to beat her with a baseball bat. I could tell you accounts of women who were burned, punched, kicked, locked up . . . the heinous acts make my blood boil.

So it was with great interest that I read Ruth Tucker's latest book, *Black and White Bible, Black and Blue Wife: My Story of Finding Hope after Domestic Abuse*.

The title accurately portrays the two threads Ruth weaves together throughout. First, her personal story of domestic abuse, and second, her premise that the doctrine of male headship is to blame. The former is told for the purpose of proving the latter. According to Ruth, a Christian man who views the

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<sup>1</sup> This review originally appeared on the Girls Gone Wise blog (<http://girlsgonewise.com/black-and-white-bible-black-and-blue-wife/>) and is reprinted here with permission.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://girlsgonewise.com/statement-on-abuse-on-the-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women/>

Bible in “black-and-white” terms—thinking that it puts a God-given head-of-the-home responsibility on his shoulders—is far more likely to be a wife-beater.

## RUTH’S STORY

*Black and White Bible, Black and Blue Wife* is a meandering narrative that is built on Ruth’s personal story, but moves back and forth fluidly between that story and her musings about abuse, legal issues, John Calvin’s theology, the ideas of various contemporary theologians, smatterings of the Bible, current events, and anecdotal accounts of other marriages. Ruth is an excellent writer, and does a masterful job of melding it all together.

Ruth and her future husband, whom I’ll call “Joe” (not his real name), meet at a Christian retreat. He’s tall, dark, handsome, and the only guy who can match Ruth in the “Quote-the-Bible-Verse” game.

Ruth is in graduate school. Though they’re roughly the same age, Joe hasn’t yet finished his bachelor’s degree. That’s because he was expelled from Wheaton College for cheating and for breaking into a faculty office in search of exam answers. He was subsequently expelled from Miami Christian College for some unknown reason. Wheaton College denied him re-admission.

Besides his run-ins with educators, Joe has a history with the law. He was arrested for voyeurism – for being a “peeping-tom.” This sexual misconduct, he claims, was resolved through the mandated counselling process.

Joe plans to be a pastor. Ruth knows that his religious views are “fundamentalist.” They have a heated pre-marital spat about the science of a literal six-day creation, but the issue of wifely obedience never comes up. (37)

Because of the glaring red flags, Ruth’s mother strongly opposes the marriage. But to no avail. Ruth is in love.

## THE FIRST DECADE

Two months into their marriage, Joe and Ruth have a heated argument about politics. Angry that she didn’t vote for the right candidate, he pushes her. Over the next few years, she sees that her prince charming has anger issues. He can be controlling, argumentative, given to moods and an ugly temper.

Joe finishes his undergrad degree at Shelton College and graduate studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He becomes the pastor of a small Bible church in Woodstock.

A few years later, a church elder and wife show up on Ruth’s doorstep with a local newspaper in hand. The paper reveals that Joe had been arrested for repeated theft of coffee and donut money at the county jail, where he had made weekly pastoral visits. (65) Joe hadn’t told Ruth about the arrest. She’s mortified.

To alleviate her “wretched shame,” Ruth pressures her husband to publically confess: “He agreed (on my insistence) to preach the following Sunday night a sermon of deep contrition from Psalm 51—a sermon I practically dictated to him.” (65)

Joe was dismissed as pastor. However, Ruth’s “behind-the-scenes maneuvering” opened doors for him to minister part-time at a church in Crown Point, Indiana, and for further graduate studies at Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. (57)

At this point, 9 years into their marriage, and staying home with a preschooler, Ruth decides it's a good time to take in foster children. Thirteen-year-old Deana moves in. When Ruth finds out that Joe has repeatedly come into Deana's room at night and sexually assaulted her, the rage she unleashes against him is "virulent and deep primal." Yet she doesn't report Joe to the authorities. She covers up the sexual abuse.

I did not report him because I knew he would be arrested, lose his job— our only income— and probably be imprisoned up to fifteen years. How would I manage with a two-year-old son? But mainly I didn't report him because I wanted to shield myself from the humiliation of facing family, neighbors, church members. I didn't report him for selfish reasons. I was protecting myself, and no one else. (170)

Ten years into their marriage, Joe and Ruth move to Grand Rapids, where both of them begin to teach at Grand Rapids School of Bible and Music.

## THE SECOND DECADE AND ON

Ruth is assigned to teach a course in women's ministries, and begins "to read the Bible differently." (73) Her stance on women's role in marriage and the church begins to change.

Ruth's career takes off. Besides teaching courses at the Grand Rapids School of Bible and Music, she gets a prestigious job as visiting professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, flying from Grand Rapids to Chicago two to three days each week. Her summers are spent teaching cross-cultural courses at a Bible college in Kenya.

Ruth becomes a driving force in the Biblical Feminist movement of the 1980s, and a growing public figure in the Evangelical world. She becomes a spokesperson for the doctrine of egalitarianism, which claims that the theological/historical interpretation of the Bible is incorrect, and that the Bible doesn't, in fact, teach male headship. This view, which was controversial at the time, becomes a flash-point in Ruth and Joe's marriage . . . "the women's issue itself became the catalyst for most of his frequent explosions." (73)

Joe's moods grow increasingly volatile. He rips cabinet doors off hinges, puts a dent in a refrigerator door, and bloodies his knuckles. His violence turns on Ruth.

Nearly all of the domestic violence detailed in this book occurred in the years after we moved from Crown Point to Grand Rapids— in the years after I did not report my ex-husband's sexual abuse of Deana. (138-139)

Joe's career doesn't go as well as Ruth's. Six years into their teaching jobs, the president of the school corners Ruth to discuss her husband's character. The president gently inquires whether Ruth had ever experienced Joe to be untrustworthy. Ruth lies. She tells the president that she has no idea what he is referring to, and that she regards her husband as completely trustworthy.

Ruth's vote of confidence doesn't help. Joe is demoted and then terminated. But he somehow manages to get an editorial position at Zondervan publishers, the company for whom Ruth is co-authoring

a book, *Daughters of the Church*. Was this another case of Ruth’s “behind-the-scenes maneuvering”? She doesn’t say.

But she does note that her editor-husband got a hold of her manuscript and took exception to her making John Calvin out to be a feminist. She refused to make changes according to his dictates. (88) Zondervan becomes aware of their difficulties at home. For his interference in the publishing process, and perhaps for other reasons too, Joe is terminated from his job.

The arguments and violence escalate, as does Joe’s appetite for unspecified “sordid” sexual acts. Though Ruth gives in to her husband’s sexual demands, she feels raped and violated.

After one particularly ugly fight, in which Joe grabbed her and threw her to the floor, uttering threats, Ruth phones his parents. Joe’s parents are concerned, but the best advice his mom can come up with is for Ruth to stop writing about such controversial topics.

In 1987, after 19 years of marriage, Ruth seeks help from the courts and from her church to legally separate from her husband. Counselling is ineffective. Three years later Joe sues for divorce.

In 1994, still feeling guilt and remorse over not reporting her ex-husband’s sexual abuse of a minor, Ruth tries to track down Deana, who by that time would have been in her late twenties. Ruth wants to apologize, beg forgiveness, and maybe take Deana to Sears to buy her a new washer and dryer. But years earlier Deana’s car had slipped off a bridge in an ice storm. She died. There would be no reconciliation and no new appliances.

In 2004 Ruth marries fellow Calvin Seminary professor, John Worst, with whom she experiences a happy (egalitarian) marriage.

