

THE JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL
JB MW
MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

ARTICLES INCLUDE:

Defenders of Women

Susan Hunt

Raunch Culture Rip-Off

Carolyn McCulley

The Power of a Consecrated Life

Lived Out in The Ministry of Miss Lottie Moon (Romans 12:1)

Daniel L. Akin

What's at Stake: "It's Hermeneutics!"

Margaret Köstenberger

Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles:

Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the

Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead

Bruce A. Ware



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AND WOMANHOOD**

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The purpose of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood is to set forth the teachings of the Bible about the complementary differences between men and women, created equal in the image of God, because these teachings are essential for obedience to Scripture and for the health of the family and the Church.

CBMW is a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability and the National Association of Evangelicals

Table of Contents

STANDARD FARE

- 2 Editorial
- 5 Odds & Ends
- 11 Letters

ESSAYS & PERSPECTIVES

- 12 **Raunch Culture Rip-Off**
Carolyn McCulley
- 20 **How Shall We Speak of God?**
Seven Reasons Why We Cannot Call God "Mother"
Randy L. Stinson and Christopher W. Cowan
- 24 **Defenders of Women**
Susan Hunt
- 31 **Answering Lottie Moon's Cry:**
A Call for Dialogue On the Role of Women in Missions
David Kotter
- 36 **What's at Stake: "It's Hermeneutics!"**
Margaret Köstenberger

STUDIES

- 43 **Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles:**
Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the
Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead
Bruce A. Ware
- 59 **Complementarianism and Eschatology:**
Engaging Gordon Fee's "New Creation" Egalitarianism
Everett Berry

FROM THE SACRED DESK

- 69 **The Power of a Consecrated Life**
Lived Out in The Ministry of Miss Lottie Moon (Romans 12:1)
Daniel L. Akin

GENDER STUDIES IN REVIEW

- 79 **Is This Good News for Women?**
A Review of Carolyn Custis James, *The Gospel of Ruth*
Jennifer J. Naselli
- 82 **What Are Little Boys Made of?**
A Review of Leonard Sax, *Boys Adrift*
Christopher W. Cowan
- 86 **Sliding the Slippery Slope**
A Review of Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*
Robert E. Sagers
- 88 **Getting to the Heart of Manhood and Womanhood**
A Review of John Ensor, *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart*
James K. Dew Jr.
- 90 **How to Discern a Lie**
A Review of Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Dannah Gresh,
Lies Young Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free
Lorie Looney Keene
- 92 **Annotated Bibliography for Gender-Related Books in 2007**
Barak Tjader and Christopher W. Cowan

Editorial: A High-Profile Conversion to Egalitarianism

Denny Burk

Editor, Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood

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Irving Bible Church (IBC) is a large evangelical congregation in the metro area of Dallas, Texas. Over the years, IBC has been the church home for many professors, administrators, and students of Dallas Theological Seminary and is commonly associated with the constituency of that school. Both the church and the seminary have an historic commitment to the complementarian position.¹

Beginning in 2006, however, the elders of IBC began a year and a half long reconsideration of the church's stance on the gender issue—the results of which were published in the Spring of 2008 on the church's website.² On page two of a 24-page position paper titled “Women and Ministry at IBC,” the elders summarize their findings as follows:

- (1) The accounts of creation and the fall (Genesis 1-3) reveal a fundamental equality between men and women.
- (2) Women exercised significant ministry roles of teaching and leading with

God's blessing in both Old and New Testaments.

(3) Though the role of women was historically limited, the progress of revelation indicates an ethic in progress leading to full freedom for women to exercise their giftedness in the local church.

(4) Key New Testament passages restricting women's roles were culturally and historically specific, not universal principles for all time and places.

(5) Though women are free to use all of their giftedness in teaching and leading in the church, the role of elder seems to be biblically relegated to men.

Several things are clear from these findings. The elders have clearly moved the church to an egalitarian-friendly position, despite their limiting the role of elder to men. That the office of elder only “seems” to be limited to men suggests that the elders are less than certain about their conclusion on this

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point. What is perhaps most significant here is the fact that the elders have adopted a trajectory hermeneutic in their understanding of the relevant biblical texts.

The process that led to these findings included consultations with various professional theologians. The elders write on the IBC website that, “we sought godly counsel, and invited three professors from Dallas Theological Seminary . . . [each one] representing different positions on the issue to present their studies and insights to us.”³

A testimonial published in the church’s newsletter reveals that one of those professors, Dr. Robert Pyne, advocated a thoroughgoing egalitarian position to the elders. The essay is titled “Why I Changed My Mind,” and in it Pyne writes,

When I was a theology professor, people frequently asked me about the role of women in ministry. I used to tell them I held to “complementarianism,” a word with far too many syllables. The label stands for a belief that, while women and men have equal dignity and value, they occupy distinct roles in church and in the home. Proponents of this position believe the Bible places restrictions on a woman’s service in the body of Christ. I no longer believe that, and I now attend a church with a female senior pastor. Clearly something has changed, but it was not my view of biblical authority. My interpretation of the Bible, however, has been recently renovated.

The “renovation” of Pyne’s view stems in part from his embrace of a trajectory hermeneutic in his reading of scripture. This fact comes out as he explains his conversion to the egalitarian view *vis a vis* his reading of certain sections of the Old Testament:

The Law of God was never meant to represent God’s ideal.... The Law was a transitional ethic for those who had a long way to go on the journey of faith.... If the Law does not fully express God’s ideal, might something similar be happening with other ethical passages of Scripture, even in the New Testament?

Pyne answers this last question in the affirmative, arguing that the Bible’s commands sometimes represent a “transitional ethic” that should not be applied universally for all times and cultures. He writes,

A transitional ethic acknowledges a move from biblical command to biblical ideal. It embraces the spirit of the law over the letter of the law. It encourages a shift from careful restriction to broad encouragement.... May we all join in the movement toward God’s ideal as we celebrate both women and men participating fully in the kingdom of God.

What should we make of the changes at IBC, and why is it a topic worth mentioning in this journal?

First of all, theology has consequences for the pews.⁴ The theology shaping the shift at IBC appears to be coming from a trajectory hermeneutic like the one that William Webb advances in his watershed book *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*.⁵ Points three and four of the elders’ findings say that the biblical texts on gender represent an “ethic in progress.” The elders say that even though there may be patriarchal affirmations in scripture, those affirmations are “culturally and historically specific, not universal principles for all time and places.” It would appear that Webb’s book has had a shaping influence on both the conversion of Pyne and the findings of the IBC elders. It is remarkable that Webb’s hermeneutic continues to have an impact seven years after the publication of his controversial book. Theology does have consequences, and once again we are reminded that the gender debate has never been a merely academic exercise.

Second, IBC has essentially moved to an egalitarian position. The adoption of the trajectory hermeneutic is the crossing of a theological “Rubicon,” as it were. How one reads the relevant biblical texts will have more of a determinative influence in the long run than the vestigial affirmation of a male-only eldership. Even though the office of elder still “seems” to be limited to men, that proscription cannot survive for long. Going forward, it is diffi-

cult to imagine how biblical directives about male-only elders can withstand the logic of a trajectory hermeneutic. Eventually, all apparent limitations will be deemed as reflecting a “transitional ethic” that no longer applies to contemporary culture.

Third and finally, the trajectory hermeneutic remains a threat to the functional authority of the Bible in the life of God’s people. Wayne Grudem’s warning in this regard is still relevant: “Webb’s trajectory hermeneutic nullifies in principle the moral authority of the entire New Testament and thus contradicts the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*.”⁶ For this reason, we do not view the changes at IBC with indifference. The situation is a matter of grave moral concern because it amounts to a setting aside of the clear teachings of scripture (e.g., 1 Tim 2:12) in favor of misguided hermeneutical criteria. Perhaps more than ever before, it is clear that this debate is unfolding as a contention about the authority of scripture itself.

The gender debate is far from over. What we conclude about these matters has profound practical implications for both the church and the home. Even if certain sectors of the larger evangelical culture regard these matters as passé, we do not. There is far too much at stake.

ENDNOTES

¹DTS’s academic catalog and an in-house position paper affirm a complementarian stance.

²The results of their study were published online at the church’s website at <http://www.irvingbible.org/index.php?id=1259>. A 24-page position paper summarizing the results of the elders’ study was also posted under the title “Women and Ministry at IBC” [cited 14 August 2008]. Online: http://www.irvingbible.org/fileadmin/pdf/special_sections/women_ministry/women_ministry_IBC.pdf.

³Dr. Robert Pyne was the only one of the three DTS professors that was identified as an egalitarian. Though Pyne left the faculty of DTS in 2007, he was serving as a faculty member during his consultation with IBC elders.

⁴The egalitarian shift at IBC, in fact, provoked a response from another area Bible church. Pastor Tommy Nelson of Denton Bible Church hosted a Complementarian series of sermons in part as a response to what was going on at IBC. The three messages were delivered by Tommy Nelson, Bruce Ware, and Russell Moore, and they can be downloaded for free online at <http://www.cbmw.org/Denton-Bible-Church-June-2008>.

⁵William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001).

⁶Wayne Grudem, “Should We Move Beyond the New Testament to a Better Ethic?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47 (2004): 301.

Odds & Ends

Andreas Köstenberger Responds to Philip Payne on 1 Timothy 2:12

My findings regarding the syntax of 1 Tim 2:12 in the first edition of *Women in the Church* were widely accepted even among feminist scholars (though, of course, they still do not agree with the book's overall thrust on other grounds). There has been a recent exception, though, in the case of Philip B. Payne, who recently published an article in the journal *New Testament Studies* ("1 Tim 2.12 and the Use of οὐδε, to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea," *NTS* 54 [2008]: 235–53). In my 1995 essay in the first edition, I provided a thorough critique of Payne's earlier unpublished 1988 paper on *oude*. Now Payne, in turn, has responded to my study, claiming that nine of the over 100 syntactical parallels to 1 Tim 2:12 I presented do not match the pattern. I will respond in detail to Payne's article in a forthcoming publication, *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles* (Broadman & Holman). In brief, let me say, however, that, first, even if Payne is right and nine of the over 100 instances don't fit the overall pattern, that would still be an over 90 percent success rate!

What is more, I carefully looked at Payne's article and each of the nine instances he discusses, and I found that Payne's analysis does not hold true. Essentially, he seems to be operating on the basis of the notion that verbs are "positive" or "negative" largely in and of themselves. More properly, however, verbs convey a positive or negative connotation *in context*. For example, one of the nine instances in which Payne disputes the validity of my argument is 2 Thess 3:7–8 ("For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because *we were not idle* when we were with you, *nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it*, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you"). I maintained that both being idle and eating others' bread without paying

for it are viewed negatively by the author (Paul). Payne objects that there's nothing wrong with accepting "free meals," so here one negative and one positive verb are joined. I continue to maintain that, in context, "eating anyone's bread without paying for it" is viewed by Paul negatively, as is made clear by the following clause "that we might not be a burden to any of you" (clearly not viewed positively by Paul).

For this reason, I would argue that Payne's rebuttal is itself invalid and that my original conclusion stands. The other eight instances Payne cites can be answered similarly, and I have done this in the forthcoming publication mentioned above. For now, I'm content to let the reader decide if Payne's argument with regard to 2 Thess 3:7–8 is convincing or not. That's the beautiful thing about scholarship, isn't it, especially in the age of blogs and the internet? In the end the most compelling argument will prevail, and people must make up their own mind on a given issue based on the strength of the evidence. It's not a matter of oratory or rhetorical skill, but of substance and the most likely explanation of the available evidence.

[The foregoing originally appeared online in an interview with Andy Naselli about the second edition of *Women in the Church*: <http://theological.blogspot.com/2008/07/interview-with-andreas-j-ksterberger-on.html>.]

- Andreas Köstenberger

Another Response to Philip Payne

At an alumni symposium held last Spring at Wheaton College, Philip Payne rendered an opinion on the state of contemporary evangelicalism—an opinion which consists largely of an indictment of complementarian interpreters of the Bible. Here is a transcription of his remarks, followed by a brief response.

Philip Payne, class of 1969. My field is New Testament studies, and I agree with what John Piper has said. There has been in my opinion a hollowing of the trunk of theology. And it concerns me. But I think part of the fault is due to some of us in that we have misrepresented the truth of the Bible in a way that has led to a rejection of the Bible as truth. Two examples:

One, in the nineteenth century there was a defense of slavery by the church using the Bible which led to a dismissive view of the Bible in that era.

Number two, there has been in the twentieth century and the twenty-first century a defense of the subordination of women, leading to hatred of Paul by the feminist movement. And sadly much of the exegetical defense of that position has been based on lies, misrepresentation of the data.

There's an article that just came out in *New Testament Studies* that I authored in which I pointed out a couple of scholars . . . from the evangelical movement . . . who have misstated the data in order to convince. Sometimes, because we haven't had the intellectual rigor and the commitment to truth, scholars have been willing to say, "The end justifies the means. I can twist the data in order to make it say what I think it means."

And I think it's as we come to a commitment to understanding and exegeting God's word truly that we will be able to undermine some of these traps which have caused people to hate the Bible and instead to open up a greater willingness to listen to God's word and let that shape it ("Changes in Evangelicalism Over the Last 40 Years," Wheaton Alumni Symposium [May 10, 2008]. Online: <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/MediaPlayer/2750/Audio>. The remarks from Payne begin at 58:39).

In light of Köstenberger's forthcoming response to Payne's article (see above), we will leave aside for the moment the exegetical discussion of

1 Tim 2:12. But what does deserve our attention here is Payne's transparent concern about how the wider culture views evangelical interpretations of the Bible. Payne has missed a crucial difference between the slavery issue in the nineteenth century and the gender issue in our own day. In the nineteenth century, the wider culture was by and large not scandalized by slavery, and thus the abolitionist movement began as a distinctly countercultural phenomenon. If Christian abolitionists had been overly concerned about what the wider culture thought about their views, perhaps slavery would still be with us. Aren't we all grateful that the abolitionists stood against the culture for the sake of the culture when it came to slavery?

Likewise, contemporary evangelicals cannot look to prevailing cultural mores to adjudicate what is and what is not true *vis a vis* the gender debate. It is true that the egalitarian view is more amenable to the spirit of the age. But that fact is hardly a reason for concluding that egalitarianism is true. On the contrary, it may very well be a sign that it is not.

Complementarianism is a decidedly countercultural posture in our day. We believe it to be a faithful summary of the Bible's teaching on gender and a necessary condition of faithful Christian discipleship. Even though feminists and the wider culture may despise us for it, we can nevertheless teach and live what we believe the Bible enjoins.

In addition, Payne's charge that "a couple of scholars . . . from the evangelical movement . . . have misstated the data in order to convince" and that "[s]ometimes, because we haven't had the intellectual rigor and the commitment to truth, scholars have been willing to say, 'The end justifies the means. I can twist the data in order to make it say what I think it means'" is an *ad hominem* argument that is unworthy of a serious scholar. Who are those "couple of scholars" Payne has in mind? A perusal of his article suggests that one of these scholars appears to be Andreas Köstenberger, author of the definitive study on the syntax of *oude* in 1 Tim 2:12. Now Payne certainly has a right to disagree with Köstenberger's findings on the subject, but it is inappropriate for him to charge, by insinuation,

Köstenberger and other non-egalitarian scholars with “misstating the data to convince,” with lacking “intellectual rigor and the commitment to truth,” and with operating on the premise that “[t]he end justifies the means. I can twist the data in order to make it say what I think it means.” This sounds more like partisan politics than scholarly discourse and is precisely the kind of rhetoric that should be avoided by those engaged in scholarly discourse on the gender issue.

- Denny Burk

C. S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian*, and Women in Combat

The big screen version of *Prince Caspian*, the second film installment of C. S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, was released in theaters last Spring. One significant difference between Lewis's book and the Disney film caught my attention. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, though Father Christmas gave Susan and Lucy Pevensie weapons, he did not intend for them to use them in battle, for “battles are ugly when women fight.” In the film version, this is altered to “battles are ugly affairs.” Thus, the question of women in combat is neatly avoided.

Not so in *Prince Caspian*. Unlike the book, the film clearly depicts Susan as a warrior, actively engaging in physical combat alongside her brothers. When asked about this deviation from Lewis's story, director Andrew Adamson responded,

When the issue of Susan not participating in the fight for Narnia was introduced in the first film, I rejected it then. I was like, “Well if she's just gonna make sandwiches then give her a plate and a knife.” It's something that I don't agree with so I wasn't going to make a movie like that (Megan Basham, “The Return of the Lion,” *World*, 17 May 2008).

On whether or not this change is a disservice to Lewis's work, Adamson continues, “You have to remember, these books were written in a different time and place by somebody who I think evolved in his views over the years.” Adamson justified this to

Lewis's stepson and film co-producer Douglas Gresham by arguing, “I think C. S. Lewis evolved after meeting [Gresham's] mother, and that's why you start to see stronger female characters in his later books.”

Regardless of the relative merits of the film as a whole, what is one to make of Adamson's interpretation regarding this particular issue?

(1) It was not until I read the *World* article that I realized anyone actually made claims about the “evolution” of C. S. Lewis's thoughts on gender. However, having read some recent debate on this very issue, I remain unconvinced that Lewis's later writings reflect an embrace of gender egalitarianism. In the end, of course, this question will remain unanswered, since Lewis is unavailable for questioning. Regardless, though, it seems the question was really moot from the start, for Adamson confesses, “It's something that I don't agree with so I wasn't going to make a movie like that.” Ultimately, then, modern views eschewing any notion of gender roles for men and women won the day.

