

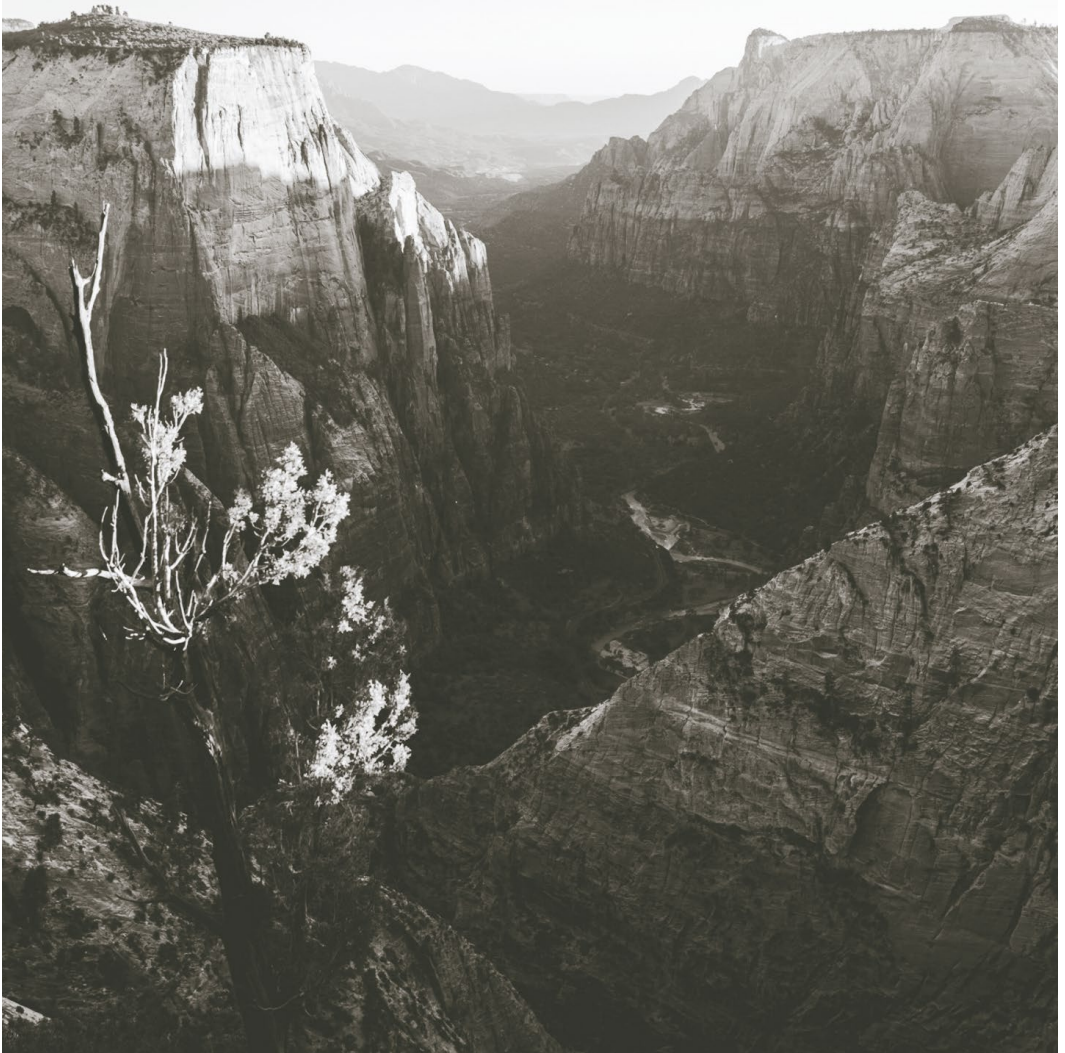
WITH ONE VOICE: SCRIPTURE
AND NATURE FOR ETHICS
AND DISCIPLESHIP *Joe Rigney*

THE FALLACY OF
INTERCHANGEABILITY
Colin J. Smothers

HUMAN DIGNITY, REPENTANCE,
AND #METOO
Palmer Williams + Catherine Parks

eikon

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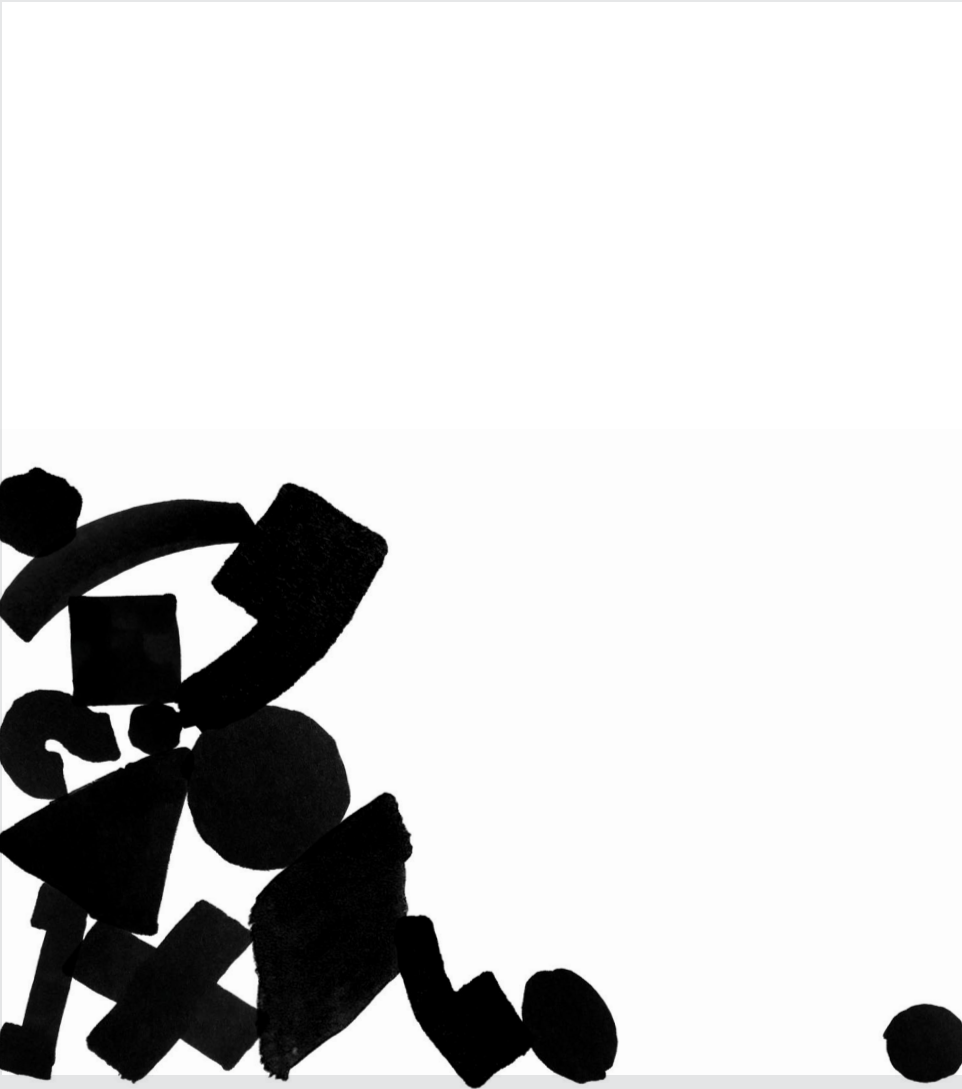
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DENNY R. BURK

Introducing eikon



The hallmark of late modern Western culture is that it has forgotten itself. It is largely post-Christian and has not retained God in its knowledge. Failure to see God as He is means that man fails to see himself as he is. There is light all around, but often he fails to see it. Indeed, he doesn't want to see it, for to see would mean giving the Creator His due. And this, he is largely unwilling to do.

The cultural consequences of this can hardly be overstated. We are now in a situation in which we don't know ourselves. We don't know ourselves as we ought because we don't know God as we ought. For this reason, many Westerners believe that human identity and meaning are self-determined, not God-determined. This idea is not anything new, but it is the ideological air that we breathe. It is so prevalent in our culture that we hardly notice that it is there forming us and shaping our understanding of ourselves and of what it means to be a human being.

Sociologists have given a name to this mindset. It is called *expressive individualism*. In his book *The Fractured Republic*, Yuval Levin describes what *expressive individualism* looks like in the modern world. He writes:

The ethic of our age has been aptly called *expressive individualism*. That term suggests not only a desire to pursue one's own path but also a

yearning for fulfillment through the definition and articulation of one's own identity. It is a drive both to be more like whatever you already are and also to live in society by fully asserting who you are. The capacity of individuals to define the terms of their own existence by defining their personal identities is increasingly equated with liberty and with the meaning of some of our basic rights, and it is given pride of place in our self-understanding.¹

The philosophy of *expressive individualism* was given unique expression in Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy's majority opinion for the 1992 decision *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. Justice Kennedy put it this way:

At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.

At the heart of this philosophy is the notion that the purpose of life is to discover one's deepest self, to express that to the world, and then to forge that identity in ways that may contradict what family, friends, tradition, or religious authorities might say.² Your identity—indeed even the meaning of life itself—is determined and expressed by you, the individual. It is not something given to you by God or any other external authority. The individual is the captain of his own soul.

¹Yuval Levin, *The Fractured Republic: Renewing America's Social Contract in the Age of Individualism* (New York: Basic, 2016), 148.

²Trevin Wax, "Expressive Individualism: What Is It?" The Gospel Coalition, October 16, 2018, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/expressive-individualism-what-is-it/>.

You would be hard-pressed to find a more apt description of our age. And yet—even though this way of construing life is over a century old—it is a Johnny-come-lately in the history of the Christian West. One of the ideas that Western Civilization inherited from Christianity is the notion that our identity—and indeed the meaning of life itself—is not something that is self-determined but God-determined.

*“It is our aim
in this journal
to understand
and to explicate
God’s design of
human beings.”*

One of Christianity’s greatest gifts to the world is the revelation that human identity is God-determined, not self-determined. On this view, if you believe that there is a God who created everything including us, then His design in creation gives meaning and purpose to our lives. To ignore that design is to pursue a path that in the long run brings pain and disorder into our lives.