## DOES MALE HEADSHIP PROMOTE ABUSE?

The fact that Ruth egregiously covered up the sexual abuse of a minor, as well as the fact that abuse tends to escalate when it is covered up, are topics that likely warrant some discussion. However, the premise of this book is that male headship promotes abuse, so Joe’s abusive behavior is what I’m going to focus on.

During his violent rages, my ex-husband often hurled biblical texts at me, as though the principal tenet of Scripture was, “Wives, submit to your husbands.” He spit the words out, repeatedly beating me over the head, at least figuratively, with his black-and-white Bible. His hitting and punching and slamming me against doors and furniture, however, were anything but figurative. Nor were his terror-loaded threats. (14)

Joe repeatedly quoted Scripture to defend his headship and in an attempt to enforce Ruth’s unconditional obligation to submit— from “the kitchen to the bedroom.” (22) So it comes as no surprise that Ruth blames the abuse on the doctrine of headship.

The difficulty with an emotionally-charged narrative style of argument is that it doesn’t lend itself well to objective analysis. Ruth’s experience and her conclusions are so tightly wound together that it’s difficult to separate the two and determine whether the one logically follows the other.

Furthermore, those who question the validity of her conclusion put themselves in the precarious position of being accused of questioning the validity of her experience, of being unsympathetic, of victim-blaming/shaming, or of condoning abuse. If I were a male who took exception to Ruth’s

conclusion, I'd hesitate to even attempt a critique of her book.

But because I'm a woman, I believe I can ask the question: Was it truly the doctrine of male headship that caused Ruth to be abused? Or was something else to blame?

I've seen all sorts of doctrines twisted and used as justification to support sinful behavior: the doctrine of trust and generosity to bilk churchgoers out of money, the doctrine of truth-telling to justify slander, the doctrine of joy to justify adultery, the doctrine of abundance to justify greed. Jim Jones used the doctrine of social justice to force his followers to drink the Kool-Aid.

So do we toss these doctrines out the window because some people use them in a twisted and destructive manner? Or do we recognize that sinners will use whatever justification they can to excuse their sinful behavior.

Ruth's experience led her to believe that the doctrine of headship promotes abuse. But my experience with abuse leads me to believe that women in egalitarian relationships are at a far higher risk than those with husbands who sense a responsibility to provide loving, protective headship. I could tell you dozens of heart-wrenching stories to persuade you that the further away a couple wanders from God's pattern for marriage and the doctrine of loving male headship, the higher the risk of abuse.

So Ruth's experience and my experience testify to the exact opposite conclusion. Which is why experience and emotions are an unreliable source for debating the veracity of a premise. It's a sad day when reason is ignored and a conclusion accepted purely on the basis of who tells the best story and evokes the strongest emotion.

## COMING TOGETHER AS A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

In her book, Ruth throws down the gauntlet and asks the question, "*Can we come together as a Christian community and recognize that the doctrine of male headship has sometimes been used as a cover to perpetrate violence against women?*"

The wording is somewhat leading. It implies that the doctrine of male headship is the primary "cover" that Christian men use to perpetrate violence against women, and implies that the "cover" is in fact the "cause." Have I witnessed some men use the argument of wifely submission to justify abuse? Yes, I have. It's deplorable. But I've witnessed them use the cover of egalitarianism, too. Abusive men use whatever cover they can to justify their violent sinful behavior.

A better question would be, "Can we come together as a Christian community—complementarians and egalitarians—and stand together against abuse?" It's a question Wayne Grudem and I asked Catherine Clark Kroeger and the Council for Biblical Equality (CBE) board on behalf of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) in the mid-nineties when I helped draft CBMW's Statement against Abuse.<sup>3</sup> Sadly, CBE's answer at the time was a resounding no. CBE didn't want CBMW to stand with them against abuse. I suspect they only wanted to blame CBMW for it.

After all these years I would still love to see a greater "coming together as a Christian community" against abuse. Our differences on Scripture interpretation and application regarding the roles of men and women may differ, but surely we can agree to disagree on this, and stand together against that which we both deplore.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://girlsgonewise.com/statement-on-abuse-on-the-day-for-the-elimination-of-violence-against-women/>

## **CBMW 1995 STATEMENT AGAINST ABUSE**

We understand abuse to mean the cruel use of power or authority to harm another person emotionally, physically, or sexually.

We are against all forms of physical, sexual and /or verbal abuse.

We believe that the biblical teaching on relationships between men and women does not support, but condemns abuse (Prov 12:18; Eph 5:25-29; Col 3:18; 1 Tim 3:3; Titus 1:7-8; 1 Pet 3:7; 5:3).

We believe that abuse is sin. It is destructive and evil. Abuse is the hallmark of the devil and is in direct opposition to the purpose of God. Abuse ought not to be tolerated in the Christian community.

We believe that the Christian community is responsible for the well-being of its members. It has a responsibility to lovingly confront abusers and to protect the abused.

We believe that both abusers and the abused are in need of emotional and spiritual healing.

We believe that God extends healing to those who earnestly seek him.

We are confident of the power of God's healing love to restore relationships fractured by abuse, but we realize that repentance, forgiveness, wholeness, and reconciliation is a process. Both abusers and abused are in need of on-going counseling, support and accountability.

In instances where abusers are unrepentant and/or unwilling to make significant steps toward change, we believe that the Christian community must respond with firm discipline of the abuser and advocacy, support and protection of the abused.

We believe that by the power of God's Spirit, the Christian community can be an instrument of God's love and healing for those involved in abusive relationships and an example of wholeness in a fractured, broken world.

**A Review of Michelle Lee-Barnewall.  
*Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom  
Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate.*  
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016. 240 pp. \$24.99.**

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### **AN IRENIC APPROACH**

**D**uring the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson served as a major in the Tennessee militia. At a key moment in the battle, the morale of his troops appeared to be at an all-time low. Tensions ran high, and the soldiers under Jackson's command were arguing, talking bad about each other, and fighting amongst themselves. Jackson pulled the troops together and said, "Gentlemen! Let's remember that the enemy is over there!" He encouraged his troops to keep a proper perspective about their real enemy and not turn on each other.

In discussions about gender roles in the church, the level of vitriol and heated rhetoric among believers can be disheartening. Both complementarians and egalitarians can fall prey to the mistake of Jackson's soldiers, viewing each other as enemies on the so-called theological battlefield, instead of remembering that the battle is not and should not be against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12). This issue of what the Bible teaches about gender is deeply personal for many women and men, and it can be hard even to have a discussion about gender roles with someone who holds a different position because both sides can end up talking past each other and offering the worst or most extreme examples of each belief system as the stereotype. That is not helpful. And, it does not honor the Lord.

Entering into this theological fray, Michelle Lee-Barnewall, associate professor of biblical and theological studies at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, has offered what she calls a kingdom corrective to the evangelical gender debate in her new book *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*. She states,

I am proposing that we may find a better solution by going back to the biblical text to see, not which of the two current positions—complementarian or egalitarian—is

correct, but rather whether there might be a different way to configure the issue itself. Thus I would like to reexamine the context of gender in Scripture rather than defend one particular view. (1)

Approaching the debate with an irenic tone is laudable and quite refreshing. Unfortunately, Lee-Barnewall does not actually provide clarity or even a “better solution” to the discussion about gender roles when she goes back to the biblical text. In fact, in part 1 of her work, Lee-Barnewall takes a historical survey to see how culture has shaped the discussion of gender so any treatment of the biblical text is absent. In part 2, she does look at key themes found in a couple of the passages on marriage and ministry in the Bible (particularly Gen 2–3 and Eph 5), yet her focus on the values and themes emphasized in certain biblical passages over the actual teaching and instruction perhaps gives some insight but no real clarity about how to interpret or apply these texts.