(2) Recently, Douglas Gresham was interviewed by Rebecca Cusey for National Review Online (“Crowning *Prince Caspian*: Behind the Movie,” 16 May 2008). Gresham admits that Adamson persuaded him that “Lewis's attitude toward women changed to some extent after he married my mother.” (However, the anecdote Gresham shares does little to convince that Lewis had changed his views of male headship as taught in Scripture.) What I found most interesting, though, is how Gresham responds to the thought of a world where women take part in battles.

That becomes a very difficult thing to define. I don't really think women should be involved in active combat. I don't think it's fair for the men who are fighting beside them, or the men who are fighting against them. And it's not fair for the women themselves. I think the idea that women have to become men in our current society is a very bad one.

(3) Adamson contends that one starts to see “stronger female characters” in Lewis's later books.

But what is meant by *stronger*? In *Prince Caspian*, Lucy sees Aslan, who beckons for the children to follow him. The other children are unable to see him, though, and reject Lucy's appeals. Eventually, they relent and take the route to which Lucy (and Aslan) pointed.

In the print version, Lucy's fortitude is much more evident (a fact strangely absent in the film). When she sees the lion a second time, he commands her to tell the others to follow. But even if they will not, Aslan urges, "Then you at least must follow me alone." Lucy is shaken by the prospect of telling people "something they probably won't believe and making them do something they certainly won't like." But she is resolute to follow Aslan in spite of her fears. Thus, when she wakes the others and urges them to follow, Lucy proclaims "in a tremulous voice,"

And I do hope that you will come with me. Because—because I'll have to go with him whether anyone else does or not.

Lucy is presented as a model of steadfast faith in the face of adversity. After she apologizes to Aslan for not obeying him the first time and announces her determination to follow him, he tells her, "Now you are a lioness. And now all Narnia will be renewed." Lewis chooses a female protagonist to play a crucial role (and not "just make sandwiches") in the overall effort to win back Narnia. It is difficult to see how anyone would not regard her as a "strong female character."

Unless, of course, women are only considered "strong" when they act like men.

- Christopher W. Cowan

California Ruling on Gay Marriage is Revolutionary and Radical

In May 2008, the California Supreme Court fired what was, shocking for many, an unexpected shot across the bow when its judges ruled 4–3 to strike down the state's ban on gay marriage.

This action overturns Proposition 22, which Golden State voters overwhelmingly approved in 2000 to protect the traditional definition of mar-

riage. The ruling came as a result of a lawsuit filed by gay rights groups alleging that they were unlawful victims of discrimination. California authorities are now required to issue same-sex marriage licenses. California voters will likely have another opportunity to protect marriage in the November election when the electorate will consider a proposed constitutional amendment.

Shannon Minter, attorney for one of the plaintiffs in the case, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, called last week's ruling "a moment of pure happiness and joy for so many families in California."

"California sets the tone, and this will have a huge effect across the nation to bringing wider acceptance for gay and lesbian couples," he said.

Minter's comment seems to get to the heart of the original intent of the lawsuit: homosexual activists are hoping that the California ruling will have a domino effect on the rest of the nation and will lead to a *carte blanche* affirmation of same-sex marriage. R. Albert Mohler Jr., CBMW Council Member, said the ruling by activist judges is comprehensive and drastic; the ruling imbues "sexual orientation" with protected status equal to biological factors such as gender and race:

By a one-vote margin, their state Supreme Court renounced the will of the people. The ruling is both revolutionary and radical. It sets the stage for a much broader reorganization of human society.

Chief Justice Ronald M. George, writing for the majority, pushed the argument for same-sex marriage far beyond where any court had taken it before. The decision identified marriage as a 'fundamental right,' thus opening the door for infinite challenges beyond same-sex marriage.

The court also declared sexual orientation to be a class protected by a 'strict scrutiny' test of all legislation and regulation. In so doing, the California court became the first in the nation to apply this test on the basis of sexual orienta-

tion. This move also opens the door for much broader challenges to laws and regulations across the board.

California voters will have another opportunity to protect marriage in November, when a proposed constitutional amendment will come before the electorate. The stakes now could not be higher.

Scripture is unambiguous regarding the place of honor that marriage—as biblically defined—must hold within the city of man among those whose future hope lies in the City of God: “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” (Heb 13:4)

As Mohler pointed out, there is indeed much at stake in the California ruling and the possibility of a marriage amendment in November 2008 in that state.

- Jeff Robinson

Manliness of Thought

I was reminded how much language has changed while reading the latest issue of *Modern Age*. One article cites Russell Kirk writing in the mid-1950's about the need for a new serious journal of opinion (which eventually became *Modern Age*). Kirk had stated that the new journal would attempt to conserve

the intellectual traditions, the free constitutions, and the old heartiness of our civilized society; it would be forthrightly opposed to political collectivism, social decadence, and effeminacy in thought and literature.... It would not be ashamed of an avowed prejudice in favor of religion, in favor of prescriptive justice, in favor of liberty under law, in favor of the wisdom of our ancestors, in favor of manliness in thought and society. But it would not be afraid to face the problems of our age.

- Ray Van Neste

Harvey Mansfield on Manliness

Harvey Mansfield's book, *Manliness* (Yale University, 2006), is a significant contribution to the wider discussion on gender roles and deserves a good hearing from the readership of this journal. It is true that it is not grounded in a biblical worldview (as previously noted in the 2006 *JBMW* Annotated Bibliography), but it is important and helpful to note when others share our concerns. This book is a strong challenge to the pursuit of a gender-neutral society. Simply, the fact that Mansfield, political science professor at Harvard, wrote such a book in our current climate qualifies him for “manliness.” Even though we would say he does not get all the pieces straight, he does make some very good and very important points—and does it with a flourish that makes reading enjoyable.

Mansfield challenges, head on, the current pursuit of a gender-neutral society, a pursuit which is largely taken for granted today. He addresses the findings of social sciences while also noting the fundamental shortcomings of such science, critiquing their attempt to deny manliness and to rename it “masculinity.” Mansfield's jabs at science for its inability to quantify the intangibles of life, its inability to deal with the soul of matters are of the sort which could make C. S. Lewis smile. In fact, his critique of Darwinism is itself worthy of reading on various levels. Mansfield is also instructive in calling us to look to literature and history more than to current science when seeking to understand humanity. There is much good to be gleaned from this book.

One place where Mansfield does miss it is in his juxtaposition of manliness and the life of the mind, between the man of action and the poet (p. 20, and elsewhere). This contrast is a common one in our current culture, but our era is the aberration. Sure, it is hard to imagine John Wayne (one of Mansfield's images) reciting a poem, but it has not always been so. In practically all the old sagas of Western civilization, the heroes were also poets. In fact it was expected that the hero would recount his mighty deeds in song. This is seen in such diverse places as Charles Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake*, the legends of the Huns, and practically all

the Norse tales. Even in *The Hobbit* the one who emerges to slay the dragon is not Bilbo but a character relatively unknown until that point—a man named Bard!

No, it is our current culture that has driven a wedge between manliness and poetry, between manliness and thinking, and we are the worse for it.

- Ray Van Neste

Letters

To the Editor of *JBMW*:

I read with keen interest the letter written by Dr. Kevin Giles and published in your Spring 2008 issue responding to a review that I penned in Spring 2007 of his *Jesus and the Father*. I appreciate Dr. Giles's continuing interest in the subject of Trinitarian relations. While I still reject his conclusions—both in his book and his response to my review—I have no reason to doubt his sincerity. However, there is one point in his response that particularly caught my attention and gave me pause.

Dr. Giles claims that in my review of his work I made “the suggestion that [he is] a modalist.” That is a very serious charge, since modalism is a heresy that has been condemned by orthodox Christians for thousands of years. However, I would like to set the record straight that I never suggested in my review that Dr. Giles, or anyone who agrees with his position on Trinitarian relations, is a modalist. In fact, I blatantly denied that such is the case. I wrote, “when read out of context and stretched to their extreme conclusions, Giles's views could be considered modalistic, as he grounds distinctions only in the fact that one divine Person is not the other without adequately discussing any distinction in role or function.” Then I explicitly stated, “But this in and of itself does not make Giles a modalist” (“Review of *Jesus and the Father*, *JBMW* 12, no. 1 [2007]: 38).

The point that I was making, and continue to make, is that nearly any theological view can be distorted to its illogical extreme and made to resemble heresy. I used Dr. Giles's own work to illustrate my point. Perhaps he disagrees, but that does not mean I suggested that he is a modalist.

I join him in praying for further debate and reflection on the doctrine of God, and I continue

to hope that discussions about Trinitarian relations can be had without charges of heresy being thrown about.

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Raunch Culture Rip-Off¹

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It was the latest political scandal: a tough-on-crime governor gets caught transporting a high-priced prostitute over state lines. The media cranks up all the requisite snarky stories. The politician's wife is trotted out to glumly stand by her man as he admits to what he was caught doing. After a few tense days, he resigns. As the porn industry makes the requisite million-dollar media appearance offers to the now infamous call girl, the story seems about played out in the media cycle.

Fade to black; await the next scandal.

That is, until a staff member at one of those porn distributors realizes he could save his boss the money—for the producer of *Girls Gone Wild* already had sexual footage of this call girl when she was an 18-year-old on spring break in Florida. She loses her million-dollar offer; he likens the archival discovery to “finding a winning lottery ticket in the cushions of your couch.”²

And millions of people who had never before seen nor heard of *Girls Gone Wild* are suddenly made aware of one of the prime showcases for the “female raunch culture” that arose in the third-wave of feminism.

I had only heard of the show a few years earlier, when a critique titled *Female Chauvinist Pig: Women and Raunch Culture* by Ariel Levy was published in 2005. I was intrigued because I had not encountered anyone *within* the feminist movement standing up to say women were making horribly wrong choices in the name of sexual liberation. So I previewed the book on Amazon, where the featured chapter was about the author's experience

with the *Girls Gone Wild* camera crew. Stunned by the description of the show, I shut down my browser. There was no way I could order the book. I was going to have to derive my understanding of Levy's thinking from magazine summaries and other second-hand sources.

So in this essay I will try to be as discreet as possible (challenging to do!), but if you just want to read the executive summary, here it is: God created sex. It is very good within His design. Outside of God's design, it inevitably causes problems. We are living in the fallout of that every day. Young women who are assaulted with “porn-positive” ideology of third-wave feminism are jaded, cynical, infected, and often deflated about these “freedoms.” They are ripe to hear about God's plan for their sexuality. As Christians, we should not shrink from meeting them where they are and boldly demonstrating and proclaiming the gospel. We need to be able to discuss sexuality in candid but redemptive ways. We need to be clear that we are *not* anti-sex; rather, we are for the passion, trust, and enjoyment of marital sex as described in all its glowing celebration in Song of Solomon. The Judeo-Christian perspective celebrates female sexuality; therefore, we have all the more reason to pipe up when female sexuality is distorted and abused in our culture.

So if you are wondering why young girls wear “porn star” T-shirts, why the paparazzi offer 24-hour coverage of the latest sex scandals of the “train-wreck” stars, why a local gym offers “strip aerobics,” and why it's nearly impossible to find attractive yet modest clothing for yourself or

your daughters—you are experiencing the effects, in large part, of third-wave feminism. “Sex-positive” or “porn-positive” theories are a large part of third-wave feminism. Third-wave feminists did an about-face, dismantling the opposition to pornography and sex work of the second wave by claiming participants in pornography and sex work can be “empowered.” Third-wave feminists have also embraced a fluid concept of gender and rejected any universal definition of femininity.

Girls Gone Wild

Several years ago, writer Ariel Levy—who was born in 1974 in the midst of second-wave feminism and grew up on its logic—started to notice “something strange.” Everywhere she went it seemed pornography had gone mainstream, infecting mainstream TV, magazines, fashion, and entertainment. “Raunchy” had become synonymous with “liberated”—a trend that Levy found very confusing:

Some odd things were happening in my social life, too. People I knew (female people) liked going to strip clubs (female strippers). It was sexy and fun, they explained; it was liberating and rebellious. My best friend from college, who used to go to Take Back the Night [feminist anti-sexual violence] marches on campus, had become captivated by porn stars. Only 30 years (roughly my lifetime) ago, our mothers were supposedly burning their bras and picketing *Playboy*, and suddenly we were getting implants and wearing the Bunny logo as symbols of our liberation. How had the culture shifted so drastically in such a short period of time?³

So Levy decided to research this trend, which included spending three days with the *Girls Gone Wild* video crew. In a nutshell, GGW cameras visited party spots like Mardi Gras or spring-break destinations, where they encouraged drunk young women to expose themselves or engage in sexual scenarios. The women who participated and the men who egged them on received either GGW T-shirts or trucker’s caps. That’s all they got—while

GGW’s founder, Joe Francis, earned millions from this footage. In one article, Levy quotes Mia Leist, GGW’s 25-year-old tour manager, saying, “people flash for the brand.”⁴

Though heterosexual men are the obvious GGW audience, Levy says it no longer makes sense to just blame men. Women are not just in front of the cameras, they are also behind the scenes, making decisions, and making money:

Playboy is a case in point. Playboy’s image has everything to do with its pajama-clad, septuagenarian, babe-magnet founder, Hugh Hefner, and the surreal world of celebrities, multiple “girlfriends” and nonstop bikini parties he’s set up around himself. But in actuality, Playboy is a company largely run by women. Hefner’s daughter Christie is the chairman and CEO of Playboy Enterprises. The CFO is a middle-aged mother named Linda Havard. The Playboy Foundation (which has supported the ERA and abortion rights among other progressive causes) is run by Cleo Wilson, an African-American former civil-rights activist. A woman named Marilyn Grabowski produces more than half the magazine’s photo features. . . . That women are now doing this to ourselves isn’t some kind of triumph, it’s depressing.⁵

After spending three days with the GGW crew, Levy was more confounded than ever. “My argument is that women have forgotten that sexual power is only one, very limited, version of power and that this spring-break variety of thongs-and-implants exhibitionism is just one, very limited version of sexuality,” she writes.

The marketing of this brand of female sexuality starts at a very young age. Wendy Shalit, author of *Girls Gone Mild: Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It’s Not Bad to Be Good*, says that even six-year-old girls are affected by the intentional sexuality of Bratz dolls, “Hello Kitty” thongs, and suggestive clothing in the girls’ department. As she writes, this kind of premature sexualization of girls is startling even to the pros:

Across the political spectrum, many have expressed dismay that the legendary porn star Ron Jeremy was mobbed by families at Disneyland who wanted to have their picture taken with him, or that thirteen-year-old girls told the porn star Jenna Jameson at a book signing that they look up to her as an “icon.” Reportedly, both Jeremy and Jameson were shocked to learn of their young fan base.

But if we don’t want this kind of thing to happen, then it seems that we need new role models. And we need them fast. For girls to have meaningful choices and genuine hope, the “wild girl” or “bad girl” cannot seem like the only empowered option.⁶

Unfortunately, many young women feel they have no other option in their relationships. Donna Freitas, a professor at Boston University and the author of *Sex and the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance & Religion on America’s College Campuses*, says that many of her students are unhappy with their own behavior when it comes to dating, romance, and sex. In her national college survey of more than 2,500 students, Freitas discovered that 41 percent of those who reported “hooking up” (a range of sexually intimate activities unconnected to any committed relationship) were “profoundly upset about their behavior.” The 22 percent of respondents who chose to describe a hook-up experience (the question was optional) used words like “dirty,” “used,” “regretful,” “empty,” “miserable,” “disgusted,” “ashamed,” “duped,” and “abused” in their answers. An additional 23 percent expressed ambivalence about hooking up, and the remaining 36 percent were more or less “fine” with it, she reports.⁷

In her class, “Spirituality & Sexuality in American Youth Culture,” Freitas assigned Wendy Shalit’s book, *A Return to Modesty*, fully expecting her students to reject it. Instead, she reported that her students are “fascinated” by Shalit’s description of modesty as a virtue, especially in the context of religious faith.

The class was equally attracted to some evangelical dating manuals, like “I Kissed Dating Goodbye” by Joshua Harris and “Real Sex” by Lauren Winner, that I asked them to read. They seemed shocked that somewhere in America there are entire communities of people their age who really do “save themselves” until marriage, who engage in old-fashioned dating with flowers and dinner and maybe a kiss goodnight. They reacted as if these authors describe a wonderful fantasy land. “It would be easier just to have sex with someone than ask them out on a real date,” one student said, half-seriously.⁸

This casual attitude toward sex comes with a high price. In March, 2008, the Centers for Disease Control released a study that shocked many: An estimated one in four (26 percent) young women between the ages of fourteen and nineteen in the United States—or 3.2 million teenage girls—is infected with at least one of the most common sexually transmitted infections (human papilloma-virus (HPV), chlamydia, herpes simplex virus, and trichomoniasis). The study also found that African-American teenage girls were most severely affected. Nearly half of the young African-American women (48 percent) were infected with a sexually transmitted infection, compared to 20 percent of young white women.⁹

The hook-up generation not only has their sexual health and future fertility at risk, they also are betting on a short-lived commodity: sexual attractiveness as defined by the porn industry. The leaders of third-wave feminism are now in their mid-30s to early 40s, and may soon appreciate the counsel of the generation ahead of them:

At a spring 2008 conference at the University of Baltimore School of Law, academics, activists and students from around the country gathered to talk about feminism and societal change. There was some discussion of what distinguishes second- and third-wavers. When one young women’s studies major asked what was wrong with drawing on her sexuality to gain power over men, one of her

“elders” reminded her that such power was, at best, temporary, and that education and good employment might provide more lasting power.¹⁰

The Porn Wars

There was a time, however, when feminists did not celebrate pornography, but vilified it—saying that pornography denigrates women. Women Against Pornography (WAP) coalesced in the late ‘70s out of several feminist organizations, and was loosely led by feminist author Susan Brownmiller, who wrote *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, and the militant activist Andrea Dworkin, among others.