Consider, for example, the design of a hammer. A hammer is designed to drive nails. You can use a hammer for all kinds

of things that it wasn’t designed for. You can use it, for example, to get into your car when the door is locked. That’s not what it was designed for, but you could use it to pry open your car door or break a window if you wanted. It would be far better for you and your car not to use it that way but to use your keys or your keyfob instead. If a person is blocking your view of the television, you could use a hammer to get them to move out of the way. But that is not what the hammer is designed for, and if you use it that way you might be able to see the television but will have brought pain and harm into someone’s life in the process.

Christians believe that God’s design in creation is like that. His design is not there to hurt us but to guide us into the best of human flourishing and wholeness. We can ignore his design in order to individually express our own will and design. And that may achieve some short-term satisfaction or goal. But when our will and design contradict God’s will and design, the long-term effect eventually undermines human happiness and flourishing. It is like taking a hammer to our lives, and we won’t like where that ends up.

The psalmist puts it this way: “Know that the LORD Himself is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves” (Ps. 100:3, NASB). If God is the one who made us, then our deepest need is not to assert our own will and design but to discover what *His* will and design are for our lives.

And that is the reason why the journal *Eikon* exists. The aim of our inquiry in these pages is fundamentally anthropological. It is our aim in this journal to understand and to explicate



God’s design of human beings. We understand above all that God has created every human being in His own *image*, which is the namesake of our journal *Eikon*, the Greek term for “image.” In particular, this journal is concerned with setting forth what the Bible and nature teach us about sex and gender.

It is our hope and prayer that this work will illuminate what has become so obscure in our day—that God has created each of us in His very own image *and* as male and female. These truths define us and have implications for every facet of our lives. May they find resonance in the hearts and minds of every reader of *Eikon*. ✕

The Fallacy of Interchangeability

C.S. Lewis opens his 1948 essay, "Priestesses in the Church?" with an amusing exchange from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*:¹

"I should like Balls infinitely better," said Caroline Bingley, "if they were carried on in a different manner. . . . It would surely be much more rational if conversation instead of dancing made the order of the day."

"Much more rational, I dare say," replied her brother, "but it would not be near so much like a Ball!"

On its face, Caroline Bingley's lament seems eminently reasonable. She is proposing, after all, at least literally speaking, the more rational arrangement: sensible conversation in the place of impractical dance, an equality of give and take instead of lead and follow, the engagement of two minds transcending the body.

By the very way she makes her statement, Caroline no doubt realizes she is prescribing a ball that would revolutionize it, and her statement could itself be read as nothing more than a tongue-in-cheek remark.

But the comedy and genius of her brother's reply are found in his frank accounting of the obvious. To replace dance with conversation at the ball is to no longer have a ball, but something else altogether. And Austen allows Caroline no reply.

Lewis tells us he was reminded of this episode when he confronted the reality that some were calling for female ordination to the priesthood in the Anglican Church. He wrote his essay to chasten the church against the idea, because in it he saw a great upheaval, a revolution that would remake the very nature of the church, possibly into something else altogether.²

¹C.S. Lewis, "Priestesses in the Church," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper, (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2014), 255–62.

²In 1976, 28 years after Lewis wrote his essay and just 13 years after his death, the first woman priest was ordained in the Church of England.



In 1948, a woman of some notoriety was making the now-popular and bluntly rational—in Caroline Bingley’s sense of that word—argument that since men and women are equal, they should share equally in access to the priesthood. Lewis writes,

Lady Nunburnholme has claimed that the equality of men and women is a Christian principle. I do not remember the text in scripture nor the Fathers, nor Hooker, nor the Prayer Book which asserts it; but that is not here my point. The point is that unless ‘equal’ means ‘interchangeable,’ equality makes nothing for the priesthood of women. And the kind of equality which implies that the equals are interchangeable (like counters or identical machines) is, among humans, a legal fiction. It may be a useful legal fiction. But in church we turn our back on fictions. One of the ends for which sex was created was to symbolize to us the hidden things of God. One of the functions of human marriage is to express the nature of the union between Christ and the Church. We have no authority to take the living and semitive figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were mere geometrical figures.³

For Lady Nunburnholme, female ordination flows logically from the Christian principle that men and women are equal. In response, Lewis puts his finger on a crucial concept that we would do well to consider anew.

Are men and women equal? If by equality one means that men and women are

created in God’s image with equal measure of dignity and worth, then yes, men and women are equal. But are men and women equal in every respect? E.g., in composite strength? In testosterone levels? In ability to bear children? In these considerations we arrive close to the heart of Lewis’s perceptive resistance to the bald and uncontextualized leveraging of the Christian principle of equality between men and women toward female ordination. And I contend it is a failure to reckon with such considerations that lies at the heart of the breakdown of the biblical norms and the natural order with respect to the church, marriage and the family, and even our concept of sexed personhood.

Are men and women interchangeable? The cultured impulse (an impulse toward which I myself feel conditioned) is to answer with an unequivocal yes. Annie with the gun has been teaching us as much since the ‘50’s: not only can she do anything a man can, but she can do it better. But we could come at the same concept from a different angle and ask, are men and women different? Surely only the most zealous LGBT activists would insist the answer is an unqualified no. But the project of many generations of gender revisionists has been to downplay or erase differences between the sexes. This project defies nature itself and runs up against the most fundamental of principles.

Spot the Difference worksheets are a staple in many elementary classrooms. Anyone who attended public school or spent any time in children’s Sunday School is probably familiar with the concept: given two very similar but slightly differing pictures, can you find and circle all the differences? At first glance the pictures appear identical, but a closer study

reveals several dissimilarities. Elementary students are assigned these exercises because they encourage and hone the development of the innate and basic ability to compare and contrast. Have we forgotten, or are we actively trying to forget how to spot the differences between men and women?

One of the most basic, natural differences that one can observe between men and women is the way sex is manifest in male and female biological organization. Simply put, to be a woman is to have sexed genetics that develop internal sex organs, including a womb. Conversely, to be a man is to have sexed genetics that develop external sex organs. In this form is rooted a function.

The internal/external dichotomy between the sexes grounds descriptive accounts of the sexes. In his book *On the Meaning of Sex*, J. Budziszewski summarizes masculinity and femininity, or manhood and womanhood, with the concepts of fatherhood and motherhood.⁴ Women, in their essence, have the potentiality for motherhood and everything attendant. Men, in their essence, have the potentiality for fatherhood and everything attendant. This is not to ignore the many similarities

between men and women, as a first glance recognizes with the two pictures on a Spot the Difference worksheet. To be sure, male and female are two kinds of humanity—what they share in common binds them together under one classification: mankind. But a mother is not a father, and the essential differences between the two flow from the essential differences between male and female.

Returning to our original consideration, in order for two entities to be strictly interchangeable, they have to be identical in both form and function. For example, a car can do much of what a truck can, but not everything a truck can do. In order for a car to be able to do what a truck can, it has to acquire a truck bed, perhaps a trailer hitch, a lift, and four-wheel drive. But then, much like a ball with no dancing, the car is no longer a car. It is a truck.

The relationship between form and function is not always immediately apparent. But considering why some objects have a certain form often reveals their intended function, and vice versa. A car has the form it does as distinguished from a truck because of its differentiated, yet overlapping, function.

³Lewis, “Priestesses in the Church?” 259–60. Lewis, perhaps surprising to some, defends a “complementarian” theology of male headship in the family at the end of his chapter on marriage in *Mere Christianity*—emphasis on “mere.” Lewis writes even more directly in *The Weight of Glory*, “I do not believe that God created an egalitarian world. I believe the authority of parent over child, husband over wife, learned over simple to have been as much a part of the original plan as the authority of man over beast. I believe that if we had not fallen, Filmer would be right, and patriarchal monarchy would be the sole lawful government.” Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, 168. Because Lewis so clearly and unequivocally grounds male headship in the family and the church in both natural law and the Scriptures, I find Alan Jacobs’s speculation that Lewis would “surely leave that subject alone, but in his time it had a different resonance, a different set of contexts” to be a stretch. Again, to take Lewis at his word, “We have no authority to take the living and semitive figures which God has painted on the canvas of our nature and shift them about as if they were mere geometrical figures.” Alan Jacobs, *The Narnian: The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, (New York: Harper One, 2005), 255.

⁴J. Budziszewski, *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2012), 54–61. I was recently reminded of Budziszewski’s descriptions in this excellent review by Bobby Jameison. “Book Review: On the Meaning of Sex, by J. Budziszewski” 9Marks, accessed February 16, 2019. <https://www.9marks.org/review/book-review-on-the-meaning-of-sex-by-j-budziszewski/>

If this is true, attending to the form of the sexes would better inform their functions. And if one were unhappy with the differentiated nature of functions, what would one do? Attempt to alter the form.

In the introduction to her book *Adam and Eve After the Pill*, Mary Eberstadt writes, “No single event since Eve took the apple has been as consequential for relations between the sexes as the arrival of modern contraception.”⁵ How is such a claim sustained? Reflecting on the fundamental distinctions between men and women and what the womb epitomizes, in order for the claim of no difference or interchangeability to hold water, the womb must be neutered, so to speak. In so doing, the legal fiction of male and female interchangeability begins to seem plausible. Have you ever wondered why the feminist project has been so invested in contraceptive and abortifacient technological developments?

I would suggest it is not merely a coincidence that Protestantism’s near-wholesale embrace of modern contraceptive ideology corresponds to an embrace of female ordination, while Catholicism rejects both. Where the church has bought into the principle of male and female interchangeability, it has undercut its ability to withstand the onslaught of gender progressivism that challenges traditional gender roles, has already legally redefined marriage, and is now attempting to redefine personhood.

We have severed form from function and, as a result, have left both form and function up for redefinition. Instead of considering the innate connection between the natural

order of male headship in the home and church and male and female natures, the egalitarian-equalitarian impulse has insisted—on the sole basis of the trump-all principle of equality—that men and women are functionally interchangeable in the home and the church.

This functional interchange paves the way for a formal one. If a woman can do anything a man can do in the home, why the need for a man in the home at all? Would not two women suffice? Would not two men? The fallacy of functional interchangeability leads to sexual interchangeability, and with it nothing less than the redefinition of society. The great upheaval Lewis rightly feared in the Anglican Church is just the beginning. The natural bonds of family are not immune to such radical redefinition.

On the horizon, and even now in our midst, is a crisis of personhood itself, of what it means to be an ensouled, sexed body. For the intersectional gender activist is not content with the triumph of the legalization of same-sex marriage. If men and women are interchangeable in both form and function, which today is sacrosanct truth in many quarters, then for a man to become a woman is no great feat. It is really no feat at all. They are interchangeable and thus indistinguishable already.