Lee-Barnewall’s book ends up being a well-articulated cliffhanger—there is great build-up, but no resolution is offered because she is unwilling to take a stand on how to apply her corrective to the most pertinent texts. In the foreword to the book, Craig Blomberg praises this approach: “Lee-Barnewall assiduously refuses to answer the question of whether certain roles or tasks are limited to one gender. She recognizes that eventually one has to answer this question, but she does not want to duplicate past debates over privileges and power.” (xii) Her assiduous refusal to offer conclusions and application is one of the biggest weaknesses of her book. She acts as a coach who is unwilling to put into action her own advice. She says, “Do it this way.” Yet, she never shows us how approaching the discussion her way will bring a better solution of how to understand and apply the biblical texts.

## **A HISTORICAL SURVEY**

In part 1, “Gender in Evangelical History” (15-67), Lee-Barnewall “examines some ways in which evangelicals have historically understood gender and how these shifted in ways that reflected larger social trends.” (7) Her goal in doing this is to “demonstrate a pattern of striking similarities between evangelical gender discussion and the cultural context in which the gender debate was formed.” (17-18) Chapter 1 looks at the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the influence of Victorian ideas of womanhood; chapter 2 examines the post WWII era of the 1940s and 1950s; and chapter 3 looks at the rise of egalitarianism in the 1970s and the impact of secular feminism.

While this section is interesting and well-written, Lee-Barnewall’s historical survey does not clarify the discussion of gender roles. She suggests that the church has been influenced by the culture’s changing ideas of gender, yet she fails to demonstrate this claim with her work. If you were to study the Christological controversies of the Patristic era, you would see that the church councils addressed misunderstandings or outright heresies concerning Christ. The Church was not impacted by the culture and did not adapt its doctrine in order to accommodate changing ideas regarding Christ; instead, the Church addressed issues arising in that day. In today’s world, because of the emergence of gender rebellion, fluidity, and confusion in the LGBTQ community, current discussions regarding what the Bible says about gender identity address those ideas. It is not fair to say that the church has shifted its understanding on gender because it addresses these concepts. The church is addressing the culture, not adapting to it.

In the long run, Lee-Barnewall’s historical survey only proves that the church has addressed ideas

about gender roles, not necessarily that the church has adapted or conformed to the cultural ideas of gender roles. When Lee-Barnewall concedes that her book “does not present a detailed and systematic examination of all the passages traditionally associated with the debate” (10) because it is beyond the scope of her book, she would have been better served to devote some space to examining 1 Timothy 2 or even 1 Corinthians 11 instead of providing her historical survey.

## REFRAMING, NOT CLARIFYING, THE DEBATE

Turning to part 2, Lee-Barnewall provides her suggested parameters for reframing the gender debate. Chapter 4 outlines her proposal: the kingdom themes of unity, the corporate identity of God’s people, and reversal demonstrating the power and glory of God are the lenses through which Lee-Barnewall suggests people view the debate. (71) She urges readers to focus on these things in order to “oppose the self-centered and self-glorifying ways of humanity.” (81) While her critique of self-centeredness and self-glorifying ways are well-taken in this individualistic age, she has set up a false dichotomy. One can talk about distinctions without falling into self-centeredness; talk about leadership or authority does not make a person self-glorifying by default.

Chapters 5 through 8 should have offered the payoff of Lee-Barnewall’s corrective, but in these chapters, she fails to bring clarity and put into action her principal hermeneutical themes. If unity, corporate identity, and reversal are key concepts, how do they impact how one interprets and applies the key texts in the debate? Lee-Barnewall shows herself skilled in both egalitarian and complementarian understandings of some texts, but why not address the elephant in the room? Why not answer the “so what” question? So what do these themes mean for how one understands whether or not a woman is allowed to teach or have authority over a man in church or whether or not there are distinct roles for husbands and wives? Lee-Barnewall proves to be unwilling to answer such questions, though she does acknowledge her deliberate decision not to address the “so what” question. (167)

Lee-Barnewall’s treatment of some key words in the debate prove to be troubling. On the concept of equality, she rightly notes that it is important to define what is meant by that word (85) and provides many different nuances of meaning and definitions of equality. (85-91) She makes the judgment that “equality speaks to one’s personal privileges and rights” (89) and thus dismisses the term as unhelpful and rejects it as a central biblical theme. (91) However, both complementarians and egalitarians can agree that men and women are equal in essence or ontology, indicating that equality does not necessarily have to refer to position or privileges. While the term equality can be in danger of misinterpretation, her preferred terms to signify equality of essence are “unity” and, prone to even more misunderstanding, “sameness.” Lee-Barnewall argues that “because she [Eve] is ‘like’ Adam in that she is another human being, his female counterpart made in God’s image, she is in a sense his equal. However, more fitting terms to describe her relationship with Adam would be ‘sameness’ and ‘unity’ rather than ‘equality.’” (135)

In an effort to take the focus off of position, she missteps. The concept of “sameness” could be easily misinterpreted in talks of gender in our unisex-leaning society. Furthermore, her emphasis on the unity of genders is only examined in the context of a marriage relationship. How should a single man or woman understand this concept of unity in relation to gender roles? Additionally, Lee-Barnewall spends the next section highlighting just how Adam and Eve are not the same. For example, she notes, “Adam is created first, and further, Eve is created *from* Adam” (137), discusses “Eve’s unique role”

(138), that “while Eve, like Adam disobeys God, the text highlights a different type of relationship to the command” (139), “only Adam received any explicit instruction about their unity” (142), how unity is “the responsibility of the husband” (143), and that “Adam has a particular role.” (143) How do these observations express unity and sameness?

In Lee-Barnewall’s discussion of the meaning of *kephalē* in Ephesians 5, she utilizes rhetorical criticism as well as extra-biblical Greco-Roman background material instead of in-depth scriptural analysis to examine “whether there are connotations of authority in the passage.” (148) Lee-Barnewall suggests examining how the head/body metaphor was used “in antiquity to determine its specific use in this passage.” (150) She looks at examples of this metaphor ranging from 500 years before Paul to over 100 years after Paul (151-54) and concludes that Paul’s emphasis is on reversal not authority because in antiquity the body was to sacrifice for the head yet in God’s design the head sacrifices for the body. Surprisingly, she never looks for insight into the meaning of *kephalē* by examining Paul’s uses of it in 1 Corinthians 11. Her conclusion is that “the wife is called to submit not to a patriarchal authority but to her husband’s headship, which creates a deeper unity because the one with the privileges and position of authority sacrifices himself instead on behalf of the body.” (164) What does headship mean, exactly, then in her lexicon if does not have some nuance of authority?

Finally, Lee-Barnewall’s argument is that terms like leadership, authority, equality, and rights highlight the individual over the community and God. (177) In the next breath, though, she acknowledges them as biblical concepts:

While these characteristics might well be part of the church, they must be subsumed under overriding kingdom priorities related to the inclusive, loving community that lives in dependence on God. The corporate identity of the church, not individual rights or personal power and position, provides a more fitting perspective for understanding gender. . . .Believers are called to become a community that pursues holiness, submission, and devotion to God through the Spirit in imitation of Christ. (177)

What does that mean in the practical, everyday life of the church? What does it mean *exactly* to pursue holiness, submission, and devotion to God for me as a woman? Does it look any different for a man? How *exactly* does the corporate identity of the church provide a more fitting perspective for understanding gender? Sadly, while readers can appreciate her irenic tone and desire for unity among believers, Lee-Barnewall has ultimately left her readers with more questions than answers.