Dworkin campaigned frequently on the subject, helping to draft a law in 1983 that defined pornography as a civil rights violation against women. The law was later overturned by an appeals court as unconstitutional. Dworkin even testified before a national commission on pornography that was formed in 1985 under President Reagan. Led by Attorney General Edwin Meese III, and informally known as the Meese Commission, this group included several prominent Christian leaders, including Focus on the Family’s founder, James Dobson. WAP’s anti-porn efforts were reported in a 1979 *TIME* magazine article:

Perhaps the basic question is whether pornography really incites men to violence against women, or does the opposite—lets them sublimate their aggressive sexual fantasies in a relatively harmless way. The 1970 report of the President’s Commission on Obscenity and Pornography implied that it did indeed serve as a useful social outlet. But since then, at least one of the study’s authors is having second thoughts. Says University of Pennsylvania Sociologist Marvin Wolfgang: “The weight of evidence [now] suggests that the portrayal of violence tends to encourage the use of physical aggression among people who are exposed to it.” Backed by such support, Brownmiller and other feminists have every intention of stepping up their fight, hoping to recruit still more converts to their cause.¹¹

Serial killer Ted Bundy could have been their poster child. In the final hours of his life before his execution in 1989 in Florida, Bundy gave a controversial video interview to Meese Commission member James Dobson. In it, he stressed over and over the influence of violent media and pornography on his thinking, and on the thinking and impulses of the other men in prison with him:

I’ve lived in prison for a long time now and I’ve met a lot of men who were motivated to commit violence, just like me. And without exception, every one of them was *deeply* involved in pornography—without question, without exception. Deeply influenced and consumed by an addiction to pornography. There’s no question about it. The FBI’s own study on serial homicide shows that the most common interest among serial killers is pornography.¹²

Bundy claimed he wanted to make this warning about pornography his final message because he had seen the mainstreaming of porn and he was concerned for future generations.

Opposition to pornography was the link between two groups that typically had little else in common: the Christian Right and feminist activists. For a brief period in 1980s, they found themselves on the same page. It wasn’t a comfortable alliance for feminists. Nor did all self-identified feminists support the anti-porn activism:

The movement quickly ran into trouble. In 1983, the members of WAP pushed forward a ban on pornography in Minneapolis, which they hoped would serve as a national model. Suddenly, their support dropped through the floor. To many, the campaigners began to look like puritans who were taking things too far, and free-speech activists rose up with a shout. Finally, a few young women emerged with shocking news: They liked pornography.¹³

The “porn wars” were the last gasp of second-wave feminism. As the sexual liberation message collided

with the victimhood message, the resulting contradiction led to serious in-fighting. As Ariel Levy explains, the anti-porn faction of feminist leaders “felt they were liberating women from degrading sexual stereotypes and a culture of male domination and—consequently—making room for greater female sexual pleasure. [Their] opponents thought they were fighting a new brand of in-house repression. . . . Everyone was fighting for freedom, but when it came to sex, freedom meant different things to different people.”¹⁴

Concurrently, porn was becoming more mainstream—first through the VCR and then through the Internet. Just as the Jazz-Age daughters of New Woman suffragists rebelled against the relentless seriousness of their mothers and their causes, so did the daughters of “patriarchy is the problem” second-wavers. The result was the “sex-positive” or “porn-positive” feminism that arose in the third-wave of the early 1990s. It hinges on the idea that sexual freedom is essential to women’s freedom, and it opposes all legal or social efforts to control or limit sexual activities. According to one definition, sex-positive feminists reject the vilification of male sexuality that they attribute to many radical feminists of the second-wave, and instead “embrace the entire range of human sexuality,” including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered sexuality.

“Real Women Are Bad Porn”

Some argue that today’s raunch culture is a reaction to the omnipresence of pornography. In order to get and keep a man’s attention, women feel that they have to act and look just like porn stars. According to a *New York* magazine article, one Manhattan-based sex therapist says that she’s seen many young men coming in to chat about Internet-porn-related issues. “It’s so accessible, and now, with things like streaming video and Webcams, guys are getting sucked into a compulsive behavior,” she says. “What’s most regrettable is that it can really affect relationships with women. I’ve seen some young men lately who can’t get aroused with women but have no problem interacting with the internet. I think a big danger is that young men who are constantly exposed to these fake, always-

willing women start to have unreal expectations from real women, which makes them phobic about relationships.”¹⁵

Feminist writer Naomi Wolf agrees. “The ubiquity of sexual images does not free *eros* but dilutes it,” Wolf writes. “Today, real naked women are just bad porn.”¹⁶

Twenty years down the line from the “porn wars” of second-wave feminism, Wolf notes that part of what was forecasted then has come true now—and part was wrong. In an article titled “The Porn Myth,” Wolf writes of running into anti-porn feminist Dworkin at a benefit, which caused her to reflect on what Dworkin had once prognosticated.

If we did not limit pornography, she argued—before internet technology made that prospect a technical impossibility—most men would come to objectify women as they objectified porn stars, and treat them accordingly. In a kind of domino theory, she predicted, rape and other kinds of sexual mayhem would surely follow.

She was right about the warning, wrong about the outcome. As she foretold, pornography did breach the dike that separated a marginal, adult, private pursuit from the mainstream public arena. The whole world, post-Internet, did become pornographized. Young men and women are indeed being taught what sex is, how it looks, what its etiquette and expectations are, by pornographic training—and this is having a huge effect on how they interact.

But the effect is not making men into raving beasts. On the contrary: The onslaught of porn is responsible for deadening male libido in relation to real women, and leading men to see fewer and fewer women as “porn-worthy.” Far from having to fend off porn-crazed young men, young women are worrying that as mere flesh and blood, they can scarcely get, let alone hold, their attention.¹⁷

Peanut Butter and Jelly

As I was writing this essay, I met a fifteen-year-old girl who had not been exposed to Christian

thinking about sexuality. Her sexual experiences to date in her young life are jaw-dropping—and my concept of saving sex until after marriage is equally as foreign to her. She was initially attracted to the idea of men treating women with respect and honor, but when she found out part of that was due to the delayed gratification of sexual activity, she couldn't fathom it. She thought for sure something was wrong with men who could exercise that kind of self-control. And since marriage has not been a future expectation, either, she has had no particular reason to decline the most base offers for group sex and other hook-up sexual activity.

I've been thinking a lot about her as I've worked on this material. Her notion of sexuality and relationships breaks my heart. Her acceptance of how she's been treated by men—who, I might add, have committed a crime because she is a minor—breaks my heart, as well. Though she is an extreme example, she is not uncommon. To her and her friends, sex is a transaction that you negotiate and then discard. I don't know if I will have any opportunities to talk with her again in the future, but I pray I do. There are many things I want to talk to her about, including the Christian perspective on sex.

I didn't become a Christian until I was thirty. I lived a liberated lifestyle, you might say, until that time. My understanding of the Christian perspective of sex was “just say no.” So I was pleasantly surprised as a new believer to hear pastors and women's ministry speakers teach openly about God's good gift of sex. They weren't inappropriate, but it was refreshing to hear an unblushing celebration of marital sex being presented to the church. As C. J. Mahaney writes in his book to Christian husbands:

It is regrettable that when it comes to sex, secular culture sees Christianity as concerned primarily with prohibitions. Obviously, sin regularly corrupts God's good gift of sex by divorcing it from the covenant of marriage and trying to create a counterfeit experience. All misuse of sexuality is condemned in Scripture. The Bible's warnings against immorality and the power of lust must never be denied or

ignored; so it's right that we keep them clearly in mind. Even in Solomon's Song we find repeated admonitions against premature sexual activity (2:7; 3:5; 8:4).

But once joined in marriage, things change, guys! In the beginning, God looked upon the erotic union of husband and wife and saw that it was good. His opinion has not changed in the slightest.... Sex was created for marriage, and marriage was created in part for the enjoyment of sex.¹⁸

This is a message that needs to cut through our porn-saturated media. The timeless solution is the one-on-one mentoring model. The Bible instructs older women to teach younger women how to love their husbands, be self-controlled, and pure (Titus 2:4). Purity is not only for the time before marriage, but also the time afterward: “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb 13:4, NIV). I believe pastors should be teaching the church on Sundays what the Scriptures say about sex, but the one-on-one settings make room for the candor, questions, and confession that elude the larger crowds.

We need to combat any false notions of sexuality and piety by presenting a clear and unblushing portrayal of marital intimacy. A generation that is well acquainted with the physical variations of sex needs to hear about the powerful security, attraction, and emotional freedom that attend monogamous marital fidelity. Young women who are constantly disrespected by men need to hear how marriage is built upon mutual respect and honor—and how that should make a wife feel cherished and prized. They also need to know that God is not ashamed of what He created. “Even though it's intensely physical, it is not the least bit unspiritual,” Mahaney writes. “When a married couple is in the midst of enjoying sexual relations, they may not be experiencing holiness in the same way they experience it when praying or worshiping God, but make no mistake—that is a very holy moment. It is God's desire that every Christian couple ... regularly enjoy the best, most intimate, most satisfying

sexual relations of which humans are capable.”¹⁹

In the popular media, married sex gets no applause. If it is referenced at all, it is the stuff of dull jokes. This is why personal mentoring is important. Older women who have successfully weathered the various seasons of marriage need to give practical sexual counsel. Such as making peanut-butter and jelly sandwiches for dinner—a timeless tip from C.J.’s wife, Carolyn:

Recently I had a conversation with a young first-time mother. “Before our baby was born,” she explained, “I had plenty of time to romance my husband, clean my home, and cook delicious meals. But now there are days I’m still in my bathrobe at three o’clock in the afternoon, because I’ve spent all morning caring for our newborns! So how do I keep my husband a priority when my child requires so much time and attention?” she asked.

“Honey,” I replied, “fix your husband a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for dinner and give him great sex after dinner, and he will feel prized by you!”²⁰

As older women mentor younger women in God’s design for sexuality, it also presents an opportunity to circle back to basic issues like modesty in clothing and emotional expression.

“His Banner Over Me is Love”

A girl putting on an immodest outfit will think she just looks good—because that’s what fashion dictates. Her outfit may not be the true reflection of her values, but it’s what she can buy. So she continues to add to the daily accumulation of the raunch culture’s visual impact. In the same way, I think many young women imitate porn stars (on a variety of levels—from dress to personal grooming to relationships) because it’s what they believe is attractive to men. If it’s “hot,” it must be good. In the absence of other teaching, there is a certain perverse logic to this.

That’s why we must proclaim without apology the beauty of modesty and restraint. As one of my married male friends tried to explain to my sexually active fifteen-year-old acquaintance: “The price

of a candy bar is one dollar because that’s all that it costs to get it. You don’t pay two dollars because you don’t have to; one dollar is sufficient. Well, the price of my wife was everything I had and then some. She was not going to part with the treasures of her sexuality, her affections, her romance, and her support apart from my pledging my life and love to her until death do us part. She was priceless, in some ways. And I knew that going in—she demanded my respect and honor. And it’s been completely worth it.”

I long for young women to understand this principle. It is natural for us to want to captivate a man’s attention. But a *Girls Gone Wild* T-shirt is no symbol of love. It’s simply a badge of a tawdry performance. It conveys no lasting security or honor or even attraction.

The bride in the Song of Solomon speaks of something far more precious: “He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love” (Song 2:4, NIV). This bride has received public affirmation and acclaim, and she wears her husband’s love like a banner. Instead of insecurity or disappointment, this woman revels in her status: “Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love” (v. 5). She is no hook-up casualty or discarded sexual partner. She is celebrated and prized—and intoxicated with her husband’s sexual attention.

This is the message that young women today need to hear. God’s original design for sex is still the best

ENDNOTES

¹This essay is taken from the new book, *Radical Womanhood: Feminine Faith in a Feminist World* by Carolyn McCulley (Chicago: Moody, forthcoming). It traces the rise of three waves of feminism, from 1848 through today, and compares feminist ideology with biblical teaching on womanhood. In this excerpt, Carolyn addresses the impact of the third-wave of feminism, which began in the early nineties—just about the time Carolyn herself was converted from feminism to Christianity.

²“‘Girls Gone Wild’ founder says Spitzer call girl was in video archives; pulls \$1 million offer,” Associated Press wire story, Wednesday, March 19, 2008.

³Ariel Levy, “Ariel Levy on ‘Raunch Culture,’” *The Independent UK*, December 4, 2005. Online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/ariel-levy-on-raunch-culture-517878.html>.

⁴Ariel Levy, “Dispatches from Girls Gone Wild,” *Slate.com*, March 22, 2004. Online: <http://www.slate.com/id/2097485/entry/2097496/>.

⁵Levy, "Ariel Levy on 'Raunch Culture.'"

⁶Wendy Shalit, *Girls Gone Mild: Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It's Not Bad to Be Good* (New York: Random House, 2007), xxiv-xxv.

⁷Donna Freitas, "Sex Education," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 4, 2008, W11. Online: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120728447818789307.html?mod=taste_primary_hs.

⁸Ibid.

⁹CDC press release issued at the 2008 National STD Prevention Conference, March 11, 2008. Online: <http://www.cdc.gov/STDConference/2008/media/release-11march2008.htm>. The results of this study were later disputed by Neil Munro in "Birth of a Number," *National Journal*, May 31, 2008. Though some of Munro's critiques are warranted, it would be an error to dismiss the CDC's report altogether. The original CDC release referred to STDs instead of STIs (which is the more accurate term). Critics have also assailed the study for including nineteen-year-old women, which apparently they believe are too old to be of concern. Nevertheless, because of the high rate of sexual activity among 19-year-olds, their inclusion in the study seems warranted.

¹⁰Jane C. Murphy, "The Third Wave," *The Baltimore Sun* op-ed, March 24, 2008. Online: <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bal-op.women24mar24,0,500379.story>.

¹¹Unattributed, "Women's War on Porn," *TIME*, August 27, 1979, as archived on <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,920580-1,00.html>.

¹²"Fatal Addiction: Ted Bundy's Final Interview," *Focus on the Family* Films, 1989.

¹³Eliza Strickland, "Just Desserts," *SFWeekly.com*, March 29, 2006. Online: <http://www.sfweekly.com/2006-03-29/news/just-desserts/>.

¹⁴Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 63.

¹⁵David Amsden, "Not Tonight, Honey, I'm Logging On," *New York*, October 13, 2003.

¹⁶Naomi Wolf, "The Porn Myth," *New York*, October 20, 2003.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸C.J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 75.

¹⁹Ibid., 14.

²⁰Carolyn Mahaney, *Feminine Appeal: Seven Virtues of a Godly Wife and Mother* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 83.

How Shall We Speak of God? Seven Reasons Why We Cannot Call God “Mother”

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Over the years it has become more and more evident that the current gender debate among evangelicals is not a “detached” issue, having no effect on other areas of Christian teaching and practice. Rather, it seems that how one understands and responds to the biblical teachings on manhood and womanhood often informs and influences one’s understanding of many other significant Christian doctrines.

One recent challenge comes from some evangelical egalitarians who advocate, or at least express openness to, speaking of or addressing God as “Mother” or with the feminine pronoun “she.”¹ But does Scripture permit this step? The following brief essay is not intended as an exhaustive response to the use of feminine language for God. But we hope it will assist believers in understanding some key biblical objections to this challenge, and we pray that it will encourage faithfulness to Scripture as we seek to glorify God together.²

(1) There is no biblical precedent for referring to God with feminine terms such as “Mother” or “she.”

The Bible uses many masculine appellatives,

names, and titles for God (e.g., God, Lord, Father, King, Judge, Savior, Ruler, Shepherd, and Husband) and consistently uses masculine pronouns for God. We also find “ungendered,” impersonal titles, appellatives, and predicate metaphors used for God (e.g., Rock, Fortress, and Shield). However, no similar feminine terms or pronouns that predicate God are to be found in Scripture.

(2) Biblical, masculine language for God is not culture-dependent, but rather is God’s chosen self-revelation of his identity.

Some have argued that the patriarchal culture of ancient Israel dictated the biblical use of masculine terminology for God. However, other ancient Near Eastern cultures, though no less patriarchal than ancient Israel, worshipped masculine *and* feminine deities (See Jdgs 3:7; Acts 19:34) and even referred to one and the same God as both “Father” *and* “Mother.” Thus, ancient Israel’s culture did not of necessity require masculine language for God.³

Furthermore, despite the cultural influences around the nation, Israel believed and Christians today believe that what we learn of God in the Old Testament (and the whole Bible) is owing to God’s

self-chosen revelation of himself to us. Therefore, the masculine language for God in the Bible is not due to what Israel or the early church thought about God, primarily, but, ultimately, this way of speaking of God comes from God himself. Because the Bible is God's own chosen self-revelation, we must take seriously the language God chose to use to communicate to us what he is like. This revelation, by God's choice, includes all the masculine God-language of the Bible, and therefore it cannot be dismissed as merely the by-product of a patriarchal cultural. To dismiss the masculine language for God in the Bible is to dismiss how God has spoken of himself, and this is a serious matter.