Thus we arrive at the ultimate Hegelian synthesis: man as woman, woman as man, androgynous bliss. The collectivist is pleased; more workers participating in the workforce (ironically, our society’s ultimate definition of liberation⁶), laboring indistinct side by side, the natural bonds of family defined down

to oblivion, the state raising its neutered citizens with no natural devotion to any individual in particular. They are interchangeable, after all.

A quote attributed to the French feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir, who influenced generations of feminist activists in the twentieth century, takes us to the doorstep of sex erasure, making the connection between functional feminist interchangeability and ontological interchangeability eminently clear:

In itself, homosexuality is as limiting as heterosexuality: the ideal should be to be capable of loving a woman or a man; either, a human being, without feeling fear, restraint, or obligation.⁷

It is perhaps no historical accident that Beauvoir had a relationally open romance with existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, who in one of his lectures famously quipped,

Dostoevsky once wrote: “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted;” and that, for existentialism, is the starting point. Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn.⁸

If God does not exist, then everything is permitted for the man or woman, even interchangeability. But if God does exist, then man and woman are who he says they are, and they are created for his purposes, form and function. “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? (Rom. 9:20, KJV)”

“If God does not exist, then everything is permitted for the man or woman, even interchangeability. But if God does exist, then man and woman are who he says they are, and they are created for his purposes, form and function.”

⁵Mary Eberstadt, *Adam and Eve After the Pill* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 11.

⁶Cf. Wendell Berry, “Feminism, the Body, and the Machine” *Cross Currents* 53.1 (Spring 2003), <http://www.crosscurrents.org/berryspring2003.htm>, accessed February 16, 2019. In his essay, Berry asks several provoking questions: “Why would any woman who would refuse, properly, to take the marital vow of obedience (on the ground, presumably, that subservience to a mere human being is beneath human dignity) then regard as “liberating” a job that puts her under the authority of a boss (man or woman) whose authority specifically requires and expects obedience? It is easy enough to see why women came to object to the role of Blondie, a mostly decorative custodian of a degraded, consumptive modern household, preoccupied with clothes, shopping, gossip, and outwitting her husband. But are we to assume that one may fittingly cease to be Blondie by becoming Dagwood? Is the life of a corporate underling— even acknowledging that corporate underlings are well paid—an acceptable end to our quest for human dignity and worth?”

⁷Quoted in Wayne M. Bryant, *Bisexual Characters in Film: From Anais to Zee* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 143

⁸Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism Is a Humanism,” in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre, Revised and Expanded*, ed. Walter Kaufman (New York: Penguin, 1975), 353.



In the conclusion of his essay, C.S. Lewis makes an appeal for a more humble and conservative posture when approaching the ball, or marriage, and the Church.

The Church ought to be more like a Ball than it is like a factory or a political party. Or, to speak more strictly, they are at the circumference and the Church at the Centre and the Ball comes in between. The factory and the political party are artificial creations – “a breath can make them as a breath has made”. In them we are not dealing with human beings in their concrete entirety only with “hands” or voters. I am not of course using “artificial” in any derogatory sense. Such artifices are necessary; but because they are our artifices we are free to shuffle, scrap and experiment as we please. But the Ball exists to stylize something which is natural and which concerns human beings in their entirety—namely, courtship. We cannot shuffle or tamper so much. With the Church, we are farther in: for there we are dealing with male and female not merely as facts of nature but as the live and awful shadows of realities utterly beyond our control and largely beyond our direct knowledge. Or rather, we are not dealing with them but (as we shall soon learn if we meddle) they are dealing with us.

Indeed. This is our starting point, for “it is God who made us, and not we ourselves.” (Ps. 100:3, NASB).

Colin Smothers serves as Executive Director of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and Associate Pastor at Kenwood Baptist Church in Louisville, KY.



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LEMANUEL WILLIAMS

The Innate & Compelling Nature of Challenge

Why are men so attracted to the message of Jordan Peterson? Peterson, a psychology professor at the University of Toronto, came to public fame when he spoke against a Canadian law that stifles freedom of speech and intends to protect “gender identity and expression,” yet his comprehensive work is what has captivated the masses. His most recent book, *12 Rules for Life*, was one of the top selling books in 2018 and is currently one of the most listened to books on Audible. Why? What is his message? With respect to the breadth and depth of his work, and in danger of over simplification, his message is merely this: “man up.” The overture to responsible, assertive masculinity is one of the primary reasons men are attracted to Jordan Peterson.

The colloquial phrase “man up” has never lost its potency in our society. The expression is not as vibrant in our politically correct

culture, but its meaning still lingers. Nestled in the nuance of the phrase is a glimmer of a call to a man’s true identity, not merely a false identity of hyper masculinity. Implied in the phrase is this challenge: be what you were meant to be, a man. Peterson captures the inherent value in that challenge—be what you were meant to be—and it evokes the interest of the masses.

Peterson challenges men to be what they were meant to be and to fulfill that calling by bringing order to chaos. He presents no illusions about taking up the challenge and guarantees inevitable danger. Although *prima facie* his message seems to lack appeal, it is nevertheless compelling, not because some Canadian phenom has uttered it but because at the heart of the message, I believe, men can hear someone more phenomenal: their Creator. They may fail to recognize the echo of the true voice, but the voice cries out nonetheless.

What the masses perceive as Peterson’s call for males to cease being passive, the Canadian genius’s new message, is actually an ancient message from the genius of God. Here’s the message: be what you were meant to be by bringing order to the world. We see this challenge in the creation mandate of Genesis 1. It was this call that was meant to be man’s purpose and fulfillment of life on the earth. There is no more enthralling and fascinating summons from God to man. That summons must be heard by men in the church and church leaders must tap into the genius of that call—to bring order to chaos.

Heralded by some as a sort of pseudo-savior for modern male psychology, Peterson has gathered an enormous following. To be clear, Peterson is no shining example of Christian orthodoxy. There are axioms to his belief system and psychological presuppositions that Christians should reject. Nevertheless, Peterson’s challenge to men to do hard things is reminiscent of Jesus, who told men, “follow me and it’ll be the hardest thing you’ll ever do, but it’ll be every bit worth it.” Christians would do well to take note of the appeal that this kind of call has. This isn’t bravado masculinity or macho masculinity. The call that Jesus makes, and that Peterson reflects, is a call for all men to exercise dominion over their own lives.

Jesus challenged men to follow him promising it would be no easy feat, but they’ll have an unfathomable reward. He told men that if they followed him there was no secure resting place in this present world, for he said that foxes and birds have a more secure resting place

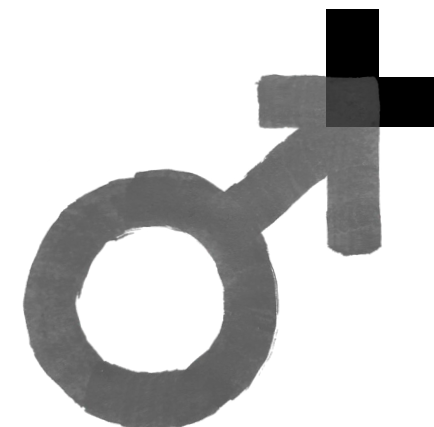
than him. He declared that a man must deny himself and take up his cross. The imagery is stark—bearing an enormously heavy burden uphill, ravished with blood, sweat, pain, and sorrow. Even so, men still followed. Why? Because something in them knew that this message and their life is inextricably tied to the challenge of bringing order to a chaotic world under the guise of a watchful God. There was a magnetic nature to a Man who claimed that he was putting the world back to rights, calling them to join in on the dangerous action, boasting of its reward, and obtaining life in the dawning of a new age.

It is a guarantee that if church leaders begin to emulate Jesus in his dangerous challenge to men, men will follow. Jesus promised when men follow his example, he will make them “fishers of men.”

Jesus’ model of getting men to follow him is counterintuitive to any attractional model the church tries to invent to get men to be “involved” in the life of the church. On the contrary, church leaders must constantly envisage the gospel as a dangerous yet victorious event. That is the kind of call that will engage the hearts of men. That gospel will be heard as a war cry inviting them to join into the battle and enjoy the spoils of war. Jesus did it with his disciples. Paul did it with Timothy. The chief message that calls men to action in the church is the challenge to abandon what seems to be important in this present age and live in the new age, now—“seek first the kingdom of God and all its righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). Jesus not only challenged men to this, he did it himself.

God has designed men to respond to this kind of challenge. Jesus, the perfect man, the exact imprint of the image of God, is seen as a man responding heroically to the most daunting challenge. In Revelation where the Apostle John begins to weep because there seemed to be no man worthy to respond to the challenge to open the scroll, the angel shouts, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (Rev. 5:5). Jesus himself is seen as a man responding to a challenge to usher in redemptive history. This is the distinct imprint of the image of God on masculinity—response to challenge.

Church leaders must be aware and sensitive to the dangers of unconsciously promoting hyper masculinity or radical feminism. Even so, church leaders ought to understand why Peterson has become a secular prophet. He is being heard by a culture that views manhood as a curable disease. Peterson’s message resonates with men in part because it is consistent with how God has designed men. Perhaps it’s because the men that follow Peterson hear the voice that is innate to them; they hear the voice of their Creator saying, “man up” or, more likely, follow me. ✕



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ABIGAIL DODDS

(A)Typical Woman Excerpt

THE END IS THE BEGINNING

When most of us come to Christ, we know relatively little about him. Likely we haven't even read all of his Book. But what we do know is indescribably good news, and it is enough to secure our eternal devotion.

What we know when we come to Christ is the end of the story, as far as the Bible is concerned. We know the gospel, which came into full view in the last third of Scripture. Even those of us raised on Scripture, when we come to Christ, our coming is still located at the end of the Book.

And as we find ourselves new, reborn, and in Christ, having begun at the end, we go back and learn or relearn all about God's story—his creation, his plan, his promises—which has now become our story. We read how Christ was there from the beginning and that God made everything through Christ (John 1:1–3), how we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), how Christ was everywhere (Luke 24:27)—popping up visibly and invisibly—and

how that's now *our* family history. It's like children asking to hear the story of how they were born and how their parents and grandparents met. They need someone else to recount it or show them the photo albums or baby books. And they never, ever get tired of hearing it.