**A Review of Mark A. Yarhouse.**  
***Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture.***  
**Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015. 186 pp. \$16.00.**

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**H**ow do we as Christians approach the issue of transgenderism/transsexualism and maintain a faithful biblical witness? In *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, Mark A. Yarhouse, professor of psychology at Regent University in Virginia Beach, provides the most extensive discussion to date from an evangelical Christian perspective regarding gender identity and transsexualism. Yarhouse has extensive clinical contact with people experiencing gender dysphoria and offers many compassionate suggestions, but at points it appears Yarhouse’s compassion possibly supersedes a commitment to the biblical standard of sexual identity.

Central to Yarhouse’s argument is the manner in which he compares and contrasts three different frameworks for conceptualizing gender dysphoria and transsexualism. First is what he calls the “integrity framework,” which is basically the biblical view that people should embrace their birth-sex and express themselves in gender-appropriate ways consistent with their birth. Second is the “disability framework,” which approaches gender dysphoria with reference to the mental health dimensions of the phenomenon. According to Yarhouse, Christians drawn to this perspective see gender dysphoria “as a result of living in a fallen world in which the condition—like so many other mental health concerns—is a nonmoral reality.” (48) Furthermore, the disability framework suggests the person has not specifically “chosen” to experience gender dysphoria. Finally, the “diversity framework” sees transgender issues as something to be celebrated, honored, or revered. Within this category, Yarhouse distinguishes between a “strong” form of diversity which “calls for the deconstruction of norms related to sex” as opposed to a “weak” form of diversity which “focuses primarily on identity and community.” (50) Yarhouse himself argues for an “integrated framework” and urges Christians to find the strengths in each perspective and to see them as “different lenses” through which we examine transgender issues.

Chapter 3, “What Causes Gender Dysphoria,” is an even-handed review of the major scientific

theories to date. Yarhouse spends most of his time discussing the “brain-sex” theory. What is this theory? In utero, the presence of testosterone early in development causes the development of male genitalia. According to the brain-sex theory, a second surge of hormones is required later in development to either “masculinize” or “feminize” the infant’s brain in a manner consistent with his or her genitalia. But if the second surge of hormones is discordant with one’s genitalia, the “brain-sex” theory says the result is gender dysphoria: one has the genitalia of one sex, but the brain is organized more like the opposite sex. Yarhouse rightly notes one problem with this theory is that it is uncommon for females with Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) to experience gender dysphoria. CAH is a condition in which prenatal girls receive too much testosterone and often have ambiguous genitalia. Yarhouse notes the rare occurrence of gender dysphoria in these children “does not appear to support” the brain sex theory. (68) Yarhouse discusses several other factors and concludes by saying, “We don’t know what causes gender dysphoria.” (79) He then says his counsel to people is, “I don’t think you chose to experience gender dysphoria.” (81) The chapter could have been stronger if Yarhouse had explored the ways some are suggesting the emerging science of epigenetics is closely related to the brain-sex theory.

Yarhouse also addresses the newly developed practice of intentionally repressing puberty through the use of hormone blockers. This new therapy gives children between ages of ten and thirteen hormone blockers which keep them from producing estrogen or testosterone. As a result, boys and girls do not experience the development of secondary sex characteristics common in puberty. The premise of this treatment is to allow children to wait until they are older to determine if they are going to embrace their birth sex. Yarhouse rightly emphasizes that most children with gender dysphoria successfully resolve these challenges and embrace their birth sex. He then asks, “If there is a possibility that gender dysphoria might abate at age twelve or thirteen, does the decision to use hormone blockers somehow preclude the possibility of natural desisting that might take place?” (109) This is a helpful question for our culture to consider before embracing the strange notion of suppressing the natural process of puberty. Yarhouse’s critique would have been stronger if he had explored the manner in which such therapy fundamentally rejects God’s intent and design for men and women.

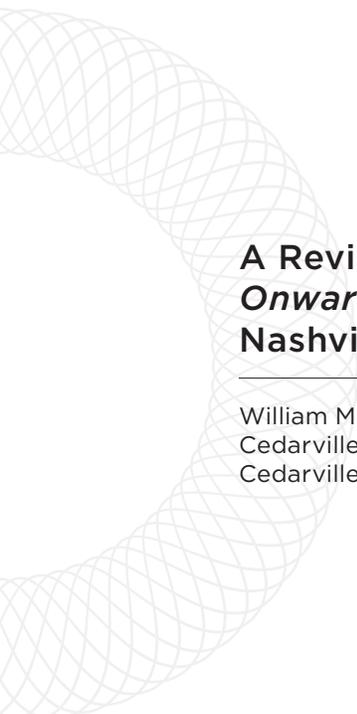
Clearly, Yarhouse has compassion for people struggling with gender dysphoria. It also seems obvious that he has a commitment to the gospel and offering people an opportunity to find new life in Christ. But his discussion of biblical passages related to transgenderism is truncated. Yarhouse addresses 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Deuteronomy 22:5, 23:1, and various New Testament passages regarding eunuchs. But he fails to explore the creation narrative of Genesis 1 & 2 which establishes the gift of one’s gender as part of the goodness of God’s creation. Nor does he explore New Testament passages such as Ephesians 5:22-33 or 1 Peter 3:1-7 which define gender roles in marriage. These glaring omissions weaken his presentation. Furthermore, chapter 6, “Toward a Christian Response,” contains no interaction with Scripture.

Yarhouse says, “I see the value of encouraging individuals who experience gender dysphoria to resolve dysphoria in keeping with their birth sex.” (137) But this is much different from saying that we should *embrace* our birth sex. Yarhouse quickly adds, “Where those strategies have been unsuccessful, there is potential value in managing dysphoria through the least invasive expressions,” recognizing genital plastic surgery as the most invasive procedure. (137) The exact nature of these “least invasive expressions” is somewhat vague, leaving the reader confused concerning the degree to which Yarhouse does or does not approve of specific transgender behaviors.

What is clearer is that Yarhouse feels the church has marginalized people experiencing transgender struggles. He urges Christians to form friendships with transgender people, but then adds, “Are

Christians prepared to do so without the condition that the person manages that dysphoria in a way the Christian community would support?” (150) If Yarhouse means that we meet people where they are and do not require them to “clean up” before we offer the gospel of grace, then well enough. But if Yarhouse means that people who violate clear biblical teachings about gender and gender expression should be allowed into the full membership of a local church, this is quite another matter. As it is, Yarhouse’s suggestions are sufficiently vague that he raises more questions than he answers. Furthermore, while he has extensive discussions of strategies for showing compassion and kindness to people experiencing tumult regarding their own gender, he does not have an in-depth discussion of repentance, thus omitting a major component of the Christian life.

A robust understanding of gender begins with a deep appreciation for the creation narrative in which God created man “male and female” and saw that it was “very good.” Likewise, all of us struggle with effects of the Fall, and because of sin, we all experience disordered ideas regarding gender to some degree. For some people, the effects of sin lead to a confused desire actually to *be* the other sex. Mark Yarhouse helps Christians understand the very real and painful struggles of people experiencing gender dysphoria. Furthermore, he challenges churches to greater compassion and patience for such friends. But we can also hope that in future work Yarhouse himself will explore the deeper and more substantive biblical texts regarding gender. The biblical perspective is not just one lens to use among several; it is the correct lens through which other perspectives should be evaluated.