(3) The use of “feminine imagery” for God in the Bible does not demand or even imply that we may refer to God with feminine terms such as “Mother” or “she.”

On rare occasions, Scripture describes God's *actions* using feminine figures of speech—metaphors and similes (see, e.g., Deut 32:18; Job 38:29; Ps 123:2; Isa 42:13-14; 46:3; 66:13; Hos 13:8). However, the Bible also uses similar figurative language to speak of the actions of *male human beings*. In 2 Sam 17:8, Hushai says that David and his men “are mighty men, and they are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs.”⁴ The Lord announces that Israel will one day “nurse at the breast of kings” (Isa 60:16). Paul tells the Galatians that he is “in the anguish of childbirth” until Christ is formed in them (Gal 4:19), and he claims that he and his collaborators treated the Thessalonians “like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thess 2:7). Do these statements imply that we are to refer to any of these men as “mother” or “she”? Of course not. Such language is simply a literary device that makes for a vivid description. If, then, this figurative language does not result in feminine terminology for human beings, neither does it imply the same for God.

(4) All feminine metaphors for God in the Bible are *verbal*—none are names or titles for God (like “Father”).

While the Bible uses many masculine terms as

names, titles, and metaphors for God (see #1 above), all feminine metaphors are *verbs*, imaging some of his actions (e.g., “the God who *gave you birth*,” Deut 32:18). The Bible says, “The Lord is my shepherd” (Ps 23:1), “God is the King” (Ps 47:7), “Your Maker is your Husband” (Isa 54:5), and “You, O, Lord are our Father” (Isa 63:16), but it does not predicate similar *feminine names, titles, or metaphors* for God (such as “God is my Mother”). Moreover, second and third person verbs in the Hebrew Old Testament are inflected for gender. So, though Scripture may employ *verbal feminine metaphors* to describe God's actions, the consistent use of *masculine verb forms* in these cases precludes us from envisioning God as “Mother.”⁵

(5) “Father” is a name or title that communicates something real about God's nature.

Scripture does not call God “Father” merely because he is like human fathers but because he is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3). God is the Father of the Lord Jesus in a way that he is not a Father to believers (John 20:17). Likewise, though Christians are made “sons of God” by adoption in Christ (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5), Jesus is the Son of God in a way that Christians are not (Mark 1:11; John 1:14, 3:16).

The titles “Father” and “Son” do not apply to the first two persons of the Trinity merely as a result of the incarnation. This Father-Son relationship has *always* existed. Prior to the incarnation, God sent *his Son* into the world (John 3:17); this entrance “into the world” is from heaven (John 13:1, 3; 16:28)—the place from which he was “sent.” The eternal love of the first two persons of the Trinity for one another is expressed in terms of the Father-Son relationship. The Father loves the Son by showing him “all” that he is doing (John 5:20), and the Son shows the world that he loves the Father, by doing as he is commanded (John 14:31), “always” doing the things that are pleasing to the Father (John 8:29). Moreover, the Son lives because of the Father (John 6:57). As the Father has “life in himself,” so he has granted the Son to have “life in himself” (John 5:26). Since the “Word” is not created but has eternally existed (John 1:1), this is an

“eternal grant” from Father to Son and testifies to the eternal nature of the Father-Son relationship.⁶ Thus, we believe the name or title “Father” communicates something real about God. God *is* the Father of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(6) Calling God “Mother” may require an unbiblical revision regarding how God relates to the world.

It is difficult to show a direct causal connection between feminine God language and doctrinal revisions regarding how God relates to the world. In the past, most non-evangelical feminists who have argued for feminine or neutral language for God, have done so at least partially because of their presupposition that masculine language (Father, Lord, King) indicates God’s unilateral rule over the earth and leads to abusive relationships where men unilaterally rule over women and nature. In other words, for them, the “masculinity” of God and its connection to the classical understanding of the sovereign rule of God has been at the root of ecological destruction and the domination of women.

So, for many non-evangelical feminists, the way God relates to the world must change if ecological and abuse problems are going to be remedied. Calling God “Mother,” at least for most non-evangelical revisionists, means that the world is no longer ruled over by God, but is now part of God’s body or womb. So when one harms nature, he is also harming God. This belief is at the heart of standard definitions of what is called panentheism—God is in everything—which is at direct odds with the biblical description of God’s relationship to the world. God is not part of the world; he is separate from it. God is not dependent upon the world; he is self-sufficient. God is not passively involved with his creation; he is ruling and reigning over it.

Granted, most evangelical feminists who are advocating some kind of feminine language for God probably do not have as their motive a complete revision of the doctrine of God. However, given the fact that the masculine language of Father, Lord, and King is connected to the manner in which God rules the world (i.e., he is sovereign over and sepa-

rate from his creation), it will be difficult for future advocates to avoid such revisions even if there is no conscious intention to do so.

(7) Calling God “Mother” calls into question the sufficiency of the biblical revelation.

As already noted, Scripture never refers to God as “Mother” or “she.” So evangelical feminists who advocate such terminology for God often point to the constraints of Israel’s patriarchal culture for the use of masculine language for God in Scripture. Put simply, evangelical feminists must somehow argue that God’s word has been “contaminated” by the ancient biblical culture and that we must extract some principle for addressing God from the “husk” of the patriarchal biblical language.

But we believe this calls into question the sufficiency of God’s word as we have received it. We do not believe God has accommodated himself and his word to (as evangelical feminists see it) sinful patriarchalism, so that the “truth” of God’s word must be separated from the “sin” of patriarchy. According to this view, the biblical message is no longer sufficient but has been corrupted by a fallen aspect of the ancient biblical language and culture. Instead, we affirm that God has revealed in his word how he is to be addressed and that we do not have the freedom to advocate a form of address that we think is a “contemporary equivalent.” Our understanding is that God has indeed revealed himself in the Bible purposefully using masculine language like “Father,” and this revelation says something about his nature and character.

Conclusion

Although there are only a few evangelical feminists who have opened the door for feminine language for God, many churches in mainline denominations have been doing so for years. There are new hymns being sung to “Mother God” and even books designed to teach our children how to pray to “her.” We fear that this practice may become even more common among evangelicals, as the pressure to accept egalitarian teachings on manhood and womanhood grows. We hope that evangelical believers, pastors, and churches will

prayerfully consider the seriousness of this issue and hold fast to the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures for the glory of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

ENDNOTE

¹See, for example, the comments in Richard and Catherine Kroeger, “Women Elders . . . Called by God?”, 9 [cited 7 March 2008]. Online: <http://www.pcusa.org/womensministries/history-theology/women-elders.pdf>; and Mimi Haddad, “What Language Shall We Use: A Look at Inclusive Language for People, Feminine Images for God, and Gender-Accurate Bible Translations,” *Priscilla Papers* 17, no. 1 (2003): 3–7. Catherine Kroeger was the first president of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), and Haddad is the organization’s current president.

See also the evaluation and critique in Randy Stinson, “Our Mother Who Art in Heaven: A Brief Overview and Critique of Evangelical Feminists and the Use of Feminine God-Language,” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8, no. 2 (2003): 20–34.

²The authors wish to thank Rob Lister, Russell D. Moore, Thomas R. Schreiner, Bruce A. Ware, and Stephen J. Wellum for reviewing and offering invaluable feedback on a draft of this essay.

³See Helmer Ringgren, “אֱלֹהִים” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. Johannes Butterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 2–3; John W. Cooper, *Our Father in Heaven: Christian Faith and Inclusive Language for God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 152–53; and Roland M. Frye, “Language for God and Feminist Language: Problems and Principles,” in *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism* (ed. Alvin F. Kimel, Jr.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 27.

⁴All Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version.

⁵See Paul Mankowski, “The Gender of Israel’s God,” *This is My Name Forever: The Trinity and Gender Language for God* (ed. Alvin F. Kimel Jr.; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 36–37.

⁶See D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 37–38. On the eternal nature of the Father-Son relationship, see also, Bruce A. Ware, “Could Our Savior Have Been a Woman? The Relevance of Jesus’ Gender for His Incarnational Mission,” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8, no. 1 (2003): 33.

Defenders of Women¹

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"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!" (Acts 20:28-31).

Women are responsible before God to use their spiritual gifts within the ministry of the church, thus placing themselves under the authority and protection of the church. But the church has a responsibility to shepherd women well. What does this mean?

First, because God has given men the position of authority in the home and church, male leadership in a church has the power to open ministry doors for women. Men can appreciate and affirm women. Men can make room for the gifts of women to flourish. Men are responsible for being good stewards of the resources God gives to the church, including the resource of the gifts of women. Church leadership must recognize the distinctiveness and the value of the female population of the congregation. When the nursery and kitchen are the only ministry opportunities open to women, as important as those ministries are, the church suffers. The resulting deficiency is not because women are better, but because women are different. It takes men and women to bring completeness to the ministry of the church. The full range of the gifts and experiences of women can be utilized in the local church without violating male headship.²

Second, biblical headship includes protec-

tion. One responsibility of a shepherd is to provide green pastures and quiet waters for the sheep. Today, many female sheep are bruised and battered and in desperate need of a safe pasture. They need to be protected spiritually, emotionally, and sometimes physically.

A Safe Place

The primary issue of this essay is the urgency for the local church to become a safe place for wounded women. In order for this to happen, male leadership must partner with women to care for the female sheep. The authority-protection loop can be closed when male leadership utilizes the gifts *of* women to minister *to* women.

The shepherds of the flock are entrusted with the care of the flock, and they have a responsibility to involve women in helping them understand the unique needs and vulnerabilities of a woman in distress. They have a responsibility to partner with women in caring for wounded women.

Women cannot expect men to automatically understand the plight or the passions of wounded women, but men can listen to and accept the reality of these women's situations. Often men seem to be able to "hear" better if other women bridge the gap. Spiritually mature women may be better equipped to articulate a hurting woman's pain to men, so these women can be helpers to the male leadership in a church by being the advocates for hurting women. So the reality is, the responsibility of the church *to* women is the shared responsibility of men *and* women. And women are designed for the task. There are two compelling helper verses that accentuate this:

The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless (Ps 10:14).

For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help (Ps 72:12).

These verses are electrifying! Of course they do not mean that men are not to help the hurting. All disciples of Jesus are to reflect His compassion. But our female design draws us to the victims, fatherless, needy, and afflicted. God designed and equipped us with relational strengths that energize us to help others. Our femininity is fulfilled when we are involved in ministries of mercy to those who need help. And the victims, the fatherless, the needy, and the afflicted are crying out for help.

There is much fallout when male-female distinctions are obliterated. First, there is incompleteness in our relationships. And second, the victims, the fatherless, the needy and the afflicted are left without the tender help that women have been created to give. There is a big hole in society because women have abandoned their calling. But far more frightening is the hollow space in our churches because women are not helping fractured women.

Today's victims, fatherless, needy, and afflicted are inside and outside of our churches: the poor and homeless, battered women, the abused, the unborn, and so forth. Women who have developed a biblical approach to these social concerns are giving wonderful leadership in their churches and communities. The nurturing instincts of women come alive when they have opportunities to minister, and it is wise leaders who tap the feminine resource in the church to touch the needs of the community.

But in this essay I want to talk about the least recognizable of the wounded—those sitting in the pews next to us. Women who have been raped, battered, abandoned, or abused, or who have caused their own pain by having an abortion, an affair, a struggle with lesbianism, or involvement in a cult, usually think that church is the most unsafe place for them to share their hurt because they think their scars are unacceptable among such “respectable” people. Women whose sons have AIDS, or whose daughters are anorexic, or whose husbands

are alcoholics, suffer in silence because they think the women in the pew with them would consider them failures if they knew about their agony.

For many women, the pain is not in the past but is agonizingly current. They have open wounds they are trying to hide because they mistakenly think bleeding wounds are unspiritual. Some isolate themselves because they think they are the only ones having an ongoing struggle with sin.

If the church is going to act redemptively, we must be honest about who we are—not respectable people but redeemed people, not flawless people but forgiven people.

After I spoke in a women's retreat about the need for women to make our churches safe for hurting women, a young woman lingered until others had left. She shared with me her fall into sin and the marvelous reality of God's merciful forgiveness. Her joy in her restored relationship with her Heavenly Father was obvious, but her face saddened as she told me that she still did not feel safe in church. Over and over in that brief conversation I said to her, “I am confident that God will use your experience to glorify Himself by using you to minister to others.” A few weeks later, I received this letter from her:

Last night after church I invited a single mother to go out for dessert. As we sat and talked, she told me that she has an adult child “out there somewhere,” and that she has had two abortions since then. And all this happened since she has been a Christian. Her tears were dripping on the table, and I know she carries around incredible guilt. I told her what you said about church being a safe place to come and share our struggles. She admitted that she doesn't feel safe at church. She thinks people would reject her if they really knew her. How do we get past that? What can I do to help us move in that direction? By the way, being able to sit down and talk to someone about abortion and illegitimate children, and feel compassion rather than shock and condemnation, is another way the Lord has used my sin to His ultimate glory. I could

not have done that until He allowed me to see the extreme corruptness of my own heart. God is so good!

We move in that direction when we recognize our corruption and rejoice in God's grace, when we refuse to be spiritual couch potatoes, when we refrain from getting caught up in the "meet my needs" syndrome, and when we resolve to share the heartbeat of Jesus: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt 20:28).

A woman in crisis who is a member of a church should never have to wonder what she needs to do. When a Christian woman cannot trust the authority and protection of her husband, the right place for her to go is to the elders of her church. A woman whose husband has walked out on her should know that she can go to her elders for leadership. A battered woman should know that her elders will give her protection and counsel.

But that is risky. Do elders know how to handle these situations with love and compassion? And if they do handle it with love and compassion, is that putting an emotionally vulnerable woman in a dangerous situation, to say nothing of the elder?

It is a frightful experience for a woman who has been violated by a male—whether physically or emotionally abused, or raped, or if her husband has been unfaithful—to go to her elders. For her to sit in a room of men is terrifying. And often with good reason.

Glenda was kicked in the stomach and hit in the face. When she went to her pastor for counsel, she was told she must forgive her husband, go back home, and be sure he got enough sex. Lisa's husband left her. When she went to her elders for help, they expressed their sympathy, prayed with her, and sent her home to deal with the realities of supporting her children. When Martha told her pastor that her husband repeatedly beat her during his drunken rages, she was told that she must appear before all fifteen elders before the church could offer help. She got as far as the door but collapsed into uncontrollable sobbing at the thought of being alone in a room of men. The elders decided that her emotional instability was the real problem

in the marriage.

It is also difficult for many women who have been widowed to approach church leadership for help. When Betsy's husband died, she went through tremendous turmoil dealing with the pain, the fear of parenting two teenagers alone, the realities of assuming sole responsibility for all decisions, the loneliness, and numerous other adjustments. "The cards and prayers were wonderful," said Betsy, "but I needed to know how to change a tire, and there were times when I needed money to buy the tires. There were times when I was so afraid, and I struggled with bitterness that the church was not there in tangible ways for my children and me. Perhaps I should have gone to them, but I felt so insecure and unprotected that I could not be the initiator."

You can almost hear these women echo the words of Isaiah: "We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away... The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene" (Isa 59:11, 15-16).

The Need for Defenders

Is God appalled because there is no one in your church to intervene? As I was becoming aware of these issues, I was appalled! I experienced a range of emotions such as denial, compassion, grief, and anger. The anger went in all directions, but much of it was towards the male leadership in churches. I would tell my husband about these women and about my frustration and anger. Over and over he said to me, "Susan, I hear what you are saying, but I must admit that I would never have imagined that a woman would be feeling that pain or having those emotions. I'm glad I have you to tell me." Finally I got the message! My husband is the kindest, most compassionate man I know. If he does not connect with female emotions without me telling him, how could I think that other men would make the connection?

Men do not intend to inflict more damage on women. Many just do not know how to deal with women in crisis appropriately and compassionately. It is difficult for men to understand the emotions of these women; but other women can be

the interpreters of those feelings. When I admitted this, my emotions became productive. I realized that women, including myself, must be the advocates *to* church leaders *for* emotionally and physically bruised women. I realized that I could speak for them, and that I could encourage other women to speak for them. And I came to realize that the smallest attempt to champion their cause gives them enormous hope. Now when I have opportunities to speak to groups of men and women, I urge them to reach out to women in crisis. I receive numerous letters from women who attend my seminars. They tell me that simply acknowledging their plight gives them hope. These real letters from real women speak far more passionately than anything I could write:

Thank you for the encouragement and validation you gave me. There are times, even now, when I respond to people's looks and their cavalier attitude toward my experiences by wondering if I really am crazy. I wonder whether other women have endured spousal battering and childhood molesting without sustaining the scars that I carry within my mind and body. I wonder if I'm making a mountain out of a molehill. Then God sends someone like you to say, "No, this really is a problem and you're not alone." It's such a relief to hear those words. Please keep saying them to women and for women.