So rather than understand ourselves as first women and all that entails and then Christians, it actually works the opposite way. Without Christ, we can know what we ought to be as women because of the clear signs given to us in creation and in our created bodies, but we will be powerless to be what we ought. Even more than that, we will be at war with God and his creation. We must first be found in Christ in order to humbly and happily receive both the revelation of God's world and his Word. We can never come to the Old Testament, even the creation account, and expect to understand it rightly without the revelation of Jesus Christ. That's who the whole book is about, after all. So that's where we begin.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is something a young child can understand, but its complexity and ramifications are inexhaustible. It is that God, who created everything and everyone (Gen. 1:1), sent his Son (1 John 4:14), who is also God (John 8:58), to earth to be born as a man named Jesus (Matt. 1:21). He did this out of his great love for us (Eph. 2:4), because our sin made us his enemies; his Son Jesus came to make peace for us (Rom. 5:1, 10). The way Jesus made this peace was by living a holy, perfect, and sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21), then being crucified by wicked people like us and dying a terrible death on a cross (Luke 23). When he died, he took the punishment for all the sins of those who put their trust in him—past, present, and future (Rom. 3:21–26). He was buried in a tomb, and three days later, God raised him from the dead, and he appeared to many in his

resurrected body (Acts 2:32; 1 Cor. 15:6). Then God took him up to heaven, where Christ is now seated at the right hand of God the Father (Luke 24:51; Col. 3:1).

All who repent of their sin, die to themselves, and believe in him are given eternal life and the righteousness of Christ (Luke 24:47; Rom. 6:5–14). They are also given God’s Holy Spirit, who was sent as a helper for us, to guide us in the truth (John 14:16–17). And even in this life, our lives are now lived in the death-conquering Christ, as though eternity has already begun (Col. 3:3–4). We are transformed, brand new, and born-again (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:3).

This is the gospel. It is the end of the story—which is just where all good stories really begin.



¹C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), 207.

AN ONION OR AN APPLE TREE

There’s a real risk for us though, even as we embrace the gospel, that we will make it a story that’s mainly about us. *Our* self-discovery, *our* journey, *our* triumph. We Christians have this knack for cramming the gospel into one short act of a play that merely enhances the bigger epic tale starring yours truly. We all crave self-knowledge: “Who am I?” or for some, “What’s unique about me?” And we tend to make those the central plot points of our lives.

The process of discovery often looks like an attempt to climb inside our belly buttons and peer through any cracks to the innards. Maybe then we’ll know who we are and why we’re special. We think of ourselves like an onion with oh-so-many layers, and as we peel them back, we are as beguiled as Mr. Tumnus in C. S. Lewis’s *The Last Battle*: “‘Yes,’ said Mr. Tumnus, ‘like an onion: except that as you continue to go in and in, each circle is larger than the last.’”¹ But rather than being in the real Narnia beholding better glory after better glory, we’re utterly captivated by the navel-lint idol of self. Even those of us who don’t like ourselves are often still captive to the fixation of *self*.

So how do we rightfully acknowledge the actual categories of our lives that exist and make us uniquely us without

engaging in a narcissistic fixation on *Ten Things Every Introvert Needs from Others to Be Happy*? We really are composed of something—the sum of the life we’ve lived, our roles and talents. In that scheme, our onion layers might include categories such as daughter, sister, friend, victim, mom, wife, single, divorced, musician, expert of such and such, communicator, and on and on, depending on the sum of *your* life experience, talents, and roles. And if you’re a Christian, you may think of the most foundational layer or the core of the onion as “Christian,” and that layer is the key component of who you are.

But consider a different picture.

Rather than imagine yourself an autonomous onion on the counter of life, composed of complex layers, consider an apple tree. A seed has gone into the ground and died. And from that dead seed, life has sprung up. It has grown thick and tall, rooted and established. On that tree are branches, leaves, buds, and fruit. The seed that fell into the ground and died is Christ. And when we become a Christian, that seed is also you and me, hidden in Christ and connected to every part of him, all his people. There are no Christians alone on the counter; only Christians growing together, in Christ.

² John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*
(Chicago, IL: Moody, 2007), 62.

RECKONED DEAD

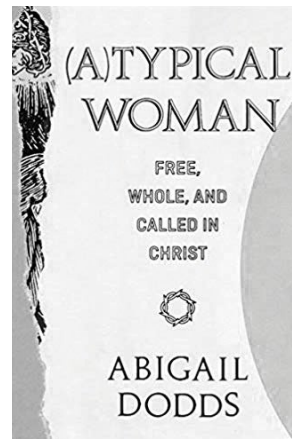
The problem with our identity may be that it hasn't yet died. We still think of ourselves as ourselves. I can hear my own objections saying, "But if I'm not me, then what? Don't I matter? What about my uniqueness? What about the life I've lived that *only* I've lived?" And the answer I find in Scripture is that it all must be reckoned dead.

When we participate in Christ's death, we die, every bit. It isn't that the sinful part of us dies and the nonsinful part endures, so that on the other side we're still us but with a makeover. There is no nonsinful part. And on the other side, having been raised with Christ, we aren't still us. We are entirely new, entirely in Christ.

John Bunyan says it best in *The Pilgrim's Progress*: "My name is now Christian, but my name at the first was Graceless."²

So for a woman, this means she dies as a mother, a friend, a daughter, and a coworker. The musician, the expert, the single and the divorced, all the things from our past that comprise us, our talents and person are all reckoned dead, as they were all tainted with sin, and are raised now as something else entirely. We are now Christian friend, Christian daughter,

Christian wife, Christian divorced, Christian single. We are Christian women. We are not layers to be peeled back in order to get to the essence; every piece of us is new. We do not get to the core part of us where our Christian selves reside, but the core is the whole. All of life through, in, and for Christ (Col. 1:16). ✕



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SCRIPTURE AND NATURE FOR ETHICS AND DISCIPLESHIP

Joe Rídney

Eikon is a journal of *biblical* anthropology. This means, among other things, that *Eikon* is fundamentally written *by* and *for* Bible people, to those who are committed to the Reformational principle of *sola Scriptura*. In his excellent introduction to this doctrine, Matthew Barrett argues that *sola Scriptura* means that Scripture alone, because it is God's inspired Word, is our inerrant, sufficient, and final authority.¹ Scripture is inspired by God. It is, in Paul's words, God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). What Scripture says, God says. And because Scripture is God-breathed, it is inerrant. It is true and trustworthy in all that it affirms. It is without error or fault in all its teachings.

What's more, because Scripture is God-breathed, it is sufficient. The Westminster Confession of Faith expresses the sufficiency of Scripture in this way: "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture." The last line about "good and necessary consequence" enables us to reason from Scripture to doctrines like the Trinity, or the hypostatic union of Christ's two natures, which are not expressly set down in Scripture, but are taught by Scripture. Finally, *sola Scriptura* means that Scripture alone is our final authority. It is not our only authority. Scripture nowhere claims to be the Christian's only authority. But, as the inspired Word of God, it is the *ultimate* authority on all matters upon which it speaks. Here's the way that the Bethlehem Elder Affirmation of Faith says it:

¹Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone: The Authority of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 23.



We believe that God's intentions, revealed in the Bible, are the supreme and final authority in testing all claims about what is true and what is right. In matters not addressed by the Bible, what is true and right is assessed by criteria consistent with the teachings of Scripture.²

Scripture doesn't speak directly to every area of reality. It doesn't speak exhaustively about many of the things that it does address. But in these areas, it still functions as a final authority by establishing the parameters within which we must do our thinking about what is true and right.

During the Reformation, *sola Scriptura* was forged in conflict over the relationship of Scriptural authority to the church's authority, expressed in the tradition of the church and in the Roman Catholic magisterium. Luther's famous quotation at the Diet of Worms expresses the Reformational principle clearly.

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in the councils alone, since it is well known that they err and contradict themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.³

Popes, councils, and creeds may speak truth. But they do not speak *only* truth. They are not inerrant. They may have authority, but they are not *final* authorities. Tradition has a *ministerial* authority as a servant of Scripture, but it does not have a *magisterial* authority alongside Scripture as a second infallible and inerrant source of divine revelation. In this way, tradition and councils are useful, but they are not necessary for us and our salvation in the way that Scripture is. Scripture alone, as the inspired Word of God, is our inerrant, sufficient, and final authority.

Now, while this doctrine was forged in conflict with Rome over the authority of the pope and councils, in this essay I want to explore the relationship between Scripture and another authority—the authority of nature. To do so, we need to reflect upon the passage of Scripture which sets these two authorities next to one another most clearly—Psalm 19.

The psalm begins with a celebration of God's glory as revealed in nature—in the heavens (v. 1), in the sun's course across the sky (v. 4, 6), in the similarities between the sun and a warrior and a bridegroom (v. 5). This revelation has gone out to the entire world so that there is no place where God's revelation is not heard (vv. 2–4). We call this general or natural revelation. Creation itself is revelatory, and this revelation is not sporadic, occasional, or limited to one segment of creation. Rather, God's revelation of himself in creation is pervasive and constant. As C.S. Lewis said, "We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito."⁴

The celebration of general revelation then moves to a celebration of special revelation—the Word of God, the law of the Lord, which revives the soul, makes us wise, delights our hearts, enlightens us, and endures for us (vv. 7–11). So general revelation is God's revelation of himself in creating, sustaining, and governing the world. And special revelation is God's particular revelation through the inerrant and inspired Scriptures. Reflect with me on the relationship between these two forms of revelation.

1. General revelation is the first and foundational revelation upon which all subsequent revelation is built. Special revelation is "special" because it presupposes the existence of general revelation.
2. General revelation has an ontological and epistemological priority over Scripture.⁵ The existence of created reality *and* experiential knowledge of created reality are both necessary in order for Scripture to be intelligible. For example, "the heavens declare the glory of God" is unintelligible apart from the existence of the heavens (ontological priority) and our knowledge of the nature and existence of heavens (epistemological priority). Psalm 19, as special revelation, doesn't mean anything unless the sun blazes up out of the east and moves across the sky, and we've seen it do so.

²The Bethlehem Elder Affirmation of Faith is the governing affirmation of faith for Bethlehem Baptist Church and Bethlehem College & Seminary, where the author teaches. It may be found at <https://bethlehem.church/elder-affirmation-of-faith/>

³As quoted in Barrett, *God's Word Alone*, 45.

⁴C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2017), 101.

⁵For these categories, I'm indebted to Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 44.