**A Review of Russell Moore.**  
***Onward: Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel.***  
**Nashville: B&H, 2015. 224 pp. \$24.99.**

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I became a Christian, was baptized, went to church, and grew up in South Carolina. In other words, my childhood and early Christian life took place in the “Bible Belt.” Russell Moore says, “The Bible Belt is teetering toward collapse, and I say let it fall.” (3) This provocative statement resonates with others like myself who benefited in many ways from life in the “Bible Belt,” such as the presence of “traditional family values,” but have since come to see the “cultural Christianity” it bred and embraced as one of the greatest disadvantages to the church for being an effective gospel-witness to the culture it inhabits, and even more so, for simply being the church of the Lord Jesus Christ at all. Although Moore frequently has his sights on the expression of Christianity south of the Mason-Dixon Line that was propagated primarily in the twentieth century, “cultural Christianity” in the West or in America is not restricted only to these cultural and geographical lines. That reality makes Moore’s *Onward* pertinent for an audience much broader than the South.

Previously provost and dean of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Moore is the eighth president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. Besides *Onward*, Moore has published a number of works, has served in the pastorate, and is a native of Mississippi. Although the former set of credentials lend significant expertise and credibility to his ability to address the shortcomings of “Christian America,” the latter set makes *Onward* a critical assessment that is born out of lived experience, which brings an unmistakable added weight of authority to both his critique and his proposal.

The structure of the book is a series of chapters that have a discernible flow. The first two chapters mince no words, questioning how distinctly “Christian” Christian America ever really was. From the “Introduction,” Moore remarks, “Christian values were always more popular in American culture than the Christian gospel.” (6) Then in chapter one titled forthrightly, “A Bible Belt No More,” after surveying the rhetoric of the last generation’s Religious Right activism, Moore reflects, “[it] was focused

much less on the kingdom of God or on the gospel of Christ than on ‘traditional family values’ or ‘our Judeo-Christian heritage.’” (16) Instead of seeking to recover what Moore seems to regard as the myth of a “moral majority,” in chapter two he calls the church to fulfill a vocation it already has been given, namely, that of a “prophetic minority.” This self-understanding does not result in withdrawal from the culture as some may fear, nor does it permit politics to drive the gospel. (29-32) “In fact,” Moore contends, “the call to a gospel-focused engagement is a call to a more vigorous presence in public life, because it seeks to ground such witness where it ought to be—in the larger mission of the church.” (29) With respect to its “minority” presence, Moore reminds believers that the “church of Jesus Christ is never a majority—in any fallen culture—even if we happen to outnumber everyone else around us.” (29) But in spite of this standing, the gospel charges the people of God with a prophetic message and mission to be heralds of the coming King Jesus, which fuels the church’s conviction and grounds its authority. (35-43) If the church lives in this mentality, its gospel awareness and focus will also prevent the lamentable error that has been to its own peril of adopting nationalistic visions of America as the “New Israel,” so to speak, that ironically causes one to despair of the loss of a nation rather than the actual Bride of Jesus Christ. (32) Moore is right when he warns, “But it would be a tragedy to get the right president, the right Congress, and the wrong Christ.” (31)

Following this challenging beginning, chapters three through eight outline key theological perspectives that are essential for the approach he describes as “*engaged alienation*, a Christianity that preserves the distinctiveness of our gospel while not retreating from our callings as neighbors, and friends, and citizens.” (8) Chapters three and four clarify perhaps the most important theological distinction for any model of “Christ and culture,” namely, the difference between the church and the kingdom. Chapter five addresses the matter of the church’s “mission,” taking into consideration its personal and social dimensions. In chapters six through eight, Moore applies his program to standard ethical and social issues of Christian cultural engagement under the headings of human dignity, religious liberty, and family stability. Next, Moore starts to bring the book to a close in chapter nine on the note of navigating between the sin of being quarrelsome and the insufficiency of mere civility by embodying “convictional kindness.” (190-94) The final chapter, “A Gospel Counter-Revolution,” summarizes the main themes of the theological outlook he has proffered while ending on the summons once more to reject an “almost-gospel.” (216)

The strengths and insights of this work are great in number. If there are weaknesses, then they are overshadowed by the powerful wisdom Moore imparts and the urgency of his message for the Western and American church, so long as one concedes his assessment of “cultural Christianity,” its past and its future. To quibble over minor details would seem to miss the point of the author’s own “prophetic” voice crying out as a “minority” report in the midst of a wilderness of Christians and churches who are more distraught about the state of “Christian” America than they are their own spiritual health.

One strength to highlight is that “cultural Christianity” and an “almost-gospel” need to be identified in unambiguous terms so as to continue to usher it out of the church. One of Moore’s main concerns in this task is that, “We must equip a new generation for different days. They must know how to fight for doctrinal orthodoxy and for public justice. An almost-gospel won’t do; a cut-rate righteousness won’t either.” (216) Earlier in the book, Moore cautioned, “A church that assumes the gospel is a church that soon loses the gospel.” (26) All too often, the church has worn its gospel, biblical, and theological illiteracy on its sleeve when, “We rail against the culture outside, and speak in muted and ambiguous terms about what is common among us. We lambaste political and cultural heresies on the outside, but sit silently in the face of doctrinal heresies on the inside.” (87) Moore paints the picture

clearly, “A church that loses its distinctiveness is a church that has nothing distinctive with which to engage the culture.” (88)

Second, Moore demonstrates how desperately the church is in need of a robust theology, especially for informing its “prophetic” stance towards society, by applying sound ecclesiology and inaugurated (“already, not yet”) eschatology to the subject of “Christ and culture.” Without a precise distinction between the church and the kingdom, Christians will continue to fail in their “prophetic” vocation in the world. For instance, those who “bring the kingdom *too near* (already) fall for utopianism, unrealistic expectations, politicized gospels,” while those who “keep the kingdom *too distant* (not yet) fall for prophecy chart fixations or cultural apathy or failed attempts to withdraw from society.” (58) A balanced view of the “kingdom come” will instruct Christians on what truly matters in the present reality, causing rightly calibrated concerns and action for matters like social justice, abortion, marriage, and religious liberty. (60) In turn, this theological vantage point will bring the church’s identity and mission into a proper focus that understands the church as “a signpost of God’s coming kingdom (Eph 3:10), a preview to the watching world of what the reign of God in Christ is to look like, a colony of the kingdom coming.” (59)

“The church is an *act of war*,” Moore declares. (78) The reason Moore provides is that, “In the church, the powers-that-be see a pilot project of the kingdom of God, which is plowing aside their own empire.” (78) With these biblical-theological categories in place, Moore again devotes extra attention to dismantling the dangerous “God and country” interpretations and application of passages like 2 Chronicles 7:14 or Genesis 12:3 to the nation of America that inexcusably bypass not only their significance for the unique election of Israel, but even more so, their meaning in relation to the gospel of Jesus Christ. (75-77) Although the exhortation to “seek the kingdom of God first” does not entail “kingdom only” (53), Moore reminds Christians that “kingdom first” gives pride of place to believers’ membership in the local body of Christ before its earthly exercise of citizenship. To show this view plainly, in one of the many memorable and striking passages to be enjoyed in the book, Moore writes, “Our vote for President of the United States (for those of you who are Americans) is important. We are held accountable. . . . But our vote for the President is less important than our vote to receive new members for baptism into our churches” (63).

In 2015, *Christianity Today* announced *Onward* as the winner of their “Book of the Year” award. This honor is no small feat and is one that certainly seems fitting. Not only does *Onward* pointedly address glaring weaknesses in the American church with gospel clarity and the call for biblical orthodoxy, but Moore accomplishes his goal while displaying his undeniable gifts as a wordsmith. It is likely that not all readers will grant Moore’s every point or critique, but the wit, wisdom, humor, and paradox that fills every page makes for an immensely satisfying read nonetheless. This book should be a “must” read for every pastor or minister in the Christian church that serves wherever “cultural Christianity” may be found, and they ought to strive to place it into the hands of as many laypeople as possible for the sake of a recovery of a holistic vision for the coming days amidst the drastic shifts in society and the world. Despite some serious criticisms and warnings, Moore does not end the book without hope. He reminds, “But God is not, Jesus told us, the God of the dead but of the living.” (217) If the “Bible Belt” is not dead yet, it is definitely dying. As it does so, Moore encourages Christians not to mourn America as a “post-Christian” nation. (218) “It may be that America is instead pre-Christian,” Moore suggests, “a land that though often Christ-haunted has never known the power of the gospel, yet.” (218) May the church be the church, seek the kingdom first, herald the gospel, and press into a world that is “without hope and God” (Eph 2:2) apart from the coming King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ.