Acknowledging the fact that wounded women are in our churches is the first step to freeing them from their isolation. And yet all too often the church either denies their existence or casts a shadow of doubt on their pain. I weep every time I read the following excerpts of letters I have received:

After several years of being battered, I was finally divorced from my husband. I began attending a church and became a Christian. When I talked to the pastor about church membership, his major concern seemed to be whether I had obtained a "scriptural" divorce. He did not tell me how glad he was that I had managed to stay alive; or how brave I had

been to protect my children all those years by deliberately bringing my husband's wrath down on my head whenever I saw him heading for one of my children. He didn't tell me how great it was that I had finally found the courage to leave. What he wanted to know was whether or not my former husband had actually hit me and who it was that began divorce proceedings. As soon as I assured him that my former husband had discarded me like an old shoe just as soon as it was clear to him that I was no longer willing to be a puppet suspended upon strings of fear, my pastor's face cleared and he told me that, since my unbelieving husband was the one who instigated the divorce, I was free to serve God even in my divorced state. My stomach twisted into a knot. I realized that if I had been a member of my church at the time I actually left my husband, I might not have been given the kind of advice I most needed ... namely, get out of there and don't look back! I wanted to weep. My pastor is a wonderful, compassionate man. He cares deeply for his people ... even the women. I have to assume that his response was born of ignorance.

A prevalent attitude in the church is that a Christian woman will save her unbelieving husband if she just acts appropriately. A lot of people, both men and women, seem to believe it's my fault that my former husband never became a believer. Many of them want me to tell them the fatal mistake I made that ruined my witness and prevented my husband from being saved. And I have to admit that I was not particularly respectful of my husband. Respect falls way down on one's list of priorities when the list begins and ends with terror. There were many times when I lied to my husband; many times when I kept secrets from him. It was the only way I knew to survive. It was the only way I knew to keep my children safe. No one wants to hear that, and doubtless there were better ways I should have handled things if I had only known what they were. Unfortunately,

most people regard my statements about my children's safety as lame excuses for not being the kind of wife I should have been.

So many people, both in and outside the church, feel that a battered woman must really deserve it. They want to know what I did to provoke my husband's rages. I can only tell them, "Believe me, if I had been able to figure that out, I would still be married." I tried. You can't imagine how hard I tried. I've come to the conclusion that it is possible for a Christian woman not to make any mistakes and still be a battered wife. I would be so grateful to you if you would tell people that, and keep telling them until they believe it.

Women are walking in darkness. They are groping along the wall, and many are finding their way into shelters for battered women, or abortion clinics, where the arms of the feminists and the lie of the enemy are waiting for them.

Safety!

A woman from New Life Presbyterian Church in Escondido, California, shares with us the powerful and poignant story about her journey from being an abused wife, to the feminist movement, through several churches, and finally to new life at New Life.

When I finally left my violent, abusive husband, I was relieved to make my escape, but I was so ashamed. My former husband had spent all of our twenty-year marriage telling me that his rages were my fault. If I was just a better wife, better lover, better you-name-it, I wouldn't *make* him act like that. And I believed him. Now I realize that it's difficult to be a good wife, and even more difficult to be a good lover, when you're terrified of the man you're supposed to be loving. But at the time I left him, I could only feel shame at having failed so miserably at the one and only job I ever wanted . . . that of wife and mother.

When a woman leaves an abusive husband there is generally no church,

no Christian, willing to take her in. No one wants to get involved with a woman who may be "disobeying" her husband so there's generally only one place for her to go . . . a shelter for battered women. These shelters are almost always run by feminists.

Even when a woman does have another place to live, feminists are the only ones offering counseling specifically tailored to the needs of battered women. One way or another, almost any woman fleeing an abusive marriage eventually comes under the "covering" of feminists who are trained and willing to help her. As I look back at my own experience, I'm shocked to realize that churches have deserted the very women who most need them. When such a woman leaves her marriage she has no self-esteem, no idea who she is or what she believes. She is so accustomed to having someone else tell her what to do and what to think that she is nearly incapable of making decisions for herself. Her mind is completely open to brainwashing. Feminists take full advantage of that fact. They take her in. They give her empowering messages about herself and her capabilities. Then they tell her that empowerment includes the "right to choose," that the withholding of birth control (read: abortion) is a male plot to keep women subjugated. Men can't be trusted—not now, not ever. Men are after one thing—power. And a battered woman's fears underline and validate those messages.

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm extremely grateful that, in the absence of Christian assistance, feminists were there when I needed help. If it were not for feminists, thousands of women and their children would be living—and dying—in abusive situations at this very moment. Unfortunately, feminists have had to fill the vacuum left by the church. It's time for Christians to assume their responsibility in this area.

I've been in church all my life. I've attended so many different kinds of Protestant churches that I used to call myself

a one woman ecumenical movement. Yet, until I came to New Life I had never seen male-female relationships modeled after Biblical norms. Maybe I was just blind, I don't know. I do know that until I came to New Life I never heard a message preached that taught men that they had a responsibility to protect their wives. I would remember a message like that! In fact, I would have grabbed hold of it like a life preserver.

Something that occurred one day when I was leaving an elder's home after a Bible study will illustrate why a wounded woman may sometimes behave in bizarre ways and how others can be a help, rather than a hindrance, in her healing. When the study concluded, the elder brought all of the women's coats into the family room. I happened to look over to see my coat draped over his arm while he was helping another woman with her coat. The idea of a man coming up behind me with something in his hands with which he planned to make contact with my body—even if it was my own coat—absolutely terrified me. I knew this man was trustworthy. My reaction made no sense at all. I was gripped with fear all the same. I went over and lifted my coat from his arm. He protested, saying that he would help me with it. I tried to make light of it and joked about the fact that I live alone and am unaccustomed to valet service, but I could tell he felt put down. After I had thought about it for a couple of days and determined why I reacted that way, I called his wife and told her what had been going through my mind. I asked her to make sure he knew it was not a reflection on him. I explained a little bit about post-traumatic stress so that she would have some context in which to place my remarks. That elder and his wife have been some of my most loving supporters. I can take any prayer request to them, no matter how personal, and know that they will bring it before the Lord and not share it with another living soul. Church seems like a much safer place to me since I've developed a relationship with them.

I'm so grateful that our church has chosen to be a part of the solution rather than the problem. Because I have had the opportunity to know some trustworthy men within our church, I'm beginning to understand that God's plan for male headship may not be such a bad one after all. It's taken a lot of determination and a willingness to walk through my fear rather than running away, but I'm getting there.

More than anything else in the world I want to love and comfort broken, bleeding women. I want to be able to listen and pray with them and watch God do miracles in their lives the way He has in mine. I'm praying that the day will come when I will be able to do that under the covering of elders who actually believe that such a ministry is needed.

So What Can the Church Do?

It would take an entire book to answer that question, but here are some starters.

- The church leadership, male and female, must make a deliberate decision about whether or not the church will be a safe place for women in crisis. This is a costly ministry. If we are going to call women to live in obedience to biblical truth, we must be willing to spend emotional and financial resources to help them. Please do not take the next steps until you take this one. It will only create more pain, because it will raise the hopes of women only to have those hopes dashed if practical help is not available.
- Use an anonymous survey to profile women in your church.³ Use the information from that survey to alert the male leadership to the number of women in your own church who have had abortions, have suffered abuse, etc. Ask them to pray regularly for women in these specific situations. When the pastor prays from the pulpit for women who struggle with memories of an incestuous relationship, or for

women who have been abandoned, etc., church becomes a safer place for them.

- Use the information to plan seminars addressing whatever issues surface. A strong women's ministry that is teaching women to think and act biblically is an important component if a church is going to minister effectively to women.
- Encourage the male leadership to identify several spiritually mature women who will be available when needed to assist them in ministering to a woman in crisis. These women should be willing to keep confidences, to go with a woman to appear before the elders, to keep regular contact with the woman, and to report to the elders on her progress and needs. They should understand that they are not expected to serve as counselors, but as comforters and friends. These women should meet with the male leadership to map out a strategy and develop procedures so they will not be caught by surprise when a crisis happens. The primary function of these women would be to pray and to re-program. Women who have been treated in an evil way have lived in darkness. Their minds do not receive truth quickly. *Repetitive affirmation* is essential. They need to hear over and over that God loves and accepts them. Words such as, "You are special to God, and you are special to me," "God loves you, and I love you," "You are important to our fellowship and we need you," "Your past was dealt with at the cross—you are a treasure to your Heavenly Father," are soaked up like a sponge.
- Church members should be taught from the pulpit, and women should be taught in women's Bible studies, that the elders are there to help wounded people and that they partner with godly women to minister to women.
- Church members should be taught that injustice is sin and that submission does

not mean that a woman must submit to the sin of abuse. Women should understand that it is wrong for a wife to enable a husband to continue sinful practices. She has a responsibility to him to take this to her pastor and to the elders of her church.

Making church a safe place is not a safe thing to do, but it is the right thing to do. It takes courage, and I am not courageous. The only reason I have been able to speak and write about this is because God has called me to do it and because some of His daughters surround me with prayer. When I think of those brave women whose letters I have shared with you, Isa 62:1 burns on my heart:

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet,
till her righteousness shines out like the
dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch.

We must speak for the victims, the fatherless, the needy, the afflicted who have no one to help. But notice, we do not do it just for them: We do it for Zion's sake, for Jerusalem's sake. We do it for the sake of God's church. We do it so that the King of the church will not be appalled, but will be honored.

ENDNOTES

¹This essay is an edited reprint of a chapter by the same title in Susan Hunt, *By Design: God's Distinctive Calling for Women* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994), 57-72. Used by permission of Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

²This subject is addressed more fully in a book I co-wrote with Peggy Hutcheson entitled *Leadership For Women In The Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991).

³An example of a survey is given in the Leader's Guide for the book *By Design*, which can be ordered through the Christian Education and Publications ministry of the Presbyterian Church in America: www.cepbookstore.com, 1-800-283-1357.

Answering Lottie Moon's Cry: A Call for Dialogue On the Role of Women in Missions

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What are biblical ways for a woman to serve in missions? Are these different from the ways a woman can serve in a sending church? Many churches accept a great divergence between home and abroad in women's roles. Even complementarian sending churches—with strong, wise, humble masculine leadership in the pulpit and in the home—sometimes allow a single woman to fulfill any role in missions as long as it is “over there” in a foreign culture.

Some contend that this divergence is necessary because there are not enough men on the field and, therefore, women must rise to the occasion. Longtime missionary leader George Winston suggests that it is simply a matter of good stewardship of the female workforce to encourage them to teach, lead, and shepherd in a missions context.¹ Mimi Haddad, president of Christians for Biblical Equality, is also opposed to any such divergence in the role of women. Based on her understanding of the fruitfulness of women leading missions in the nineteenth century, she argues for the ordination of women in sending churches.²

Daniel Akin draws attention to this historical divergence in women's roles in an exposition of Rom 12:1 included in this issue of *JBMW*. His provocative sermon provides an extended illustration of the missionary work of Miss Lottie Moon in nineteenth-century China. Undoubtedly, her biography beautifully demonstrates a life consecrated to God in amazing and sacrificial ways. Nevertheless her story raises challenging questions about

gender issues in missions. Her biographer notes, “Although she was committed primarily to teaching the women, and next in dealing with the children, she could not keep the men from listening from adjoining rooms.”³ What should a complementarian missionary do if eavesdropping men are hungry to hear teaching from the Word of God? Should an exception to 1 Tim 2:12 be made in a foreign culture?

The challenge in China did not end when men were saved, but continued to crop up in the process of discipleship. Lottie Moon's letters describe being faced with the choice to either “do men's work or sit silent at religious services conducted by men just emerging from heathenism.”⁴ On other occasions she would preach to men, against her wishes, in the face of compelling need:

There was a large crowd pretty soon in attendance, so many that the hall would not hold them and they adjourned to the yard. I hope you won't think me desperately unfeminine, but I spoke to them all, men, women, and children, pleading with them to turn from their idolatry to the true and living God. I should not have cared to remain silent with so many souls before me sunk in heathen darkness.⁵

If no men are willing to endure the privations of foreign missions, shouldn't women preach the gospel to men who are otherwise destined to a Christless eternity? Miss Lottie Moon faced the daunting

task of reconciling the teaching of 1 Tim 2:12 with the crying need for gospel witness in light of the dearth of the male missionaries in many places around the world. Missions leaders are still confronted by such thorny questions today.

For example, consider two evangelical mission organizations with long track records of effective mission work Operation Mobilization (OM) and Campus Crusade. OM is celebrating fifty years of ministry and now works in more than one hundred countries around the world sharing the gospel and building up the church of Jesus Christ. Campus Crusade evangelizes on hundreds of college campuses and shows the JESUS film around the world. Both have tens of thousands of missionaries using innovative methods to advance the gospel and plant churches across cultures.⁶ They face the same gender challenges as Miss Lottie Moon, and even a cursory survey reveals many examples of new questions that need to be freshly asked and biblically answered. As a missionary leader, Bible scholar, or sending pastor, how would you respond in the following situations?

- For decades OM's evangelistic ships have been plying the ocean to distribute literature, train young people, and share the good news of God's love. Certainly, women and men alike should be encouraged to join these crews to help people in need and evangelize from port to port. Yet, could a qualified woman serve as the captain of the Logos II, or would that be a pastoral role that the apostle Paul would limit for men? More commonly, could a woman train and lead one of the many evangelistic teams (which includes college men) that serves on such a ship?
- Crusade's Athletes in Action is building spiritual movements everywhere through the platform of sport.⁷ OM's Sports Link operates in more than a dozen countries, often explaining the gospel using specially-designed multi-colored soccer balls.⁸ Certainly many women are gifted in both athletics and evangelism and should be encouraged

to take part in Sports Link teams. Yet is coaching an evangelistic soccer team an ecclesial function that biblically should be reserved for men?

- ArtsLink at OM connects Christians with ways to use their artistic gifts "practically and most radically" on the foreign mission field to "build the church and reach the unreached."⁹ Analyzing such a parachurch function in light of scripture takes much more effort than asking whether or not a Sunday School superintendent needs to be a man. Dance can communicate across boundaries of culture and language, and OM uses dance evangelistically. Would it be more appropriate for a man or a woman to direct OM's dance ministry to train dancers to "use their gifts to worship and minister on the mission field."¹⁰
- Certainly, a woman can share her faith and explain the gospel to a man or woman in any context, but does that mean that a woman could coordinate and lead the campus evangelistic efforts of men throughout an entire country or region? Should the fact that these are both parachurch organizations allow a woman to lead a small group Bible study for men? In a parachurch organization, can women teach the Bible to men at large gatherings because it is not a local church?
- Mission work is not intended to stop with evangelism but hopefully continues with the discipleship of new believers and eventually the formation of house churches. If a local church is planted by a woman missionary in a foreign country, could that church continue to be led by female elders who are nationals? In cultures that have historically subjugated and shamed women, couldn't a newly planted church be led by women to demonstrate their new freedom in Jesus Christ?

This essay is not intended to immediately provide answers to these increasingly common questions. Rather, the purpose is to call missionaries, pastors, and scholars to engage in a humble dialog to find practical answers which are biblically faithful. In every way, this dialogue needs to be conducted with the brotherly love of Christians working together and making every effort to reach the lost. Along the way, we also need to avoid a narrow view of missions. Without a doubt God has given gifts to women to serve the church in foreign missions, and women should be encouraged and empowered to help carry out the great commission.

There are countless ways for women to be involved in the greatest cause in the world, as John Piper relates, of “joyfully rescuing people from hell, meeting their earthly needs, making them glad in God, and doing it with a kind, serious pleasure that makes Christ look like the Treasure he is.”¹¹ God has gifted women for a broad array of tasks that at the very least include personal evangelism, disaster relief, counseling women, drama and dance, literacy training, teaching the Bible to women and children, music composition and instrumentation, ministry to handicapped, hospitality, prayer, and countless others. All of these contribute to fulfilling the great commission, and gifted women should be encouraged to pursue all of these essential tasks.

Even so, biblical methods must always be used to pursue biblical goals. There are biblically-defined, complementary roles for men and women in the church and these should have some expression in every culture around the world. We must understand and respect biblical limitations without discouraging women from using their God-given gifts in the mission to reach the lost for Christ. Members of the staff and scholars associated with CBMW are always available to explore these critical questions with individual churches and missions organizations.

Specifically, this essay is an invitation for missionary leaders, sending pastors, and Bible scholars to submit essays, articles, and scholarly studies to *JBMW* and Gender Blog (the daily blog at CBMW.org). The goal is to work toward a consensus that will guide missionaries on the field, teachers who

will train future missionaries, and pastors who will send and provide ongoing counsel to missionaries in the future. What important contribution does each group bring to this dialogue?

First, missionary leaders are needed to bring firsthand knowledge of cultures and practices from the front lines of the field. Understanding clearly the expectations and particular functions of a specific missionary task is critical to understand the situation biblically. We would appreciate the help of missionaries to ask and refine questions that are encountered on the field every day. This is not a task that can be successfully accomplished from academic offices or pastoral studies far removed from the rough and tumble details of daily life on the mission field.

Consider the previous example of the leadership of an evangelistic ship: Perhaps the captain might simply perform a straightforward nautical task of transporting missionaries and relief supplies on the high seas. This important position could be easily filled by a qualified woman. From another perspective, the captain could also be considered the spiritual leader of the ship's company with the pastoral responsibility of overseeing the whole evangelistic and discipling mission of the vessel. In this case serving as captain seems like an elder's role reserved for men. Nuances are significant, and prayerful wisdom is essential. For example, the former case might need to be reconsidered in the light of the fact that maritime law often allows the captain of a ship to perform marriages on board, which is a pastoral function.