⁶Poythress, *Redeeming Science*, 45–46.

3. Special revelation has linguistic priority over general revelation.⁶ The Scriptures, because they use human words, are more direct and therefore more intelligible to us than the revelation of God in nature. In saying that Scripture has a linguistic priority, we are not saying that nature is obscure or unclear. It is clear. The heavens clearly declare the glory of God. Paul tells us that “what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made” (Rom. 1:19-20). The obscurity we may feel about what God is declaring in nature is owing first to the way that God reveals himself in nature. God doesn’t issue direct, linguistic commands through nature. Instead, he creates a natural order that is designed, that has purposes, trends, trajectories. All of creation is governed by God’s fixed and established laws and principles. Then, human beings, through the use of their minds, reflect on this fixed natural order and its trends and trajectories and draw conclusions which they express in human language. So general revelation includes both the fixed natural order as well as human minds to discern and express the import and implications of that order. But that process takes time and effort and maturity, and therefore, Scripture, by giving us God’s revelation in human language, is more direct, even if both Scripture and nature are clear.

Let me illustrate through Jesus’ words about anxiety in Matthew 6. Jesus doesn’t want us to be anxious, so he exhorts us to “consider the birds of the air,” how God provides for their basic needs despite their lack of barns (Matt. 6:26-27). The birds of the air are crystal clear in their witness to God’s provision. But it takes time and effort and maturity to stop and think about the birds and how their needs are met, and how valuable we are relative to them, and to therefore, draw the conclusion that God will provide for us, and to therefore draw the conclusion that we ought not be anxious. It’s all there in nature, in general revelation, but it remains obscure because of our immaturity and creatureliness.

4. Not only does Scripture have a linguistic priority over general revelation owing to our relative immaturity and creatureliness, it has a redemptive priority owing to our sinfulness.⁷ The obscurity of general revelation which we experience is not only owing to the fact that it takes time, effort, and maturity to comprehend God’s revelation in nature; it’s also owing to the Fall. Because of our truth-suppressing rebellion, in our natural state we are deaf to God’s voice and blind to his beauty. Again, Romans 1: even though we know God (through nature), we suppress what we know and we refuse to honor God as God and give thanks to him (Rom. 1:21). The Holy Spirit restores man’s sight through the new birth by means of special revelation. Or, in the words of Psalm 19, it is the law of the Lord which revives the soul and enlightens the eye. Thus, special revelation has both a linguistic priority and a redemptive priority in giving us knowledge of God.

⁷Ibid., 46–47.

*The law of the Lord is
perfect, reviving the soul. . . .
the commandment of the Lord
is pure, enlightening the eyes.”*

PSALM 19:7A, 8B

5. Both general and special revelation are sufficient, but for different things. General revelation is sufficient to condemn us. The authority and clarity of general revelation leaves us without excuse. But it is not sufficient to save us. Only special revelation is sufficient to save, since through it alone, God causes the new birth. He has caused us to be born again *through* the living and abiding Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23).



6. Thus, Scripture and nature are mutually interpreting for each other. They are mutually meaningless without each other and mutually fruitful with each other. You can't understand the Bible rightly without some general revelation. You can't understand nature rightly without the illumination of the Bible. Again Psalm 19 illustrates this point. "More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold. Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Ps. 19:10). You can't know the meaning of that verse unless gold and honey exist, and you've experienced a desire for gold and the sweetness of honey. And you can't experientially make the connection between desiring the Word of God *more* than gold and honey unless God causes you to be born again through special revelation.

In sum, in Scripture and nature, God speaks with one voice. Both general revelation and natural revelation are necessary for us. They are authoritative, clear, and sufficient for different purposes. One is sufficient to condemn. The other is sufficient to save. But they both work together to give us true knowledge of our Creator and Redeemer.

NATURAL REVELATION AND NATURAL LAW

I've written a book trying to outline how general and special revelation work together in the Christian life.⁸ In this essay, I want to briefly talk about the importance of rightly coordinating nature and Scripture in our ethics and discipleship. In particular, I want to commend the need for a robust understanding of natural law and its proper relationship to Scripture.⁹ Often, when people commend natural law, they do so for what they perceive to be its apologetic value. They think, "Modern people reject the Bible, so let's use natural law arguments in our reasoning in the public square." And while there may be truth in this use of natural law, in this essay I'm not commending natural law because of its potential persuasive power in a post-Christian society. Instead, I want to commend its necessity *for Christian discipleship*. Let me begin with a quotation from Chesterton about the nature of insanity.

There is such a thing as a narrow universality; there is such a thing as a small and cramped eternity; you may see it in many modern religions. Now, speaking quite externally and empirically, we may say that the strongest and most unmistakable mark of madness is this combination between a logical completeness and a spiritual contraction. The lunatic's theory explains a large number of things, but it does not explain them in a large way. I mean that if you or I were dealing with a mind that was growing morbid, we should be chiefly concerned not so much to give it arguments as to give it air, to convince it that there was something cleaner and cooler outside the suffocation of a single argument.¹⁰

One of the real dangers in exalting the authority and sufficiency of Scripture is that we would fall into a cramped and narrow sufficiency, a spiritually contracted biblical authority. There is a real danger that we would appeal to Scripture to explain a large number of things, but our appeal would not explain them in a large way. In other words, as those who wish to commend a vision of *biblical* anthropology, it's important that we not only exalt the authority of Scripture, but that we also give it air. And a robust understanding of general revelation and natural law can give it that air.

⁸Joe Rigney, *The Things of Earth: Treasuring God by Enjoying His Gifts* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014).

⁹Recent years have seen a wonderful resurgence in work on natural law from a Protestant perspective. Excellent historical studies may be found in Stephen J. Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); David VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms: A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009). Van Drunen offers his own constructive presentation in David VanDrunen, *Divine Covenants and Moral Order: A Biblical Theology of Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014). An excellent example of early Protestant reflections on natural law may be found in Niels Hemmingsen, *On the Law of Nature: A Demonstrative Method*, trans. E. J. Hutchinson, *Sources in Early Modern Economics, Ethics, and Law, Second Series* (Grand Rapids: CLP Academic, 2018). Additionally, Davenant Press has attempted a multi-volume modernization of Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, which contains a clear articulation of natural law reasoning. Current volumes include Richard Hooker, *Radicalism: When Reform Becomes Revolution: The Preface to Hooker's Laws: A Modernization*, ed. Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2017); Richard Hooker, *Divine Law and Human Nature: Book I of Hooker's Laws: A Modernization*, ed. W. Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2017); Richard Hooker, *The Word of God and the Words of Man: Books II and III of Richard Hooker's Laws: A Modernization*, ed. Bradford Littlejohn et al. (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2018); Richard Hooker, *In Defense of Reformed Catholic Worship: Book IV of Richard Hooker's Laws: A Modernization*, ed. Bradford Littlejohn, Brian Marr, and Bradley Belschner (Lincoln, NE: The Davenant Press, 2018). Finally, a popular-level introduction and defense of natural law may be found in David Haines and Andrew A. Fulford, *Natural Law: A Brief Introduction and Biblical Defense* (New York: The Davenant Press, 2017).

¹⁰G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (GLH Publishing, 2016), 13–14.

Let me get concrete. Often in our moral reasoning, we attempt to ground our ethical teaching in the gospel. We rightly believe that the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus is incomparably relevant to our understanding of ethics and morality. So we lift up the spiritual mystery of marriage—that it is a picture of Christ and the church. However, there are ways of exalting the spiritual meaning of marriage that unintentionally lose sight of the natural meaning of marriage, and thereby hamper, not just Christian apologetics, but Christian discipleship and formation. Sometimes we seek to ground our ethics and obedience in the gospel, not because of our confidence in God’s power, authority, and goodness, but because of our own insecurity. We do so because we think we’re losing the argument in the church or in the wider culture, and therefore we resort to gospel roots as a last-ditch effort to salvage the truth. We’re like the pastor who wrote in the margin of his sermon manuscript, “Argument weak, shout here.” For my own part, I sometimes think that I pick up this retreat-to-gospel-centeredness or insecure-appeal-to-biblical-authority in arguments from complementarians. And I recognize them because I feel this sort of insecurity myself. I think (though I don’t know) that I detect it (or, this kind of argumentation) in others because I’m alert to it in myself.

When we do this, when we adopt a narrow and cramped sufficiency, or an insecure appeal to the gospel—one that is subtly divorced from a robust understanding of God’s revelation in nature—we unwittingly buy into the social constructivism that is the hallmark of modern ethical reasoning. Modern people—whether they have thought through it or not—believe that reality is fundamentally plastic and malleable.¹¹ It’s like play-dough. And they claim that Christians or conservatives or the patriarchy have, in the past, molded the play-dough of reality in an oppressive and self-serving way, and now they want to free people to mold reality in whatever way they choose. We ought to be free to construct our identity and our sexuality. And this way of thinking about malleable reality is so pervasive that even faithful Christians can be subtly catechized into it. We begin to think that ethical reasoning is a fight for who controls the play-dough. Sexual progressives want to mold it in a progressive way. Christian egalitarians want to mold it in an egalitarian way. And we, as conservative evangelicals, want to mold reality in a biblical or complementarian way. But the unstated and implicit assumption is that reality is play-dough. And the insecurity comes because we think we’re losing the fight for control of the play-dough.

¹¹In this section, I’m indebted to the excellent work of Alastair Roberts, “Natural Complementarians: Men, Women, and the Way Things Are,” The Calvinist International (blog), accessed February 8, 2019, <https://calvinistinternational.com/2016/09/13/natural-complementarians-men-women/>.



And this is where a robust understanding of natural law and its proper relationship to Scripture is so important, and where my argument that Scripture speaks with “one voice” all the more important. Christians might live within divided ages, but we do not live in a divided reality. Reality is not play-dough. Nature is not infinitely malleable and plastic. God is the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, and he made a cosmos, an ordered and structured world with a determinate character. Nature is stubborn. By virtue of God’s creating and sustaining acts, nature has an integrity, unity, harmony, and design. There is an immutable givenness to reality that is unavoidable and inescapable despite the best efforts of rebellious humans to subject it to their will.

And this givenness is such that we need not always appeal to Scripture directly to justify Christian ethical teaching. Christian ethical teaching is universal, normative, creational, and natural. There are some things that we need the Bible for. Nature will not tell you that Christ died for sinners and calls you to repentance and faith. You need a Bible for that. But you do not need a Bible to know what a man is, and what a woman is, and what marriage is, and what sex is for. Such things are a part of natural revelation and are sufficiently clear to all men everywhere that our refusal to acknowledge them will condemn us on the last day.