**A Review of Jen Wilkin.**  
***None Like Him: 10 Ways God is Different Than Us (and Why That's a Good Thing).***  
**Wheaton: Crossway, 2016. 176 pp. \$12.99.**

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**T**here are two opposing sides to the coin of image-bearing. On one hand, being made *like* God, one is tempted to inappropriately assume the position *of* God. This can manifest in a variety of ways in the behavior of people—where some seek to control circumstances or people, while others think they can handle everything apart from God. On the flip side, being made in the image of God can also be an intimidating truth especially if one is prone to comparison. Much like when a child grows up being told how similar he is to a particular parent, it can seem like “big shoes” to fill if that parent sets an impeccable example of godliness. Likewise, being like God is an impossible feat as He is the very definition of perfection. However, in Jen Wilkin’s book, *None Like Him*, she releases her readers from both the pedestal of a God-complex as well as the prison of comparison as she investigates ways believers are unlike God their Father.

Throughout her book, Wilkin puts the character of God under the microscope dissecting key attributes that single God out to be unlike anyone or anything else. Instead of giving her readers goals or challenging them to be more like God in varying aspects of their own character, Wilkin frees them to focus on ways they cannot possibly be like God, no matter how hard they try. “Any discussion of how God is not like us must begin with an acknowledgment that we are measurable and he is not.” (16) Speaking to ten very specific attributes—from His infinite nature to His supreme sovereignty—the author examines through Scripture how there truly is none like Him.

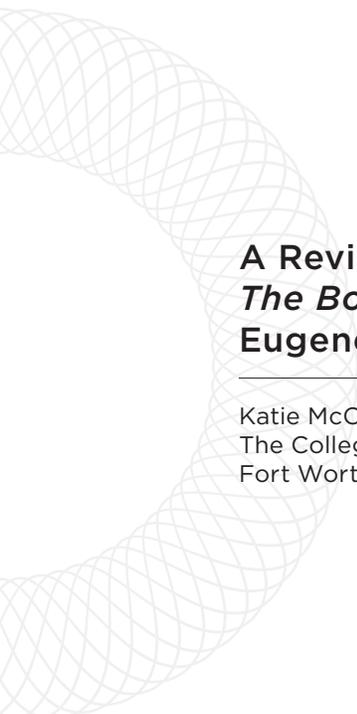
Wilkin’s natural writing style puts readers at ease coming across like a conversation or discipleship meeting. While theological terms like “omniscience” or “immutability” are used, her explanations of these truths as well as her illustrations are both down to earth and readily understandable. For example, when explaining the immanent nature of God, she writes, “All of God is fully present in all places past, present and future. Theologians call this his immanence. Put simply, there is no place—or

time—where God is not.” (95) However, as relatable as *None Like Him* is, it is not a meek book. Wilkin is not afraid to put to task her readers who may struggle with a God-complex or comparison:

With our lives collapsing around us, we paint on a smile and fake our way through another Sunday at church, denying our need for authenticity. We take out another line of credit, denying our need for financial stability. We ignore our symptoms of illness, denying our need for medical attention. We work late into the night, denying our need for rest. We starve ourselves to a size 2, denying our need for food. We turn from the God-worship that should have resulted from seeing our need to the self-worship of believing we, like God, are self-sufficient. (62)

Each chapter focuses on a different attribute of God and concludes with thought-provoking questions and Scripture for meditation. Wilkin does an excellent job choosing which Scriptures to highlight for further study and meditation. Most of the questions provided for reflection are well thought out, although some were not very deep and could be easily answered without much contemplation or vulnerability. Perhaps more insightful questions could have been asked to make these sections stronger. A study guide could easily be formed from these sections or a teacher could make this book into a series of Bible Study lessons. Wilkin has done an excellent job providing this as a resource for group lessons, whether or not she intended to do so.

There are a number of reasons to add *None Like Him* to a library. First, it is a great source of Theology Proper from a popular writing style. While it is concise, using only 158 pages to discuss ten of the most infinite attributes of a most infinite God, it is not by any means shallow. Jen Wilkins touches the core of why God and man (or in her reader’s case, woman) are vastly different. Second, it inspires further study and contemplation. This could be a valuable tool in the life a new convert grappling with who God is. A mentor or leader could use *None Like Him* as a jumping-off point for deeper exploration into the character and personage of God. Used effectively and in conjunction with God’s Word, this book could be an effective tool to help a young believer develop a healthy understanding of God because she came to know Him better through this study. Finally, this book can speak to a wide breadth of women readers, as new to mature believers would be able to get something out of it. It is the proverbial cookies brought to the bottom shelf without diminishing the value of the cookie! Whether a comparison junkie, a woman struggling with her identity in Christ, or someone who just wants to know more about God, *None Like Him* is a must-read.



**A Review of Amy F. Davis Abdallah.  
*The Book of Womanhood.*  
Eugene: Cascade, 2015. 203 pp. \$32.00.**

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**A**s an undergraduate music major, I slogged through four tedious semesters of ear training. The goal of the discipline was to cultivate the ability to hear a melody or chord progression and identify it according to the musical key, called the tonic note. As any novice quickly learns, whatever you do, you must not forget the sound of the tonic note. Hang on to the key's foundation, and you can navigate chromatic changes and deceptive cadences. But lose the sound of the tonic note for but a moment, and the music becomes a collection of notes without the sense of direction or resolution—just guesswork.

Amy F. Davis Abdallah, Associate Professor of Theology and Bible at Nyack College (NY), identifies a dissonance between a woman's identity and her self-perception in *The Book of Womanhood*, based on a program she refers to as *Woman*. In Davis Abdallah's younger years, she found herself asking the foundational question of what it means to be a woman. (xv) Yet, apart from the "womanly roles" of marriage and maternity, Davis Abdallah believed that she, like many other young women, lacked the framework necessary to define herself as a woman. (xv, 1-3) Thus, the curriculum for the *Woman* program was born.

Davis Abdallah's *Woman* program is a "rite of passage," a symbolic ritual that marks the transition from girl to woman. For Davis Abdallah, the experience is necessary for a woman's initiation into adulthood and to avoid the maturational limbo that "[leaves] the person who has adult responsibilities still feeling like a girl and unsure of her womanhood." (3) The *Woman* program revolves around four spheres of relationships in a woman's life: her relationship to God, herself, others, and creation.