Careful definitions of terms and roles will help us resist the temptation to pragmatism that places reaching the lost above biblical fidelity. If we accept that the Bible reserves some roles in missions for men, then extraordinary patience is required, and, ultimately, a trust in God to follow his methods in the face of a crying need for the gospel. It was a grievous error for King Saul to personally offer sacrifices for victory in battle rather than appropriately wait for the prophet Samuel to arrive (1 Sam 13:8–13). Is there ever a time when clear biblical expectation can be set aside (or even reversed) to plant a church or save a soul? Especially with respect to

gender issues, we must seek the lost using biblical methods.

Second, scholars are needed to ensure that solid exegesis is coupled with sound hermeneutics to reach solutions that are both biblical and practical. This task of reconciliation does not require a compromise of biblical principles, but rather the prayerful analysis and application of scriptural teaching into a plethora of contexts that were not specifically addressed in the New Testament. Once we have firmly established scriptural teachings, then much fruitful work remains to be done in the area of application.

Several scholars have helpfully undertaken to define the appropriate roles for women in ministry, however, the focus has primarily been on local churches in the context of the United States.¹² The church of Jesus Christ would benefit from a new group of scholars willing to take a fresh look at these questions from a world-wide perspective.

In this process, we must avoid the temptation to develop a schema of grids and solid lines that smacks of legalism and does not respect the prayerful wisdom of local elders and ministry leaders. Sharp lines drawn from a distance often lead to critical judgments, self-righteousness, and strife between Christian brothers that will impede the overarching mission. Rather, we need to understand common biblical principles that can be pursued in the day-to-day aspects of missionary life on the field.

Third, pastors of sending churches also have a critical responsibility in this dialogue. Pastors need to inquire and understand how gender issues are worked out in the ministries of those sent from their churches. In 3 John 5-8, the apostle gives this exhortation:

You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.

The pastor must ensure that people who are sent out for the sake of the gospel are sent in a manner that is worthy of God. The methods cannot be decoupled from the goal, or the result will undercut any churches that will be planted.

For this reason, pastors are needed to teach the next generation of missionaries and sending believers that the church of Jesus Christ is universal; there is not a Bible for sending churches that is different than the Bible that guides missionaries in foreign cultures. Paul taught about gender distinctions to be practiced in “every place” (1 Tim 2:8,9) and excluded gender-based practices the he does not teach: “nor do the churches of God” (1 Cor 11:16). There should be no divergence in the way women serve in principle, though cross-culturally there undoubtedly will be differences in practical application. Though there are myriads of ways to evangelize in different cultures, all methods can all be guided by and adhere to the same biblical principles.

While encouraging and empowering women to serve, we must not neglect to make every effort to raise up a generation of men, trained for missions, and prepared for privation, self-sacrifice, and even martyrdom—men with a love of the Savior that creates in them a burning desire to see cross-cultural evangelism and worldwide worship. We need to respond to the century-old cry of Miss Lottie Moon, “Oh! that we had active and zealous men who would go far and wide scattering books and tracks and preaching the word to the vast multitudes of this land.”¹³

ENDNOTES

¹George Winston, “Safe or Sorry in Developing the Female Missionary Force,” in *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* (April 2008): 214.

²Mimi Haddad, “Ascriptivism and Women in Missions” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, San Diego, CA, 14 November 2007). Note the brief response by Shawn Wright, “When History Trumps Scripture,” in *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 5–6.

³Catherine B. Allen, *The New Lottie Moon Story* (Nashville: B & H, 1997), 172.

⁴Letter to the Religious Herald, cited in Danny Akin, “The Power of a Consecrated Life Lived Out in the Ministry of Miss Lottie Moon,” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008).

⁵Keith Harper, ed., *Send the Light: Lottie Moon's Letters and Other Writings* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2002), 32.

⁶More information about the history and present work of Operation Mobilization and Campus Crusade is available at <http://www.om.org> and <http://www.ccci.org> respectively.

⁷More information about the history and present work of Athletes in Action is available at <http://www.cci.org/ministries/athletes-in-action/index.aspx>.

⁸More information about the history and present work of SportsLink is available at <http://www.go2sportslink.org>.

⁹More information about the history and present work of ArtsLink is available at <http://www.usa.om.org/OMartslink/site>.

¹⁰More information about the history and present work of DanceLink is available at <http://www.umdancelink.org>.

¹¹John Piper, *Don't Waste Your Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 122.

¹²Wayne Grudem, "But What Should Women Do in the Church?" *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* [Under the previous title *CBMW News*] 1, no. 2 (1995): 1, 3-7; John Piper, "A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined according to the Bible," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 31-59 (see especially the final portion of the essay, "A Closing Challenge to Men and Women," 54-59); and Randy Stinson and Christopher W. Cowan, "Women in Ministry: Practical Application of Biblical Teaching," *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 17-22.

¹³Harper, *Send the Light*, 8.

What's at Stake: "It's Hermeneutics!"¹

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Hermeneutics is the unfinished item on our agenda of theological prolegomena. It must be seriously and comprehensively addressed by all evangelical theologians and biblical scholars in the immediate future. Without a hermeneutical consensus, any hope for a consensus in theology and ethics is mere wishful thinking. We evangelicals rightly make a great deal of the normative nature of the biblical text. Our views must be judged in the light of Scripture. But our agreement on this point has real significance only to the extent that we "correctly handle the word of truth."

— Stanley N. Gundry, "Evangelical Theology: Where Should We Be Going?" (1978)²

Author's Note: *Who was Jesus? Was he a chauvinist? A feminist crusader? An egalitarian emancipator of women? In my forthcoming book Jesus and the Feminists: Who Do They Say That He Is?, portraits of Jesus painted by proponents of women's equality are investigated in order to determine how they fit with descriptions in the Gospel narratives. Specific attention is given to the evaluation of the hermeneutical methods employed by the different feminist interpreters. A study of feminist scholarship on Jesus shows that the feminist quest for self-realization has led feminists to distort who Jesus really was. Not only this; the various "Jesuses" resulting from the different feminist attempts to reconstruct Jesus are contradictory, indicating that feminism is a movement divided with regard to Jesus and his approach to women.*

The article printed below will appear as chapter 2 of the book. It focuses on special issues in the feminist debate regarding Jesus. Issues that are discussed include the reconstruction of history, epistemology, the role of the reader versus authorial intent, canonicity,

the alleged patriarchal nature of Scripture, and fundamentalism. Also, the reader is informed as to the most glaring pitfalls of feminist interpretation.

Introduction

During the 1992 United States presidential campaign, Bill Clinton's advisers kept hammering home one simple truth: "It's the economy!" They were convinced that the state of the American economy was the number-one issue in that election, and in part owing to their dogged insistence and determination their candidate triumphed. As our study of feminist scholarship on Jesus will demonstrate, something similar is the case in biblical studies: "It's hermeneutics!" In other words, people's understanding of individual passages of Scripture largely depends on their overall view of the nature of Scripture and on the interpretive methodology they bring to the table in the first place.

As we will see, in the case of radical feminists,³ their approach to Scripture is, in a word, rejection, owing to what they perceive to be the Bible's irredeemably "patriarchal" nature; i.e., it springs from and provides for a disproportionate amount of male power.

The same is true to a lesser extent with reformist feminists,⁴ except that they do not reject Scripture in its totality but selectively use or discard what does or does not conform to their feminist presuppositions. In keeping with the Enlightenment spirit, reformist feminists start out with the "enlightened notion" that all men—and women—are equal, and then they critique and supplement Scripture as they see fit, whether by rejecting the authority of Scripture where it does not conform to their feminist outlook or by adding additional writings to their "canon" that reflect more closely their own beliefs.

As for evangelical feminists or egalitarians, they accept Scripture as inerrant and authoritative, while supporting a hermeneutic aimed at discerning authorial intent. For egalitarians, Scripture is treated with more respect than it is with radical or reformist feminists. Unlike the latter, who already start out with the presupposition that feminism is right and the Bible wrong where it stands in conflict with feminism, evangelical feminists claim to show inductively that the Bible, rightly interpreted, teaches male-female equality, including women's eligibility to all church offices and roles of leadership in the church.

There is a wide range of interpretations among feminists with regard to Jesus and women. How do we account for this diversity of views, even among those who all hold to a form of feminism? And how do we know which interpretation is right? Since a proper approach to the study of Scripture is foundational to its interpretation and also essential for the construction of sound theology, it is important to unearth the theological method, including the hermeneutical method, of various schools of interpretation with regard to Jesus' approach to women.⁵

Special Issues in the Feminist Debate

In our efforts to understand feminist hermeneutics, it will be helpful to take a look at a few general hermeneutical issues with particular relevance for the feminist interpretation of Jesus.

Reconstructing History

Reconstructing biblical history is the first such issue, an endeavor that has had a major impact on the discussion of the feminist interpretation of Jesus' stance toward women. In the prevailing climate of postmodernism in much of American culture, including academia, the question of the nature of history and of historical research naturally arises. How do we really know what happened in history? Since history is forever past, how can one properly investigate it? Since all historical research is conducted by historians with various views and agendas of their own, is not the entire enterprise of historical research hopelessly subjective? Recent scholarship, including the feminist variety, has

increasingly questioned whether history "as it actually happened"⁶ can be recovered with any degree of confidence from the available sources.⁷ Post-modern theorists believe that history is written by the winners; those victorious in a given struggle are the ones who recount the story from their point of view. According to them, history is a function of power rather than truth. History is but a fable agreed upon.⁸

There is, of course, some truth to these claims. Sources must still be evaluated, and they will often—some would say *always*—reflect the bias of a particular historian. At the same time, few would go to the extreme of denying that it is possible to reconstruct history "as it actually happened" to at least some extent. For example, few would question that Jesus Christ lived as a historical person or that he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, because a variety of sources, biblical and extrabiblical, attest to his existence and the facts of Jesus' life. The same can be said with many other historical persons and events both ancient and modern. As P. W. Felix notes,

It must be granted that twentieth-century exegetes are outsiders to the culture in which the Bible was written, and for this reason can never achieve a complete understanding of the original meaning of the Bible in its historical setting. An undue emphasis upon this limitation, however, loses sight of the fact that all historical study is a weighing of probabilities. The more evidence we have, the higher degree of probability we can attain. The practice of exegesis, therefore, is a continued search for greater probability and a more refined understanding.⁹

Once doubt is cast on the interpreter's very ability to determine history with a reasonable degree of confidence, we can no longer be sure of the very foundations of our Christian faith, which is of necessity grounded in historical events such as Christ's incarnation, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3–4).

Most feminists, however, still seek to reconstruct the historical circumstances surrounding Jesus' ministry to determine his approach to women

in order to critique or commend it, though different feminists do not necessarily agree on a particular reconstruction. In this quest, of course, evangelical interpreters will trust the testimony preserved in Scripture as their primary historical source.

Epistemology

A foundational issue related to hermeneutics is the question of how we know anything to be true, the study of which is called *epistemology*. Is knowing truth strictly subjective, varying from person to person as postmodernism claims, or is truth absolute and applicable to all individuals regardless of their cultural context? The postmodernism view is that truth is but the linguistic expression of a socially constructed notion of customs and values characterizing a particular community. Yet noted philosopher J. P. Moreland, among others, has recently raised some serious questions about its validity.¹⁰

Moreland's critique of postmodernism implies that truth is not merely subjective, as if there were the possibility of many different Jesuses roaming first-century Palestine. Nor is truth based merely on the perspective of the interpreter so that the first-century Jesus is hopelessly irrecoverable. The "real Jesus" is attested by eyewitness testimony in our primary sources, the Gospels, and these sources essentially cohere. For this reason we can approach Scripture with confidence, hoping to discover who Jesus really was, as long as we are aware, and properly suspicious, of our own presuppositions.

The Role of the Reader vs. Authorial Intent

The question must be raised not only about *what* we are interpreting but also about *who* is doing the interpreting.¹¹ Evangelicals endeavor to operate within the Bible's own frame of reference, accepting the reality of a transcendent God and of the supernatural. But many who approach the Bible from a postmodern perspective allow their personal situation and experience not only to influence but even to determine the outcome of the interpretation.

This premise is paramount in feminist interpretation of Scripture; it is approached self-consciously by women with predetermined outcomes.

Yet, arguably, if we desire to interpret Scripture, we must attempt to allow its authors to have weight in the interpretive outcome. This procedure should be applied in as fair and unbiased a fashion as possible, whether or not we believe that Scripture is the inspired, authoritative, and true Word of God.

It is a realistic danger for any interpreter from whatever point of view to read her own agenda into the Bible rather than to let the Bible speak for itself. She must recognize that she has presuppositions but not allow these to be determinative in her interpretive outcome. Using proper exegetical methods will help interpreters overcome their own lack of knowledge or deficiency and will enable them to come as close as possible to the author's intended meaning of Scripture and to determine its significance for their own lives.

The quest for the intention of the author is heavily criticized in many circles and is not without its challenges and in some cases proves inconclusive, but it must be maintained that, in principle, determining authorial intent is an academically defensible and legitimate strategy for discerning textual meaning.¹² An author-oriented approach to interpretation also corresponds best to reality and common sense, since every text has an author and is willed by that author to express a particular message. Texts do not simply come into being, nor do they, properly understood, mean anything apart from authorial intention.

In recent years, certain approaches to interpretation have completely turned away from authorial intention and put the interpretive emphasis in discerning meaning squarely on the reader. According to some, a text means what it means to a given reader. This renders interpretation very difficult since a given text will mean different things to different readers; there are no criteria for determining what constitutes a valid interpretation.¹³

What various postmodern hermeneutical approaches have in common and what they share with much of recent feminist approaches is an emphasis on the reader rather than on the author of a given piece of writing. No longer do interpreters seek to discern authorial intention in seeking to understand the meaning of a given passage. Instead,

they deny that a passage has the same meaning for all who interpret it; a passage has only a multiplicity of readings, and these readings, in turn, are a function of the subjectivity and experience of the reader, whether feminist, Hispanic, white Anglo-Saxon male, or African-American. The end result is that the meaning of a given text will be different for different readers, and there are no clear standards by which to evaluate the validity of different readings. All are equally valid.

Now, there surely is an element of truth in these postmodern approaches. It is true that the focus on authorial meaning is often oversimplified. Nevertheless, the radical shift from authorial intent to reader-created meaning is too reactionary. In the end, there is no adequate substitute to make up for the loss of the author in determining the meaning of a given text. Moreover, it is important to remember that there is no way to know the author's intention other than by what is expressed in a given text.

The conclusion must be that *authorial meaning is textual meaning*, and the meaning of a given text is the meaning intended by its author. The reader's role is largely passive, seeking as much as possible to discern the various textual clues for the original author's intended meaning. Only after this approach has been applied is there a need for the reader to apply the text to her personal life.

While objectivity in interpretation is clearly impossible in light of a reader's presuppositions, this does not mean that sound interpretation is doomed to failure. Interpreters who approach the text with an openness to be engaged by its message and by its ultimate author—God himself—will find their understanding of its meaning increasing.

Issues Related to Canonicity

Given the perceived patriarchal bias that both radical and reformist feminism bring to Scripture, whole portions have been excluded by them and its authority is rejected. Other books have been co-opted or materials have been created and put in their place.¹⁴

Historically, the Scripture that we are interpreting has come down to us in church history

as a canon of biblical books.¹⁵ The canon of Old Testament books was possibly set as early as the end of the first century A.D. The New Testament canon took shape in the first few centuries of the early church. Paul's letters were given recognition before the end of the first century (2 Pet 3:16). At the Reformation, the church removed several Old Testament apocryphal books from its canon while continuing to affirm the canonicity of all twenty-seven New Testament books that had been included at least since Athanasius's famous Easter letter of A.D. 367. Therefore, the church through the ages, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, has held that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, and they alone, are inspired and authoritative.

Regarding the canon, the church has historically affirmed, first, that the canon is *closed*; that is, the early church's determination of canonicity was definitive and binding on the church ever since.

Second, the canon of Scripture is characterized by what has been termed "progressive revelation," which means that later revelation builds on earlier divine self-disclosure. This is important for interpretation, since it means that earlier material must be interpreted in the light of later revelation.

Third, the canon of Scripture is characterized by both an underlying theological *unity* and *diversity* in expression on the part of the different biblical authors.¹⁶ For example, with regard to unity, all of Scripture is the story of God's dealings with humankind. This theme runs through Scripture as a common thread and lends unity and coherence to the various biblical books. At the same time, different writers of Scripture may express themselves in diverse ways. A classic example is the way in which Paul and James address the issue of justification by faith. The implication of this for our topic is that evangelicals will expect the biblical teaching on the role of women, such as that of Jesus and Paul, to be coherent and consistent.

Fourth, in light of the diversity of biblical books many feminists have postulated the need for a "canon within a canon." They seek to determine the "central message of Scripture" and to interpret portions of Scripture that seem to be at variance with that central message in light of it.¹⁷ The prob-

lem with this procedure, however, is that only what is considered to be the central message is important while less central passages may be neglected. Also, there is danger in an interpreter arbitrarily selecting a “central theme” of Scripture in keeping with her preference while neglecting teachings that are countercultural or otherwise offensive.