So then, if we don’t need a Bible to know what a man is, and what a woman is, and what marriage is, and what sex is for, then why has God graciously given us a Bible which speaks to these issues, and a gospel which addresses them directly? In other words, how does the Bible or the gospel or special revelation relate to this revelation of God in the natural order? Here’s what I think we can say:

1. The gospel does not *create* a new sexual ethic.
2. Instead, the gospel *ratifies* and *clarifies* the natural, creational sexual ethic.
3. It further *grounds* the natural, creational sexual ethic in the work of Christ (“Honor God with your body, because you were bought with a price;” 1 Cor. 6:20). But this new grounding doesn’t overthrow the original grounding of sexual ethics in the natural order.
4. The gospel provides the *power* to live in accord with the way that God made us. We might put it this

way: Scripture confronts what we are by (fallen) nature (Eph. 2:3: “by nature, children of wrath”) by pointing us to what we are by (created) nature (Rom. 1:26: in our rebellion we do things that are contrary to nature) and by being the means of renewing us in our (redeemed) nature (Eph. 4:22-24: put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness), all in anticipation of our future (glorified) nature.

In my judgment, one of the crying needs of the hour is for Christians to know in their bones that our view of men and women and marriage and sexuality is *not* simply the product of Bible verses, but is itself natural, normative, and universally binding on all people because we live in the world God made.¹² It’s incumbent upon pastors and teachers to instruct the church of God, not only what the Scriptures require, but to point to the reasons beneath the rules that make God’s written laws intelligible and reasonable.¹³ Our social context—what we often call the World—can easily deceive us here. Because the World is moving in one direction, we begin to feel that we are the weird ones. We are the outliers. We begin to believe the propaganda that we are the last holdouts on the wrong side of history. But we’re not the weird ones. Not just God in his Word, but all of heaven and earth testifies to God’s design for men and women and marriage and sexuality.

There is a kind of humble and settled confidence that comes from knowing that, when you embrace the biblical teaching on any subject (and especially sexuality), you are cutting with the grain of created reality, not against it. As we continue to commend to the world a vision of biblical anthropology, we must do so, knowing deep down, that Scripture and nature speak with one voice, the voice of the living God, the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth. ✕

“Nature
is not
infinitely
malleable
and
plastic.”

Joe Rigney is Assistant Professor of
Theology and Literature at Bethlehem
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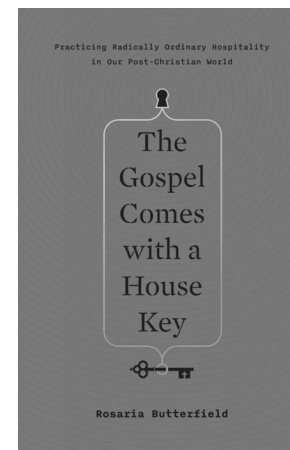
¹²For example, even those outside the church are able to recognize the fact of male headship in every society. See Steven Goldberg, *Why Men Rule: A Theory of Male Dominance* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).

¹³See G. Shane Morris, “Rules Without Reasons: Why the Culture Is Eating Evangelicals for Lunch,” accessed February 8, 2019, <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/troublerofisrael/2018/06/rules-without-reasons/>. One practical effect of recognizing the “reasons beneath the rules” is that we clearly ground a complementarian *ethic* in a complementarian *description* of reality. In my own teaching on the subject, I will often say something to the effect of, “The Bible does not teach that the husband *should* be the head of his home. The Bible teaches that the husband *is* the head of his home, whether he wants to be or not (Ephesians 5:25). Masculine headship is a given. The question is whether it will be *unfaithful* headship (like Adam) or *faithful* headship (like Christ).”

BOOK REVIEWS

LAUREN RAE KONKOL

Making Strangers into Neighbors



THE CENTRALITY OF HOSPITALITY TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

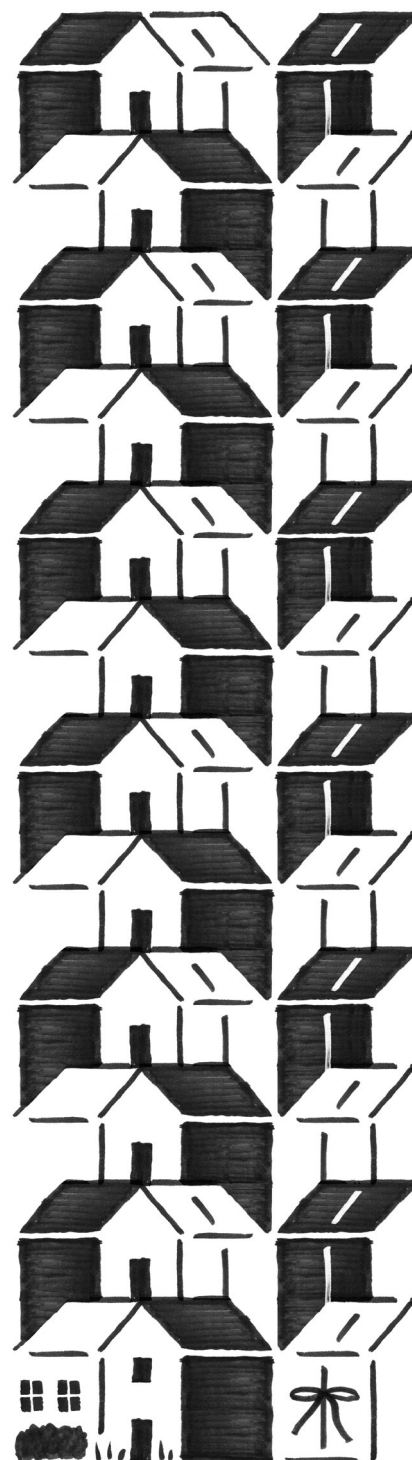
The sweet melody of Psalms put to four-part harmonies; table fellowship over simple soup and loaves of communion bread; children's laughter and muddy feet; and wet shoulders from the tears of grieving neighbors.

This is a glimpse into the intricate yet glorious picture of a Christian home undertaking the call of hospitality—that of welcoming the stranger and seeing the neighbor as family. Biblical hospitality brings to mind one word in particular that encompasses God's vision and purpose for the human person and all of creation—shalom.

Shalom (שלום), the Hebrew word for peace, casts a vision of wholeness, harmony, and flourishing that marks a people in right relationship to their Creator and to each other. On this side of heaven, hospitality, practiced in all of its forms, helps us more clearly anticipate the coming restoration of all things through Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Comes with a House Key, by Rosaria Butterfield, presents a rich theology of hospitality, calling the Christian to see our homes as gifts to be given as safe havens to the broken, lonely, and spiritually destitute, those in genuine need of authentic fellowship and a sense of belonging.

Butterfield offers the term “Radically Ordinary Hospitality” as a framework for understanding daily service and sacrifice for the good of our neighbor, the glory of God, and the proclamation of his gospel. “Radically ordinary hospitality is this,” Butterfield writes. “[It is] using your Christian home in a daily way that seeks to make strangers neighbors, and neighbors family of God” (31). It is marked by open invitations, the disruption of regular routines, and living below our means in order to use God-given resources to serve others. Hospitality is the call of the Christian life and the Christian home, providing a window into the richness and fullness of life with Christ. It is through open homes, willing hearts, and ready hands that God brings his Kingdom to earth.



Long before the Butterfields began their own hospitality ministry, a pastor and his wife—Ken and Floy Smith—modeled to Rosaria intentional, daily table fellowship, the very means by which God rescued Butterfield from the grip of sin and death and beckoned her to follow him. Butterfield’s first book, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*, details her conversion from one living a successful, but Christ-devoid, life as a tenured English professor to one unable to resist the claims of the gospel. One of the striking aspects of Butterfield’s story is the stark contrast she and others have observed between the deep, welcoming, and familial lesbian community and the oft times lack of the same within the Christian faith.

In detailing the AIDS epidemic her community faced, Butterfield reflects in somber tone, “Out of desperation and fear and banding together in spite of our differences, a community was born. . . . I do wonder, now, as a Christian, if the church had been there, had helped, had shared in our grief, how the story would have unfolded differently” (94). One ought never to find more belonging, fellowship, and security

in a sexual identity than in the church of Jesus Christ. If we are to call people out of their sin and into newness of life with Christ, the Christian home must be a place where people find abundantly more sacrificial love, compassion, and bearing of burdens.

Butterfield writes, “Because Christian conversion always comes in exchange for the life you once loved, not in addition to it, people have much to lose in coming to Christ—and some people have more to lose than others. Some people have one cross, and others have ten to carry” (95).

Jesus’ promises in Mark 10 give both hope to the brother or sister leaving this once-loved life and a weighty responsibility to the Christian community they are entering into:

“Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30)



God has chosen to fulfill this glorious, hundredfold blessing through the church, the family of God. Hospitality, and even more fundamentally, true Christian friendship, is at the heart of how we bring life to the world and proclaim the truths of the gospel to people in need of mercy and healing. By opening our homes and lives to our neighbors—many of whom are spiritually poor—we demonstrate that our faith has something powerful to say about every area of our life.

Butterfield continues, “If you want to share the gospel with the LGBTQ community or anyone who will lose family and homes, the gospel must come with a house key” (96). For many of our neighbors, the invitation to our homes may be the first opportunity they have to enter a Christian home and see a cross-shaped life. This is a great privilege to be stewarded with much prayer.

The key to properly understanding Butterfield’s book is correctly distinguishing between its prescriptive and descriptive elements. Some have remarked at the truly radical nature of the Butterfield family’s model of hospitality.

The believer who may have yet to consider the call of hospitality on their own life could easily, and understandably, be overwhelmed by the thought of preparing and hosting neighbors and strangers in their living room every single night of the week—in addition to the countless other ways the Butterfields sacrificially serve their community each and every day.

Butterfield would not have the reader leave her book feeling discouraged or inadequate but, rather, equipped and encouraged to do the hard and joyful work of showing Christ in the most practical ways. Butterfield did not set out to fully detail the endless ways one can be hospitable but beautifully tells one story of how her family has chosen to live out this call to welcome and care for strangers. This can be lived out—in full accordance with the Word of God—in many ways that may look different from the picture Butterfield lays out in her book.