What seems to make Davis Abdallah's *Woman* curriculum so unique is its fusion of a woman's life-experiences with her Christian discipleship, creating a spiritually minded perspective of what might typically be categorized as "un-spiritual" facets of existence. She devotes an entire chapter to

understanding one's hormonal cycle and specific nutritional needs, as well as the biological rhythm of hormonally influenced anxiety and creativity. (Ch. 6) Elsewhere, she encourages women toward physical exercise, healthy body image, and defining attractiveness in terms of confidence, rather than revealing clothing. (Ch. 7) For Davis Abdallah, these are not mere personal habits, but spiritual disciplines on par with Bible reading, fasting, and prayer. (89)

In discussing a woman's relationship with creation, specifically her "ecological footprint," Davis Abdallah instills a sense of responsibility for environmental conservation. (Ch. 15) Expressing creativity—whether in visual arts, cooking, gardening, or even scientific inquiry—manifests a woman's identity as an image bearer of the Creator and is, therefore, vital to her full flourishing. (Ch.16) Every aspect of a young woman's life is an aspect of her discipleship. However, as broad and varied as the topics discussed within the *Woman* curriculum are, it is what Davis Abdallah does not say that seems to illustrate her view of womanhood most clearly. Essentially, *The Book of Womanhood* is an entire study on the meaning of Christian womanhood that somehow avoids the very Scriptures that teach the meaning of Christian womanhood.

For example, the *Woman* program nurtures personal growth through woman-to-woman mentoring, a model grounded in Titus 2:3-5's teaching concerning a woman's personal and familial responsibilities. Yet, curiously, Davis Abdallah neglects any reference to this text. Several points within the *Woman* curriculum encourage a woman's personal growth through confidence, strength, and even balanced self-care, all of which are traits and characteristics exemplified in Proverbs 31:10-31 (c.f., vv. 17-18, 25). Yet, Davis Abdallah neglects any reference to this text as well. In lieu of such texts, the author tends to lean on other sources such as personal experience, sociological research, and even a couple of quotes from American feminist, Gloria Steinem. The result is a panoply of generally wholesome counsel without an identifiable resolution, helpful advice without a clear sense of direction.

This is not to say that *The Book of Womanhood* is scripturally sparse. The chapter entitled, "The Rest of Creation," offers a concise theology of Sabbath rest in the Old and New Testaments and describes its importance in a Christian woman's life. The chapter "Stand and Speak" anchors the basis for a woman's confidence in her identity in Christ: "[His] love and self-sacrifice as well as freedom from the law of sin and death." (95) The chapter "Biblical Herstory" recalls the biblical narratives of Mary, Huldah, Deborah, and Martha and suggests readers choose the name of a biblical woman with whom they identify as their "baptism name." (44) Yet, even these interactions seem to maintain an experiential overtone.

Despite Davis Abdallah's attempt to discuss womanhood apart from "womanly roles," her own theological leanings on the topic are heard in her description of women in the Bible. Deborah is described as "an equal military leader to Barak" (41), Martha was preoccupied with fulfilling a socially prescribed expectation unlike her role-subverting sister, Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet (43), and among the positive examples of female biblical characters, their identity as a wife was "just background," while the female biblical characters for whom their identity as a wife was central "are not the best examples in that role." (42) Add to this Davis Abdallah's interpretation of Genesis 2 in which Eve's title of "helper" (*ezer kengedo*) precludes relational authority (138), as well as her view of Eve's sin as the abdication of responsible stewardship, specifically, "her rightful rule." (29) For Davis Abdallah, the concept of gender complementarity within such "womanly roles" apparently clashes with the pursuit of "figuring out how to be fully yourself." (xv)

*The Book of Womanhood* demonstrates the need for continued clarity in explaining the harmony of gender complementarity. Moreover, Davis Abdallah's work demonstrates the need for consistent

reliance upon Scripture to resolve the question of what it means to be a woman. Apart from the foundation of Scripture, even the most thoughtful attempts to form a perspective of womanhood will be just guesswork.



**A Review of Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock.  
*The Grand Design: Male and Female He Made Them.*  
Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2016. 172 pp. \$9.99.**

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Our culture is adrift. We are a rudderless vessel in the sea without a compass, map, or any real idea of where we are headed. We are easily blown about by the winds of change (see Eph 4:14). Many men are increasingly effeminate; many women are increasingly aggressive. Neither really know why. For many people, sexuality and gender issues are convoluted and suggested to be nothing more than social constructs. This is a remarkably sad commentary on the modern state of affairs, and yet we are determined to maintain our autonomy and freedom unwilling to learn from history or the truths of Scripture. This is exactly why *The Grand Design* is the right book at the right time. Strachan and Peacock explain, “Christians have something better to offer...The Scriptures show us that flourishing as a human means, ultimately, thriving as a man and woman” (14) This is great news and a refreshing remedy for our current state of confusion.

This important book is comprised of six chapters and a short 172 pages in length. While not an exhaustive book, it covers the core principles of biblical complementarity as well as the essential components of manhood and womanhood that are vital for the Christian community. Strachan and Peacock go back to the beginning: What does it mean that God created male and female in the “image of God”? God created man and woman different, and sometimes those differences are taken for granted. However, “there is doxology in the details.” (24) God created man and woman to be fruitful and multiply, to have dominion over the earth, to work in unity and to fulfill their different roles. (25) God created the woman like the man but distinct from him. God’s design was intentional, and the differences were intentional—equal in worth and value, yet different in role. In fact, “Biblical womanhood is the most exciting take on femininity the world has ever seen.” (34) The woman, Eve, was a special creation of God, and Adam recognized her as a special gift. His response in Genesis 2:23 demonstrates that he was “overjoyed at what God has wrought.” (37) In fact, “Eve was made for ‘one

flesh' union with Adam. Their intimacy will make Adam a father and Eve a mother. This is the holy design of God." (38)

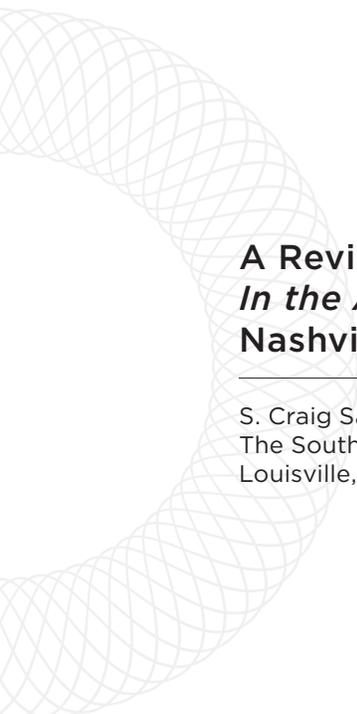
Strachan and Peacock present a biblically based model for manhood by walking through four outlined points in 1 Corinthians 16:13: "Be watchful. Stand firm in the faith. Act like men. Be strong." Meanwhile, one of the greatest strengths of the book is the presentation of biblical womanhood. God clearly designed the woman to fulfill the role of "helper" (Gen 2:18). Eve's role and purpose was to be a helper to her husband. Modern feminism wants women to see themselves as independent from men. Yet, God's design for mutual interdependence, especially between husband and wife, allows for a deeper and richer relationship than any secular theory about gender and relationships. (72)

As previously mentioned, women were created to be life-givers; they "give physical life to humanity." (73) Yet, Satan has strategically managed to strip women of a key element of the glory of womanhood through abortion. (73) Instead of joyfully bringing forth human life, a woman is robbed of this incredible gift, not to mention a principal component of her feminine identity.

Notably, the authors highlight that Jesus was a single man, and thus there is value in godly singleness. When God saves people, He brings them into the church family. (163) The church is a place where singles can serve families and families can serve singles. Complementarity is on display within the church as well as nuclear families.

While any weaknesses that might exist pale in comparison to the overwhelming positive aspects of this book, there are a few sections that could be strengthened. For example, the two authors of this book are both male and write from a male perspective. Where is the female voice providing guidance from a woman's perspective in the chapter titled, "What is Biblical Womanhood?" Also, while writing about parenting within the Christian home, there are sections on a father's discipline, a father's teaching, and a father's example. Yet, there are no sections discussing a mother's discipline, teaching, or example. Additionally, Peacock was a professional soccer player in England and included some stories about his time as a player. While his stories are compelling and likely to appeal to a male audience, there are no feminine stories to draw in the female audience. These minor issues aside, this book is well written and highly relevant for men and women of all ages.