In keeping with the church’s historic affirmation, then, we affirm that the canon is closed and consists of the sixty-six books traditionally included in the Protestant Scriptures, and all of its teachings are relevant and true in the varied presentations and portraits presented by its different authors.

The Alleged Patriarchal Nature of Scripture

Another issue at stake is the question of the perceived patriarchal nature of Scripture. Those who hold to this view believe that Scripture was written and settled in a framework controlled by men, thereby affording men an inordinately large share of authority. The question is whether such male authority is to be taken as God’s will for all people at all times.

It is undeniable that patriarchy as a cultural system of family relations existed in the Old Testament period. So should we consider patriarchy as a cultural institution that expresses God’s will for human relationships? Or is this system culturally determined and thus relative, if not intrinsically evil, because it permanently enshrines male supremacy over women, justifying the removal of portions of the canon of Scripture? How is patriarchy to be defined in the first place? If patriarchy is God’s intention for us, how is this authority to be exercised? What do Jesus’ teachings and practice contribute to this discussion?

All sides can agree that concerted efforts should be made to combat abuse of male authority, which is still found in many homes and cultures today. In the end, this is not merely an academic issue but one that has enormous practical consequences. This is one of the great strengths of feminism, which has always strongly rejected male domination and the abuse of women. Yet it is necessary to elaborate on the difference between patriarchy and what may be called *patricentrism*, between

harsh male dominance on the one hand and loving, caring leadership on the other.

Is the Bible’s teaching, then, hopelessly patriarchal and thus irrelevant for today’s enlightened, egalitarian culture? How do we rightly interpret Scripture in any case? Is not all biblical interpretation irredeemably subjective? And is not historical research fraught with insurmountable difficulties? Feminism has brought all these issues to the fore. In arguing for an interpretation of Scripture, including an interpretation of Jesus, that is ideologically and experientially driven, feminists have set themselves over Scripture, critiquing it and determining what Scripture may or may not say to modern, or postmodern, men and women.¹⁸

What are we to say, then, regarding the charge leveled by radical feminists that Scripture is to be rejected since it enshrines patriarchy, understood as the exercise of a dominant, heavy-handed type of male authority? Without exception, patriarchy is characterized as the source of all evil in feminist literature. This, however, may be shown to reflect feminist bias rather than scriptural deficiency.

In fact, Daniel Block has made a strong case that ancient Israel practiced not the kind of patriarchy depicted by today’s feminists but by what he calls “patricentrism.”¹⁹ According to Block, like the spokes of a wheel, life in ancient Israel revolved around the father in his role as the provider and protector of the extended family. It was not so much the “rule” of the father (patri-archy) but his loving care and provision for the well being of his own that were most central to the father’s role.

Scripture in its entirety is pervaded by the principle of men bearing the ultimate responsibility and authority for marriage and the family as well as for the church, “the household of God” (1 Tim 3:15). This principle of male headship reaches from God’s creation of the man first (Gen 2:7), to his holding the first man accountable for humanity’s sin (Gen 3:9–12), to the ancient Israelite practice of “patricentrism,” to the all-male Levitical priesthood in Old Testament Israel, to Jesus’ choice of twelve men as his apostles, to Paul’s teaching that men bear ultimate responsibility and authority for the church (1 Tim 2:12). In fact, Paul himself

believed that his teaching of male headship was rooted in the Genesis creation narrative (see 1 Cor 11:8–9; 1 Tim 2:13).

It is true that the historical narrative books of the Hebrew Scriptures witness to numerous abuses of this abiding principle of male headship in the Old Testament period, such as arbitrary divorce (Deut 24:1–2), the intermittent practice of polygamy, adultery, rape, incest, and so on. Scripture does not condone these behaviors and attitudes.²⁰ At the same time, the New Testament does not abrogate the principle of male headship even subsequent to redemption in Christ. Thus, Paul still can call Christian wives to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22–24), and Peter similarly enjoins wives even of unbelieving husbands to submit to them (1 Pet 3:1–6).

Feminists regularly stress women's need for liberation. There can be no doubt that all over the world millions of women are oppressed, often just because of the traditional structures remaining intact, though by and large this is not a feature of North American society, which is very much egalitarian in practice. Christian wives should experience liberation from the dominant, unloving, abusive exercise of their husband's authority (see Gen 3:16), a form of "rule" that in the Bible is contrasted with the loving, sacrificial exercise of the husband's servant leadership in Christ (Eph 5:25–28). But the gospel does not entail a promise of, or call to, women's liberation from all forms of male authority over them.

The point is that true freedom in life is not found in the abolishing of any authority over oneself, especially if it is God-ordained. Scripture presents men's authority in the home and in the church not as autocratic or grounded in male superiority or merit but in the mysterious, sovereign divine will subsumed under the supreme lordship and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Living within God's created male and female order allows for a genuine experience of fulfillment and freedom for everyone.

Evangelicalism vs. Fundamentalism

The diminishment of biblical authority in

feminism has left a vacuum that has been filled by a vast array of feminist readings of Scripture and interpretations of Jesus. These readings make Jesus an extension of feminist aspirations, domesticating him rather than allowing him to speak with his own unique voice to today's world and church.

Some are dismissing an evangelical approach to Scripture out of hand for illegitimate reasons. For example, conservative evangelical Christians may at times find themselves confronted with the label "fundamentalist," and their conservative viewpoint on gender issues gets rejected without further discussion.²¹ But there is quite a difference between fundamentalism and a conservative evangelical reading of Scripture. Fundamentalism often tends toward a narrow-minded approach to Scripture that may neglect legitimate aspects of the historical-cultural background. It at times can be dogmatic and may tend to impose systematized doctrine onto the text. It is also often characterized by simplistic thinking. Some have even used the Bible in the past to justify such terrible things as slavery and racism.

Other more balanced conservative evangelical interpreters of Scripture, while attempting to interpret the Bible literally, are open to taking the specific historical-cultural background into account to aid interpretation in order to acknowledge their own presuppositions, and they can therefore be more nuanced and open to complexity and diversity.

These foundational considerations will enable us to evaluate the various feminist proposals regarding Jesus' approach to women.

Conclusion

Hermeneutics is of critical importance in the study of Jesus' approach to women. As has been seen, several special hermeneutical issues arise in this regard: (1) the challenge of reconstructing history; (2) the question of how we know (epistemology); (3) the role of the reader versus authorial intent; (4) issues related to canonicity; (5) the alleged patriarchal nature of Scripture; and (6) the distinction between evangelicalism and fundamentalism. In assessing feminist scholarship on Jesus, it

is important to realize that the various feminist approaches are driven by various hermeneutical presuppositions that predetermine the interpretive outcome. A critique of feminist portrayals of Jesus must therefore assess the viability of these underlying hermeneutical presuppositions. This is the underlying thesis of *Jesus and the Feminists: Who Do They Say That He Is?*

ENDNOTES

¹This essay is taken from the forthcoming book *Jesus and the Feminists: Who Do They Say That He Is?* by Margaret Köstenberger (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008). Used by permission of Crossway Books, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

²S. N. Gundry, "Evangelical Theology: Where Should We Be Going?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 22, no. 1 (1979): 13; repr. in *Quo Vadis, Evangelicalism? Perspectives on the Past, Direction for the Future. Presidential Addresses from the First Fifty Years of the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (ed. A. J. Köstenberger; Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 90. This was Gundry's presidential address delivered at the 1978 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. The quote reproduces the conclusion of Gundry's address.

³Radical feminists reject Scripture and even Christianity as hopelessly sexist and pursue a feminist agenda outside the bounds of Christianity.

⁴Reformist feminists claim Scripture has a "patriarchal bias" but seek to "salvage" biblical texts that portray women in a favorable light. In addition, they supply other extrabiblical texts to their feminist "canon."

⁵For that reason, before delving into a study of feminist interpretations of Jesus, you might find it helpful to review Appendix 2 of *Jesus and the Feminists* to see how Scripture ought to be interpreted. For a helpful summary see D. J. Smit, "Biblical Hermeneutics: the first 19 centuries," in *Initiation into Theology: The Rich Variety of Theology and Hermeneutics* (ed. S. Maimela and A. König; Pretoria: J L van Schaik, 1998), 275–96.

⁶The phrase is that of the German historian von Ranke: *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*.

⁷See further on this point the interaction with E. S. Fiorenza elsewhere in *Jesus and the Feminists*.

⁸For conservative evangelical evaluations of postmodernism see D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996); and M. J. Erickson, *Truth or Consequences: The Promise and Perils of Postmodernism* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001).

⁹P. W. Felix Sr., "The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism," in *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (ed. R. L. Thomas; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 386, citing R. Thomas, "Some Hermeneutical Ramifications of Contextualization and Feminist Literature" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society; Atlanta, GA; November, 1986).

¹⁰J. P. Moreland, "Truth, Contemporary Philosophy, and the Postmodern Turn," in *Whatever Happened to Truth?* (ed. A. J. Köstenberger; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 75–92. The following summary of Moreland's argument is taken from the introduction.

¹¹Klein, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," in *Initiation into*

Theology, 324–25; chap. 5 in W. W. Klein, C. L. Blomberg, and R. L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2d ed.; Dallas: Word, 2004).

¹²E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967); Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2d ed.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

¹³Anticipated by Hirsch, *Validity*.

¹⁴See, e.g., R. R. Ruether, *Womanguides: Readings toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1985) and various works by E. S. Fiorenza.

¹⁵B. F. Westcott, *A General Survey of the History of the Canon of the New Testament* (7th ed.; London: Macmillan, 1896); B. M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987); F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); Klein, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 324; chap. 4 in Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction*; R. L. Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Scriptures* (Greenville, SC: A Press, 1995).

¹⁶Klein, "Evangelical Hermeneutics," 324.

¹⁷This is found not infrequently in the writings of biblical feminists, though they may not use the "canon within a canon" terminology. See, e.g., I. H. Marshall, "An Evangelical Approach to 'Theological Criticism,'" in *The Best in Theology, Volume Three* (ed. J. I. Packer; Carol Stream, IL: *Christianity Today*, 1989), 45–60. The article first appeared in *Themelios*, as cited and critiqued by A. J. Köstenberger, "Gender Passages in the NT: Hermeneutical Fallacies Critiqued," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994): 278–79.

¹⁸See the surveys in M. E. Köstenberger, "Feminist Biblical Interpretation" and "Feminist Theology," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization* (ed. G. T. Kurian; Oxford: Blackwell, forthcoming).

¹⁹D. I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (ed. K. M. Campbell; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 33–102, esp. 40–48.

²⁰A. J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 42–51.

²¹For a classic example of these two approaches to Scripture see the work by J. Barr, *Fundamentalism* (2d ed.; London: SCM, 1981), on which see the critique by M. Silva, "Can Two Walk Together Unless They Be Agreed? Evangelical Theology and Biblical Scholarship," in *Quo Vadis, Evangelicalism?*, 111–20.

Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the Essentially Equal Divine Persons of the Godhead¹

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Introduction: Framework for the Doctrine of the Trinity

The Christian faith affirms that there is one and only one God, eternally existing and fully expressed in three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead is equally God, each is eternally God, and each is fully God—not three gods but three Persons of the one Godhead. Each Person is equal in essence as each possesses fully and simultaneously the identically same, eternal divine nature, yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of that one and undivided divine nature.

The equality of essence among the members of the Trinity, then, is greater than the equality that exists among human beings or among any other finite reality. For example, my wife, Jodi, and I are equally human, in that each of us possesses a human nature. That is, her nature is of the same kind as my nature, viz., human nature, and so our equality surely is real as an equality of kind. But the equality of the three divine Persons is even more firmly grounded. Here, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each possesses not merely the same kind of nature, viz., divine nature; rather, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each possesses fully and

eternally the identically same nature. Their equality, then, is not merely an equality of kind but an equality of identity. There is no stronger grounding possible for the full equality of Persons of the Godhead than this. And so we affirm today what the church has affirmed as orthodox since the days of Nicea-Constantinople, that the oneness of God, and hence the full essential equality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is constituted precisely in a oneness of divine nature possessed fully, simultaneously, and eternally by each of the divine Persons.

Therefore, since by nature or essence the Father, Son, and Spirit are identically the same, what distinguishes the Father from the Son and each of them from the Spirit cannot be their one and undivided divine essence. At the level of divine essence, each is equal as each possesses the identically same divine nature. Rather, what distinguishes the Father from the Son and each of them from the Spirit is instead the particular *roles* each has within the Trinity—both immanent and economic—and the respective *relationships* that each has with the other divine Persons.

In this article, then, we wish to examine particularly what it means that the Father is the eternal *Father* of the Son, and that the Son is the eternal

Son of the Father. I will defend the thesis that while Scripture clearly teaches, and the history of doctrine affirms, that the Father and Son are fully equal in their deity as each possesses fully the identically same divine nature, yet the eternal and inner-trinitarian Father-Son relationship is marked, among other things, by an authority and submission structure in which the Father is eternally in authority over the Son and the Son eternally in submission to his Father. There is, then, an eternal and immutable equality of essence between the Father and the Son, while there is also an eternal and immutable authority-submission structure that marks the relationship of the Father and the Son.

Some, of course, reject the notion that the submission of the Son to the Father is eternal and apart from simply his role as the incarnate Son of the Father.² For example, in his recent book, *Jesus and the Father*, Kevin Giles extends a plea to his “fellow evangelicals who in growing numbers in recent years have begun arguing for the eternal subordination in function and authority of the Son to the Father.” “Go back, you are going the wrong way,” he appeals to them. “To set God the Son eternally under God the Father is to construe the Trinity as a hierarchy and thereby undermine the coequality of the differentiated divine persons, the core truth of the doctrine of the Trinity.”³ Here I will argue that this position advanced by Giles and others in fact gets it exactly wrong. Scripture and the history of doctrine unite to declare that both an eternal equality of essence and an eternal functional authority-submission relationship characterize, respectively, the one and indivisible nature and the particular roles of the Father and the Son. Consider with me a portion of the case that can be made for the eternal functional authority-submission relation of the Father and the Son.

The Case for an Eternal Functional Authority-Submission Structure in the Trinity *Names of the “Father” and the “Son”*

From the beginning, the church has understood the names “Father” and “Son” for these respective Persons of the Trinity to be appellations of their eternal Personhood and relationship, respectively,

not conventions suitable for the incarnation merely. If the Father sends his Son into the world (John 3:17) and if the Father creates and reveals and redeems through his Son (Heb 1:1–3), then these names refer not to some *ad hoc* arrangement for the incarnation but to an eternal relationship in which the Father is the eternal Father of the Son, and the Son is the eternal Son of the Father. Now, what is in these names? Geoffrey Wainwright muses over the fact that “‘Father’ was the name that the second person in his human existence considered most appropriate as an address to the first person.” But why is this? To this question, Wainwright can only say that “*there must be . . . something* about human fatherhood that makes Father a suitable way for Jesus to designate the one who sent him. In trinitarian terms, the crucial point is that Father was the address Jesus characteristically used in this connection.”⁴ However, just what the “something” is, Wainwright does not tell us.

But is it not obvious? Jesus said often throughout his ministry that he came down from heaven to do the *will* of his Father (John 6:38), indeed the Father installed his Son as King on Mt. Zion to reign over the nations (Ps 2:6–9), and in the end it will be the Father who puts all things in subjection to his Son (1 Cor 15:27–28). Without question, a central part of the notion of “Father” is that of fatherly authority. Certainly this is not all there is to being a father, but while there is more, there certainly is not less or other. The masculine terminology used of God throughout Scripture conveys, within the patriarchal cultures of Israel and the early church, the obvious point that God, portrayed in masculine ways, had authority over his people. Father, King, and Lord communicate, by their masculine gender referencing, a rightful authority that was to be respected and followed. And the father-son relationship in particular evidences, among other things, the authority of the father over the son. Malachi 1:6, for example, indicates just this connection between “father” and authority: “A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the LORD Almighty.” God as Father is rightfully deserving of

his children's honor, respect, and obedience. To fail to see this is to miss one of the primary reasons God chose such masculine terminology generally, and here the name "Father" particularly, to name himself. If the Father is the eternal Father of the Son, and if the Son is the eternal Son of the Father, this marks their relationship as one in which an inherent and eternal authority and submission structure exists. The Son *qua* eternal Son heeds the voice and command and will of his eternal Father.

One implication of the submission of the Son *qua* eternal Son to the Father *qua* eternal Father should be noted. Those who deny any eternal submission of the Son to the Father simply have no grounding for answering the question why it was the "Son" and not the "Father" or "Spirit" who was sent to become incarnate. And even more basic is the question why the eternal names for "Father" and "Son" would be exactly *these* names. John Thompson has indicated a trend in much modern trinitarian discussion to separate Christology from trinitarian formulations. He writes that "Christology and the Trinity were virtually divorced. It was both stated and assumed that any one of the three persons could become incarnate. . . . There was thus only an accidental relation between the economy of revelation and redemption and the eternal triune being of God."⁵ It appears that contemporary egalitarianism is vulnerable also to this criticism. Since, in their understanding, nothing *in God* grounds the Son being the Son of the Father, and since every aspect of the Son's earthly submission to the Father is divorced altogether from any *eternal relation* that exists between the Father and Son, there simply is no reason why the *Father* should send the *Son*. In Thompson's words, it appears that the egalitarian view would permit "any one of the three persons" to become incarnate. And yet we have scriptural revelation that clearly says that the Son came down out of heaven to do the will of his Father. This sending is not *ad hoc*. In eternity, the Father commissioned the Son who then willingly laid aside the glory he had with the Father to come and purchase our pardon and renewal. Such glory is diminished if there is no eternal Father-Son relation on the basis of which the Father wills to send,

the Son submits and comes, and the Spirit willingly empowers.