“Start anywhere. Start today,” Butterfield urges. “One logical place to start is at the end of your driveway” (62). Radically ordinary hospitality exists as a ray of hope

*“Start
anywhere.*

*Start
today.”*

restoring dignity to our neighbors—the prisoner, the immigrant and refugee, the drug addict, and the dying.

In an age marked by loneliness and depression, Butterfield encourages the reader to see hospitality as a way of life, putting ourselves in front of people in need: “Know that someone is spared the fear and darkness of depression because she is needed at your house, always on the Lord’s Day, the day she is never alone but instead safely in community where her place at the table is needed and necessary and relied upon” (111).

As God welcomes us as his sons and daughters, calling us his friend, let us do the same with our neighbors, seeing each as worthy of hospitality because they bear the Imago dei. As we do, we await the day when true flourishing—shalom—is the mark of all of creation. ✕

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Review of Cynthia Westfall's *Paul and Gender*

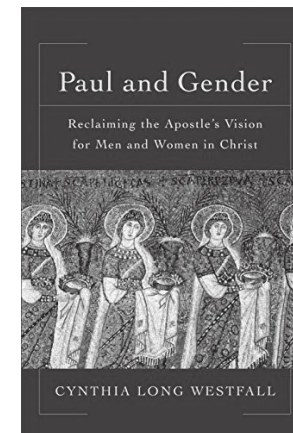
INTRODUCTION

Cynthia Westfall is an assistant professor of New Testament at McMaster Divinity College in Ontario, Canada. She has presented and published broadly on topics related not only to the New Testament, Greek exegesis, and hermeneutics, but also discourse analysis, linguistics, and sociological criticism of the New Testament. In this book, she argues that Paul subverted the contemporary views of his day on women and gender roles through his instruction to the churches.

SUMMARY

On page ix, Westfall states, “This book is an attempt to explain the Pauline passages that concern gender and to move toward a canon-based Pauline theology of gender.” She continues by defining her method of “canon-based theology,” stating, “Biblical texts that claim to be written by Paul demand that they should interpret, and be interpreted by, the other writings that claim to be by Paul.” Though concerned

with contemporary ethical issues regarding the “role of women in the church, home, and society,” Westfall intends to initiate a “paradigm shift from God” (iii) within biblical studies regarding how Paul understood and appropriated gender for his missiological purposes. Westfall gives four reasons for her work: 1) the present importance of gender studies, 2) her own scholarly proficiency with newer methods of analysis, 3) her own personal experience as a female biblical scholar, and 4) her hope of contributing to future debates in gender studies. Throughout her book, Westfall makes a case for re-reading Paul in light of his cultural context (chapter 1) and the gender stereotypes of his day (chapter 2). Additionally, Westfall explores the concepts of creation (chapter 3), fall (chapter 4), and eschatology (chapter 5) in Paul’s writings, giving due attention to theological formulations and ethical instructions regarding gender. Westfall thoroughly considers Paul’s teaching about the body (chapter 6), calling (chapter 7), and authority (chapter 8) before concluding her work by tackling 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (chapter 9).



CRITICAL INTERACTION

Readers should commend Westfall for her attempt to be faithful to the text, her linguistic sensitivity, and her pursuit of a theologically coherent Paul. One of the greatest strengths of her work is how she successfully undermines narrow gender stereotypes. By demonstrating how Paul subverted the stereotypes of his day, Westfall shows that the essence of one’s identity is not bound solely by cultural expectations or expressions. If the apostle Paul can speak of his pastoral ministry in terms of a nurturing mother, then men should not be fearful of denying their masculinity by taking on roles that may be primarily assumed by women, like being a part of the “bride of Christ.” As Westfall notes, “Paul minimizes this essential element of masculine Greco-Roman culture (athletic demonstration) in comparison with the importance of godliness” (186).

Another strength of Westfall’s book is reflected in her chapter on the body in Pauline literature, particularly as it relates to sexuality and beauty. In

contrasting Paul’s view of the body with the Greco-Roman view, Westfall writes, “There needs to be much more discussion about the symbolism of clothing, and there must be authentic spiritual vitality in a rigorous pursuit of godliness that goes far beyond pleasing men” (192). She continues, stating, “The painful reality may be that Christian men similarly influenced by the media will not find a woman who adorns herself with good works attractive. Christians need a wake-up call to rewire their sexual orientation by rejecting narcissism and ideals of beauty that are unnatural, unhealthy, and ungodly” (192). She concludes, “Young women desire a relationship with a man (Gen. 3:16), and in some cases the attempt to fulfill this desire is killing them with eating disorders” (192). These types of theological yet practical reflections on the body are much needed in our day.

Having noted some strengths of Westfall’s work, it is necessary to conclude by considering some of the weaknesses of the work. First, while one can appreciate

Westfall's attempts to reconstruct the background of Paul's letters, she often allows her reconstructions, rather than the immediate context of the passage, to guide her interpretation. Such examples of mirror reading are found in the way that Westfall reads 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. By reconstructing a cultural background for veiling, Westfall attempts to flip the traditional understanding of the passage on its head. However, as other reviewers have pointed out, the context of 1 Corinthians 11 does not seem to support the idea that men were instructing women to unveil their heads as an expression of their sexual availability. Instead, the immediate context suggests the presence of different gender roles in the church. Specifically, Paul instructed the church about veiling in the corporate gathering to reflect an order of relationship between men and women in the context of the ministries of "praying and prophesying."

Another example of allowing reconstruction to dictate her interpretation can be found in the way that she attempts to redefine the purpose of 1 Timothy. By reading 1 Timothy as a personal letter bent on stamping out a particular heresy that was being propagated by women in Ephesus, Westfall avoids the enduring relevance of Paul's command for women "not to teach or exercise authority over a man." If Paul was only dealing with a particular group of women at a particular time, then the instruction could be deemed time-sensitive with a cultural and contextual expiration date. Even if one granted that Paul was attempting to help Timothy deal with false teachers in Ephesus, Westfall still misses Paul's explicit statements in 1 Timothy 3:14-15 and 1 Timothy 4:6-16 about the purpose of his letter. When these statements are coupled with the qualifications and responsibilities of leaders in the church, it would appear

that Paul intended the content of this personal letter to be normative for his churches, making it harder to relegate Paul's prohibition to women regarding teaching and authority in the church.

As a final note of critique, Westfall fails to demonstrate why *authenthein* in 1 Timothy 2:12 should be taken negatively instead of positively. In comparison to Al Wolters' chapter, "The Meaning of *Αὐθεντέω*" in *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, Westfall does not demonstrate equal concern for her understanding of *authenthein*. Wolters' argument for understanding *authenthein* as having predominately positive or neutral connotations provides a devastating blow to the foundation of Westfall's thesis. If Wolters is right, then Westfall's argument for taking *authenthein* negatively (acting in a domineering way) instead of positively (having authority over) falls apart. Yet, even if Westfall is right about *authenthein* having negative connotations, she fails to demonstrate how the term should be understood in relationship to *didaskein* (to teach) or provide an equally compelling rebuttal to Andreas Köstenberger's argument in his chapter, "A Complex Sentence: The Syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church*. In sum, Westfall's work on 1 Timothy 2:11-15 is the weakest link in her argument for a re-reading of the apostle Paul's vision for men and women in Christ.

CONCLUSION

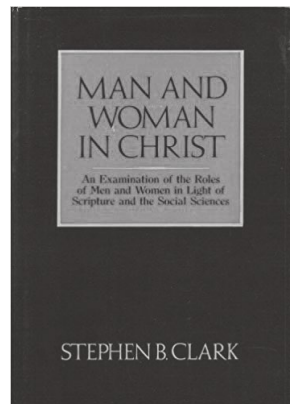
While Westfall's work has undoubtedly made a genuine contribution to Pauline scholarship on the topic of gender, she failed to demonstrate definitively that the apostle Paul was subverting "traditional"

positions on gender. Even if Westfall's work ultimately fails to convince her audience to re-read the apostle Paul on gender, the work still demonstrates the significance of cultural studies for biblical interpretation and ethics. Even readers who disagree will benefit immensely from her work in multiple areas. Even in disagreement, Westfall's work should be commended for its rigor and ambition to interpret the gender passages in Paul's writing in a way that takes the text of Scripture seriously. ✕



Man and Woman in Christ: 40 Years Later

In the mid 1980s a young Southern Seminary student named Albert Mohler was walking across the campus quad with the esteemed professor Dr. Carl F. H. Henry. At one point, the professor asked the student about his views on men's and women's roles, and the young student replied with his view, which was then fashionable among Southern Baptists, that all roles and offices in the church should be open to both men and women. The older Dr. Henry looked over to Mohler and told him that some day he would be embarrassed to believe such a thing. Dr. Mohler once told the next part of the story this way: "My friends, the day that Dr. Carl F. Henry tells you that you'll be embarrassed for believing something is that very day."¹ That night Mohler went to the campus library and searched through the collection, trying to figure out what Dr. Henry meant. After staying up all night reading and studying, Mohler emerged the next morning transformed. He had found a book which powerfully explained and defended, from Scripture itself, the traditional view on the roles of men and women. He had been convinced of the scriptural teaching.



Stephen B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*, Servant Publications, Ann Arbor, MI, 1980.

¹ CBMW Annual Banquet Address, Providence, RI, Nov. 2017.

Dr. Mohler had found a large tome published in 1980 by a small Ann Arbor, MI publishing house, written by the Charismatic Roman Catholic author Stephen B. Clark, and titled *Man and Woman in Christ: An Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and the Social Sciences*. Thirty-nine years since its publication this book remains incredibly relevant, filled with unexpected insights and raising questions of application that we still have not resolved today. Though labored in places, Clark's writing often has a freshness and vitality that is difficult to describe, as well as a deep connection with real life the way people actually live it.

Clark's book is divided into four sections which 1) exegete the scriptural teaching on the sexes, 2) show how this scriptural teaching was applied in the culture of the first century AD, 3) consider the challenges and prospects for applying the scriptural teaching to modern society, and 4) make practical recommendations. Clark's exegetical work feels at once familiar and foreign. Familiar, since pieces of it have become the standard complementarian reading, but foreign because it is embedded in a larger social and theological framework. Clark goes to great lengths to show how the Bible presents its teachings on manhood and womanhood as permanent instructions for how humanity is to live together and flourish, instructions grounded in both creational and redemptive realities.