As a Christian man, husband, and committed church member, I find *The Grand Design* to be extremely helpful, and it should be recommended reading. After all, our culture is adrift. Strachan and Peacock challenge us, Christians, to go and rescue it. "The cost of loving and proclaiming the truth may be great. But we must go. We have seen the grand design, and it impels us to go, preach, and celebrate the glory of God in the world of men." (172)



**A Review of David E. Prince.**  
***In the Arena: The Promise of Sports for Christian Discipleship.***  
**Nashville: B&H, 2016. 240 pp. \$16.99.<sup>1</sup>**

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**M**y sports career flamed out in freshman year of high school, but playing football, basketball, and baseball as a teenager instilled a work ethic and discipline I may not have learned anywhere else. Playing sports also helped me deal with failure and disappointment (so has a lifetime of cheering on perennial losers), and my years warming the bench taught me not to yearn for recognition or depend on being the star player I never was.

The fact that I have benefited from playing sports and yet witnessed the perils of worshipping it as an idol makes me thankful for the wisdom and careful insight of David E. Prince in his latest book, *In the Arena*. Prince, assistant professor of Christian preaching at Southern Seminary and senior pastor of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church in Lexington, draws from his personal experience playing sports and cultivating a love of competition in his eight children. Inspired by Theodore Roosevelt's classic quote from his "Citizenship in a Republic" speech—in which the president describes the valiant efforts of "the man who is actually in the arena"—Prince models a critical engagement with sports that promotes Christian discipleship and character.

"God kindly provides us the windows of smaller arenas where we can be challenged to demonstrate the virtues necessary for faithfulness in the ultimate venue of our lives before God, our Creator and Sustainer," Prince writes. "Athletic competition provides practice games for life, whether experienced by participation or observation, but to benefit fully, we must be intentional about the lessons it can teach us." (4)

Among those issues is an understanding of sports fandom that, rather than demonizing those who rabidly cheer on their favorite teams, seeks to understand the cultural rootedness of particular sports

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<sup>1</sup> This review first appeared at <http://www.sbts.edu/resources/towers/feature-review/>

and how Christians can engage and enlighten those identities with the gospel. In the book's opening chapter, Prince also confronts those who dismiss sports with a surprising but convincing argument that athletic competition is an inevitable reaction to God's creation.

"People created sports in response to the world God created. Sporting competition is capable of reflecting God's creative glory and design in his image bearers, and thus presents an opportunity to celebrate our unique identity in God's world," Prince writes. (15)

Prince also provides a helpful analysis on sports and spiritual warfare, demonstrating how athletes and fans can learn to endure trials and keep themselves from idolatry. But the most crucial chapter of the book, "Sports and Christian Discipleship," explores how sports merely expose character and that parents must seize these revealing moments of competition for the purpose of building godly character. (65-83)

"Whether we are protecting the Lord's Day to prioritize worship with the local church, having conversations with our children to help them think rightly before and after competitions, or guiding them through the disappointment of bench-warming, Christian parents must lead with intentionality in every area of our children's involvement in sports," Prince writes. (83)

In the chapter on discipleship, Prince provides a list of questions parents must ask their children before and after each game, and also instructs parents on how to be supportive during the game. His pastoral application in each chapter and his call for the churches to be strategic in their relationship to sports display a sincerity and thoughtfulness that no one has yet to apply to this realm of cultural awareness.



**A Review of Rob Green.**

***Tying the Knot: A Premarital Guide to a Strong  
& Lasting Marriage.***

**Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2016. 159 pp. \$17.99.**

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**W**hile there is no shortage of marital advice coming from bookstores, radio and television programs, blogs and pulpits, the overwhelming volume and variety of advice can leave engaged couples confused and concerned as they consider the road ahead. The Bible has much to say about marriage, yet a deep understanding of how it all works together eludes these couples who have never experienced a day of married life. What does it look like for a husband practically to love his wife as Christ loves the church? In a culture that celebrates the liberation of women from traditional marital roles, how should a fiancée think about what it really means to step into a submissive role with her future husband? For those who are looking to live in a Christ-centered marriage, Rob Green presents answers to these questions and many others facing those who are stepping into the new reality of married life.

Rob Green is the Pastor of Counseling and Seminary Ministries at Faith Church in Lafayette, Indiana. He writes not only as an ACBC certified counselor and a board member of the Biblical Counseling Coalition but also as a husband of 22 years to his wife Stephanie. Many of the stories and illustrations come directly from his own experiences working through the difficult challenges of marriage. He writes this book for couples who want Christ-centered premarital counseling and encourages them to work through the material with a pastor or with mentors. For these mentors, there is a special section at the end of the book that walks through each chapter of the book and gives advice for those who help a couple work through the material. While this book seeks to reach any couple, whether they are a young couple getting married for the first time or an older couple with previous marriages, not every scenario is covered, and Green encourages mentors to spend time on issues that may arise that are not discussed within the content of this resource.

The thrust of *Tying the Knot* is Christ-centered marriage. Green starts off by addressing that Christ

must be the center of your life as an individual before you can have a Christ-centered marriage (chap 1). From there he goes on to cover what a marriage looks like when there is Christ-centered love (chap 2), Christ-centered problem solving (chap 3), Christ-centered roles and expectations (chap 4), Christ-centered communication (chap 5), Christ-centered finances (chap 6), Christ-centered community (chap 7), and Christ centered intimacy (chap 8). Each chapter is intended to correspond to a session with a mentor. There are homework assignments designed to encourage discussion between couples on each chapter and to bring out potential areas for problem solving. For those couples looking to go deeper, there are also advanced homework assignments which will help the couple go even further in their understanding of marriage and the role Christ plays in it all.

While covering the common premarital topics such as communication, finances, and intimacy, Green's attention to Christ-centered community addresses an important subject often neglected or left to the margins in premarital preparation. God designed us for community, and in the right community a relationship can flourish, while the wrong community only escalates issues and a lack of community isolates couples from the help they need in order to grow. Green shows that a Christ-centered church community will encourage love and service while equipping couples to mature and providing others to care for them. (114-120)

Green seamlessly ties stories together from his years of counseling and his own marriage into the material. These stories relate to every marriage since all couples go through seasons of learning how to work through problems together, discovering that their spouse is more complicated than they ever could have imagined, and realizing that communication can be a greater struggle than they ever expected. For those on the outside of marriage preparing to step into it, these stories flesh out the principles in a way that is relatable and easy to understand.

One area which would help develop the content and the stories more is a female perspective. While Green shares stories and tells the woman's side or his wife's side of the story, there are not stories or advice given from a first-person female perspective. Men will easily connect to this material, but some women might struggle to relate. Women may have trouble connecting their own premarital hopes, expectations, and fears to the content. For those looking to use this as a premarital resource for themselves, finding a mentor couple rather than just an individual mentor to walk alongside them through this material would provide both the man's perspective and the woman's perspective.

This resource is a helpful tool for those who are looking to give premarital counsel for the first time. Green sets mentors up to succeed by doing the grunt work and providing probing questions which will lead to some great discussions. Additionally, for those who regularly counsel engaged couples, this is a unique tool to have, especially when working with couples who may be overwhelmed by a more intellectually or theologically challenging book. Compared to other resources out there, Green's simplicity makes the truths of how to have a Christ-centered marriage accessible to any couple. In every chapter and piece of advice, Green continually pushes the couple back to the truth that with Christ at the center, marriage can be an incredible journey for decades after the wedding ceremony.