Complementarian readers can benefit from two distinctive features of Clark's book generally not found in later works: 1) a comprehensive survey of social science findings regarding sex differences and their relation to the biblical teaching, and 2) a study of how manhood and womanhood are realized in the different social structures of the first century vs. the twentieth century.

Nearly 100 pages of the work is devoted to a survey of social science findings regarding sex differences between men and women. Clark demonstrates at length that social scientific methods *do* show significant cross-cultural sex differences and he addresses common objections like "aren't these differences just cultural?" and "doesn't it just depend upon how boys and girls are raised?" For example, across all cultures and ages, men are somewhat more interested in *accomplishing goals* and women are somewhat more interested in *caring for personal needs*. Men are generally more aggressive, form broader and shallower social groups, and are stronger in visual-spatial reasoning. Women, on the other hand, are generally more nurturing, have stronger verbal abilities, form smaller and deeper social groups, and experience more anxiety. These natural differences lead to universal social patterns in which, "women bear primary responsibility for domestic management and the rearing of young children...[and] men [have] a primary responsibility for the government of larger groupings within the society" (413).

This only scratches the surface of Clark's analysis. Overall, he shows the deep harmony between the created natural structures as we observe them through the social sciences and the biblical teaching about manhood and womanhood. He writes "these differences do not surface randomly, but instead cluster in a coherent pattern" (439) which fits the social roles God assigned to the sexes in creation. It strengthens our understanding of God's purposes in the world to see that man and woman together are creational realities, felt and realized in lived experience. Clark's assessment is not reductionistic, but rather is carefully nuanced, insightfully connected to the biblical account, and has been confirmed by more recent social scientific studies.²

The second distinctive contribution of Clark's book is his examination of societal differences between the first

and twentieth century, along with the complexities of application that these differences create. In the first century, the family, church, and society were thought of as a network of *personal relationships*. The church was a *community* rather than a functional service provider. It wasn't a building where consumers could come to receive religious services. It wasn't organized through programs administered by employees. Church leaders were, instead, heads of a community of persons in real relationship with one another. Their titles were "shepherds," "overseers," and "governors." Their government wasn't tyrannical, but it was personal—more like a father than like a courthouse clerk. The church was a family—the household of God. Insofar as the church ceases to be familial and instead becomes consumerist or commercial, different roles for the different sexes will make less and less sense.

²See, for example, David Schmitt, et. al., "Personality and Gender in Global Perspective," *International Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 52, No. S1, 45-56, 2017; Roy F. Baumeister, *Is There Anything Good About Men?*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, 2010; and Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood, "Social Role Theory," in Paul A. M. Van Lange, et. al., *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, SAGE Publications Ltd., London, 458-476, 2012.



Instead of community and hierarchy being in conflict, Clark compellingly shows that true biblical community requires and benefits from hierarchy. Subordination of some members to others *ensures* a unity within the grouping. When a head governs and a body complies there is a true *unity* present between the parts. Having a functional head, to which the other parts are subordinate, enables the whole to act *cooperatively*.

Clark insightfully assesses how the application of the biblical model to the twenty-first century is fraught with difficulty. In a society where impersonal job descriptions have replaced personal relationships, it is hard to see how to implement the biblical model. Clark acknowledges that when the household functions are outsourced (education, nutrition, food production, clothing production, counseling, health care, elder care, etc.) it does not automatically make sense for women to stay out of the wage economy. Women want to work at those *caring* activities, and we all have to deal with the real limitations of the society we are born into. Though he wrote well before *The Benedict Option*, Clark recognized that a key way forward was for the people of God, in whatever counter-cultural communities they are able to establish, to seek to live out the biblical model. A restoration of *household functions* is an integral part of that renewal project. The results will be a more *human* way of living, one in accordance with our maker's intention, and which produces satisfaction in the lives of His people.³

Forty years after its original publication, Clark's book remains a valuable resource both for understanding the timeless truths of our manhood and womanhood as well as living out their reality in our twenty-first century context. ✕

"When a head governs and a body complies there is a true unity present between the parts."

³For more on the changing of the household from a pre-industrial to post-industrial form see Allan Carlson, *The Natural Family Where it Belongs*, Transaction Publishers, 2014.

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CATHERINE PARKS AND
PALMER WILLIAMS ON

Human Dignity, Repentance, and #MeToo



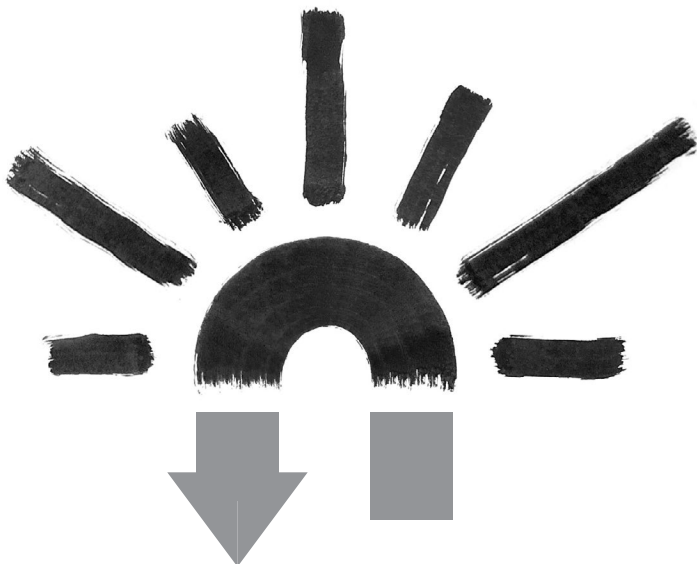
Palmer, as a human dignity attorney who has focused heavily on sanctity of life issues, I'm sure you watched with dread as the New York legislature passed—and celebrated—a late-term abortion bill this past January. What, in your view, is causing the shift from the former “safe, legal, and rare” abortion mindset to the shift of seeing abortion as a positive good with no need for any stigma whatsoever?

I think it's not very surprising that some advocates are shifting to a viewpoint of celebrating abortion and ridiculing any and all restrictions. As technology advances and it becomes clearer that human life at every stage of development—no matter how early—is a new life worthy of protection and care, advocates have to answer certain questions to justify positions they've long held. But I think this is as important a time as any to remind ourselves that our fight is not against the legislator in New York or Virginia or the advocates celebrating in the gallery. Our fight is against principalities and powers who convince one political tribe to deny the personhood and dignity of the unborn child while convincing the other political tribe to deny the personhood and dignity of the immigrant or refugee. A former president (George W. Bush) and a former Planned Parenthood clinic director turned pro-life advocate (Abby Johnson) have both expressed similar sentiments—while we must work in politics, policy, and law to make abortion rarer and less legal, our work won't stop until we make abortion unthinkable. That means we need to befriend and listen to those who are painting the town pink in New York. That means we need to double down on serving our pregnancy resource centers who care for vulnerable women, children, and men uncertain whether they are strong enough to care for that child. That means we need to have churches walking alongside mothers, fathers, and babies—giving them the support they need to show them they are stronger than they ever imagined because there is a Lord who is more gracious and loving than we can ever imagine.

We have to love the mothers and fathers and babies and political opponents. We have to love the unborn babies, the immigrants, and the refugees.

Catherine, you recently published a book *Real: The Surprising Secret to Deeper Relationships*. In it, you talk a lot about the centrality of repentance. Can you explain why repentance is central to deep relationships?

The first of Martin Luther's 95 Theses said, "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent,' he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance." In our modern context, many churches rightly emphasize the necessity of repentance for salvation, but we don't always emphasize the need for a regular practice of confessing sin and turning away from it. But when practiced rightly, repentance leads us to the cross, reminds us of our forgiveness in Christ, and causes us to rejoice. Living in this freedom allows us to be open and honest in our relationships—if we've already been forgiven in Christ, why would we attempt to cover up our sin before others? Instead, we get to remind each other of what is true and pray for one another as we fight our sin together.



Question for you both: One of the guiding frameworks for CBMW's new *Eikon Journal* is the idea that biblical anthropology helps provide a framework for a more robust human dignity ethic. When we talk about human dignity and the image of God, how do you each describe that relationship?

Catherine: Last year our family went to Yellowstone National Park, where we stood in awe at creation, from geysers to mountains to waterfalls to prismatic springs. It's easy to worship God when surrounded by such incredible sights. Yet, none of those things bear His image. God chose to create us—humanity—to bear His image. This means that each person is more magnificent than the most incredible sunset or the rarest flower. When I look at another human being, no matter his or her ability or mental capacity or status, I'm looking at a marvel of creation. Our very existence points us to the glory of God, not because of what we can do, but because of what He is like. Our dignity springs from His glory, and it's represented in every person, from the tiniest unborn child to the elderly person with dementia.

Palmer: Amen, Catherine. As Christians, our recognition of the *Imago dei* in every human being is what allows us to live out a counter-cultural ethos that a human's worth springs inherently from that image of God imprinted in them, rather than their usefulness.

Question for both: When it comes to the #MeToo movement, is there a distinctly Christian response to the moment we are in where Christianity is able to positively contribute to the broader themes emerging from #MeToo?

Catherine: Every human being is made in God's image and has human dignity. At the same time, not everyone in society occupies the same position of authority or influence. As Christians, we understand that authority is a function of living under God's plan for the world, but that no person should have unchecked power or use their status to manipulate someone, especially those who are vulnerable. One of the things the #MeToo movement has shown is that, for far too long, those in positions of authority have used their power wrongly; they've used their position as an excuse to do whatever they want. In the Gospels, we see Jesus taking the form of a servant and leveraging His power for the weak and vulnerable. He is our model for how we should steward positions of authority and power to serve those in our care, and His actions are as counter-cultural now as they were then. It is imperative that we model this type of power at the congregational level.

Palmer: The church in America—especially in the South—in 2019 has to ask itself some serious, soul-searching questions about which of its practices and perspectives are biblical and which are cultural. And we are suffering the tragic consequences as we see more and more children of God abused, fomenting sin and corruption in the process. When we elevate that which is cultural to a place of biblical and theological warrant, the oppressed are silenced and the predators gain more power. The reckoning is here now, and the church will be judged by how we respond. As well we should be. ✕

Palmer Williams is a lawyer focusing on issues of human dignity. Catherine Parks is an author of several books. Both live in Nashville, Tennessee.

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*Know that the LORD
Himself is God;
It is He who has made
us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the
sheep of His pasture.*

PSALM 100:3, NASB



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