The Rightful Authority Specifically of the Father Over All Things

The Father is the grand architect, the wise designer of all that has occurred in the created order, and he, not the Son or the Spirit, is specifically said to have supreme authority over all. In his position and authority, the Father is supreme among the Persons of the Godhead as he is supreme over the whole created order. For example, Psalm 2 records the raging of the nations against "the LORD and against his Anointed" (Ps 2:3). The very reference to "his Anointed" indicates already the supreme position that this LORD has over the one he anoints for the work to be described. As we read on, far from trembling at the rebellious counsel of the kings of the earth, God rather laughs from his exalted place in the heavens (Ps 2:4). Of God it is said, "Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 'As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill'" (Ps 2:5–6). Notice that God asserts his rightful jurisdiction over the nations of the world, and he also affirms his authority over the very king whom he sets over the nations. The point, then, is clear. God's supremacy is both over the nations themselves and over this king whom he places over the nations.

And who is this king whom God sets over the kings of the nations? He is none other than his own Son. We read of God saying, "I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel'" (Ps 2:7–9). The citation of Ps 2:7 in Acts and Hebrews make clear that the reference here clearly is to One who will become the incarnate Son of God, whom the Father places over the nations. God the Father subjects the nations to his rulership by sending his Anointed, God the Son, to come as the incarnate Son and King to reign over the world. And from Revelation 19 we learn that the incarnate but now crucified and risen Son, the

“Word of God” (Rev 19:13) and the “King of kings and Lord of lords” (Rev 19:16) will indeed bring forth the wrath of God Almighty on the nations who stand against him. Although the fulfillment of this text, then, clearly is through the incarnate Son who will come to live, die, be raised, and, in the end, be exalted over all in fulfillment of the Father’s will, still Psalm 2 records, also clearly, the pre-incarnate will of this Father to anoint and install this particular One, his own Son, to be this king. Here, then, is evidence that the Father’s role is supreme over the Son as it is supreme over all things, for it is the Father who anoints the Son, who puts the Son in his place as king over the nations, and through his Son brings all things into subjection under his Son’s feet.

Consider a few other texts. In Matt 6:9–10, Jesus says to pray this way, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” As Jesus specifies that prayer is to be made to the Father, he does so in the very context in which he asserts that the Father is over all. It is (specifically) the *Father’s will* that is to be done, and the *Father’s kingdom* that is to come. Matthew 11:25–27 specifies that the Father has determined to hide his revelation from the wise and intelligent and to reveal it to infants. His authority, then, is supreme including over those who understand the very teaching of Christ, the Son. In John 6 it is only those whom the Father will give to the Son who will come to him (John 6:37) for no one can come to the Son unless the Father who sent the Son draws him (John 6:44). Ephesians 1:3 specifies that praise be directed to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” for giving to his own people every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. As Rom 8:32 and Jas 1:17 confirm, it is (specifically) the Father who gives every good gift to his children, all of which comes to them through giving them his own Son. Ephesians 1:9–11 amplifies that it is the will of the Father to sum up all things in his Son as the culmination of his purpose (i.e., the Father’s purpose) to work all things—absolutely everything in heaven and earth—according to the counsel of his, the Father’s, will. This is so much the case that the

three-fold repetition of praise in Eph 1:6, 12, and 14 specifically is to the praise of his, i.e., the Father’s, glory. First Corinthians 15:28 instructs us that at the completion of history, when all things finally and fully are subjected to Jesus Christ the Son, then the Son himself will also be subjected to his own Father who is the very One who put all things in subjection under his Son, so that God the Father, who is not subjected to anyone—not even to his own Son—may be shown to be supreme and over all that is. Therefore, in this day when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, they will do so to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2:11). The Father, then, is understood as supreme over all, and in particular, he is supreme within the Godhead as the highest in authority and the One deserving ultimate praise.

The Submission of the Son to the Father in the Incarnate Mission of the Son

The submission of the Son to the Father during the incarnation is both obvious and virtually undisputed.⁶ Even if people question whether the Son submits eternally to the Father, the evidence is overwhelming and absolutely clear that in the incarnate life and ministry of Jesus, he lived his life in submission to the Father. That is, Jesus sought in all he planned, said, and did to obey his Father, in full submission to the Father’s will. Consider just some of the evidence from the life of Jesus for his earthly constant and absolute submission to the Father.

The Gospel of John, in particular, makes much of Jesus’ constant desire to obey his Father. In a fascinating account, Jesus said to those religious leaders who were with him, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23). Here, Jesus established his pre-existence prior to the incarnation, and he implied by this not only that he came from above but that he was, in his very nature, uncreated and divine. Given this emphasis on his intrinsic deity (which he often makes, especially as indicated for us in John’s Gospel), other statements by Jesus that follow are quite astonishing. A few verses later, Jesus says, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that *I do not*—

ing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him" (John 8:28–29, emphasis added).

Consider two observations from this account. First, the very same Jesus who claims implicitly to be God (8:23) then proceeds to describe himself as doing nothing by his own authority, speaking only what the Father teaches him, and only and always doing what pleases the Father (8:28–29). How amazing this is. Jesus is God, but Jesus obeys God. Jesus is not of this world, but in this world Jesus refuses to speak or act on his own initiative but rather chooses to do only what pleases his Father. Clearly, the only way to make sense of this is to see that the eternal Son of the Father is both "*God the Son*" and "*God the Son*." That is, as eternally divine and not of this world, he is *God the Son*, but as under the authority of his Father, and as the eternal Son of the Father, he is *God the Son*. Both are true of Christ, and that both are true is a wonder indeed. One might think that if he is God, then he would not be under anyone's authority, or if he is a Son, then he could not be fully divine. But divine, he is, and a Son, he is. As *God the Son*, he submits, then, to God his Father.

Second, the level of his submission indicated here is nearly unbelievable. Hear again these words: "*I do nothing on my own authority. . . . I always do the things that are pleasing to him*" (John 8:28–29, emphasis added). And of course, we know that these claims must be exactly correct, because Jesus went to the cross absolutely sinless, having done nothing other than the will of his Father (cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15). The level of Jesus' submission to the Father, then, is complete, comprehensive, all-inclusive and absolute. There are no exceptions to his submission and obedience, for he never once sins at any point throughout all of his life.

Another glimpse of the pervasive and passionate submission of Jesus to the Father is seen in John 4. Recall the episode where Jesus was speaking to the Samaritan woman. His disciples had gone away to get food, and they came back and realized that Jesus had not eaten anything while they were away. They were sure he must be very hungry and ask

him if he wants something to eat. Jesus responds that he has food to eat that they do not know, and they puzzle over this (John 4:32–33). So, Jesus then says to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). That is, my food, my sustenance, what nourishes me, what fuels me, what drives me, declares Jesus, is doing the will of my Father.

And when one considers this idea that Jesus' food was doing the will of his Father, another episode from Jesus' life comes to the fore. In his temptation, when he had fasted from all foods for forty days, we read that the devil comes to him and challenges him, saying, "If you are the Son of God command these stones to become loaves of bread" (Matt 4:3). In keeping with his entire life's pattern of thought, behavior, and conviction, Jesus answers Satan saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). In other words, Jesus cared more about doing what the Father wanted him to do than anything else. Even after fasting forty days, he would not eat until his Father had indicated to him that the fast was over and that the time had come for him to eat. Jesus lived his life, then, in abject submission to his Father, and in this he was both fully free and fully man, and in this he also was fully God.

The Pre-Incarnate Submission of the Son to the Father in Eternity Past

It is not difficult to understand why some find the Son's eternal submission to the Father an objectionable concept. For if the Son eternally submits to the Father, this would indicate that authority and submission are eternal realities that inhere in the intrinsic relations of the Persons of the Godhead. But, if so, does it not stand to reason that when God creates the world that he would fashion the world in a way that pictures these eternal structures (e.g., his wisdom reflected in the wisdom of a *taxis* in the created order)? Does it not make sense, then, that the authority and submission structures in marriage and in church leadership are meant to be reflections of the authority and submission in the relations of the Persons of the Godhead? But

because some find the very notion of authority and submission objectionable within these two spheres of human relationships, they clearly resist seeing this relational dynamic as true of the eternal relations within the Godhead.⁷ But, is this what Scripture indicates? Does the Bible give any indication whether the Son's submission to the Father took place in eternity past and eternity future? Consider here support for the Son's submission to the Father in his pre-incarnate existence as the eternal Son of the eternal Father.

To begin, 1 Cor 11:3 offers a truth-claim about the relationship between the Father and Son that reflects an eternal verity.⁸ That God is the head of Christ is not suggested by the apostle Paul to be an *ad hoc* relationship for Christ's mission during the incarnation. It is, rather, stated as a standing truth regarding this relationship. God is the head of Christ, and placing this at the end of verse 3 indicates that the grounding for the other two instances of headship is found in this one. The Father has authority over the Son. There is a relationship of authority and submission in the very Godhead on the basis of which the other authority-submission relationships of Christ and man, and man and woman, depend. The *taxis* of God's headship over his Son accounts for the presence of *taxis* in man's relationship with Christ and the woman's relationship with man.

John's Gospel mentions forty times that Jesus was sent by the Father to accomplish his mission. Christopher Cowan demonstrates that the "sending" language in John indicates centrally, though not exclusively, the concept of Jesus as the agent of another (viz., his Father) who carries out the will of the Sender in obedience as the Sent One.⁹ This being the case, it is noteworthy that a number of the instances of the Father's sending of the Son clearly indicate that the sending took place in regard to the pre-incarnate Son. John 3:16–17 reads, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." That the Father *sent* the Son *into the world* indicates the

sending took place prior to the incarnation itself. The Son of eternity past, then, obeyed the Father in coming into the world, since he was sent by the Father so to come. In John 6:38, Jesus says, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." These words could not be clearer that the obedience to the will of the Father took place in eternity past as the pre-incarnate Son came from heaven at the will of the Father. Again, in John 8:42 Jesus said, "I have not even come on My own initiative but He [i.e., the Father] sent Me." By the Father's initiative and will, then, the Son came. How could it be clearer that the Son, then, obeyed the will of the Father and carried out his plan and purpose by coming into the world. Or again Jesus said, "Do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God?'" (John 10:36). Clearly, the Father both consecrated the Son for the very mission he planned for him, and then he sent the Son into the world to fulfill what he had designed. For this to be meaningful, we must understand both the consecration and sending of the Son as happening prior to the incarnation and, thus, in the design and purpose of God in eternity past.

The Synoptic Gospels likewise confirm, albeit with less detail, what we see regularly in John's Gospel, viz., that the eternal Son is under the authority of his Father. Commenting particularly on the significance of the order of the divine names Matt 28:19, Simon Gathercole writes,

We have already seen how in Mark 13:32 Jesus stands between God and the angels in a heavenly hierarchy; in Matt. 28:19, however, we have a *divine* hierarchy of Father, Son, and Spirit: all three persons participate in the divine name invoked in baptism.

Already within the context of earliest Christianity, there is significance in the *order* of the names, however. Very common in the Synoptics is the implication of the Father's authority over the Son and the corresponding obedience of the Son to the Father. All things are given to the Son by his Father (Matt. 11:27 par. Luke

10.22; Matt. 28.18), and he continues to depend on the Father in prayer (e.g. Mark 1.35). Perhaps most clearly of all, the Son is frequently described as *sent* by the Father: once or twice in Mark, twice in Matthew, four times in Luke. Sending clearly presupposes an authority of the sender over the envoy.

In terms of the Son's authority over the Spirit, in John and Acts it is evident that the Son sends the Spirit (John 15.26; cf. 14.26; Acts 2.33). Jesus' sending of the Spirit at Pentecost would have been understood as the fulfillment of John the Baptist's promise (common to all four Gospels) that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. This itself presupposes divine identity: as Jenson rightly notes, "No prophet as such can do this. To give the Spirit is to act from the position of God." But if the Son is the one who *sends* the Spirit, then this again would presuppose a relationship of hierarchy within a Jewish context. As a result, it can be concluded that the order Father-Son-Spirit in Matt. 28.19 is not incidental; rather, it is born out of the early Christian thinking that the Father has authority over the Son, who in turn has authority over the Spirit.¹⁰

Regarding the Father's sending of the Son, as found particularly in the Synoptics, Gathercole also comments on the significance of Luke 7:8, which provides a helpful illustration of the authority and submission inherent in such sending: "For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes."¹¹ Indeed, both the order of the divine names in Matt 28:19, and the language of the sending of the Son both in the Synoptics and in John, indicate the eternal *taxis* among the members of the Trinity.

Consider also Peter's claim: "For He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1 Pet 1:20–

21). The key phrase, of course, is Peter's reference to Christ having been foreknown by the Father before the foundation of the world. Foreknowledge here does not mean merely knowing ahead of time what is going to happen. Of course God has foreknowledge in that sense. But more than that, to foreknow is to choose one for some certain purpose,¹² to know in the sense of favoring this particular One upon whom you choose to bestow some privileged service or calling. Thus, God had established his Son as the One who would bring everything into subjection under his feet, his Son as the One who would be raised above all of creation and given the name that is above every name. His Son would be given glory (1:21) through his suffering, death, and subsequent resurrection and exaltation. But when did the Father make this prior decision to choose his Son for this favored of all callings? "Before the foundation of the world" is the answer given by Peter. This requires, then, an authority-submission relationship in eternity past, one in which the Father chooses and sends, and one in which the Son submits and comes.

New Testament teachings on Christ as the Creator also confirm this same authority and submission structure between the Father and Son. Although Christ is featured as the Creator, nonetheless he creates under the authority of the Father. In Colossians Paul expresses thanks "to the Father," specifically in 1:12, who has "rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (1:13). With this stress on the Father's work, now he speaks of creation being done "in" Christ, indicating that the Son does what he does as the agent of the Father. First Corinthians 8:6 confirms this understanding, for here we read of "one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him." The Father creates by or through the agency of the Son. As such, Genesis 1 is echoed in John 1 insofar as the God who speaks and brings creation into existence (Gen 1) does so through his Word (John 1:3). So, by him, the eternal Word, all things are created. The Son as Creator of the universe does so as the instrument and agent of the Father's will and work.

Consider also Paul's teaching that the Father, before the foundation of the world, has chosen us in Christ (Eph 1:4) and predestined us to adoption through Christ (Eph 1:5). Since the Father is specified by Paul as the one who chose us in eternity past, we must take seriously that it is his choice in particular, and hence the authority by which we are placed in Christ rests with the Father. Surely this shows both the Father's supreme position of authority over all, but it also shows that the Son's work fulfills what the Father has willed. Echoes of "not My will but Yours be done" can be heard in the very electing will of the Father. It is his will that the Son accomplishes, and his will to which the Son submits. Furthermore, among the blessings for which we praise the Father is the blessing of providing his Son to redeem us from our sin (Eph 1:7). Indeed, the Father is praised for redeeming us through his Son (cf., Isa 53:10; John 1:29; Acts 2:23; Rom 8:32), and for this reason, the Father is deserving of all praise for the lavish display of his glorious grace (Eph 1:6–8, 12, 14). Both creation and redemption, works accomplished by the Son, are ultimately and rightly seen, then, as works of the Father that are done through the agency of his eternal Son according to the design and the will of the Father. This is by no means the full evidence of the authority of the Father over the Son in eternity past, but it is sufficient to demonstrate this clear teaching from Scripture.

The Submission of the Son to the Father in Eternity Future

What about eternity future? Do we have reason to think that the Son, having accomplished the mission that the Father sent him to do, will still be in submission to his Father in the ages to come? First, consider the repeated biblical theme of the risen and exalted Son who now sits at the "right hand" of his Father. At least fifteen references in the NT speak of Christ at the Father's right hand, and as Wayne Grudem points out, these have their background in Ps 110:1, "The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" On this text, Grudem comments,

This is not a promise that the Messiah would be equal to "the LORD" in authority, but that He would be second in authority, at the "right hand" of God. . . . Why is this important? Because it shows that someone can be subordinate in authority to someone else but still be equal in being.¹³

This is exactly the point. When "the LORD says to my Lord," both are viewed as divine in nature. Yet one Lord sits at the right hand of the other LORD. Therefore, the risen and exalted Son, while being fully God, sits in a position that represents his own acknowledgement of the Father's greater authority.

Along with his sitting at the Father's right hand, the Son also functions in the capacity of interceding for the saints (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25). The Son himself taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matt 6:9), and in keeping with this trinitarian order of prayer, the Son acts on behalf of his own and brings their requests to the Father, the highest authority over all. The Son does not command the Father, nor does the Father do what the Son wills, but rather the Son intercedes to the Father that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10).

Consider Paul's teaching of Christ's future reign over all things, when everything in heaven and earth is put in subjection under his feet. He writes,

Then comes the end, when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he [Christ] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For God has put all things in subjection under his feet. But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:24–28).

As we observed previously, this passage indicates the position of preeminence that the Father has even over the Son. How so? The Son has his position over all of creation, bringing everything into subjection under his own feet, only because the Father has given all things to the Son. The Son, then, shows himself as the supreme victor and conqueror of all, including the conqueror of death itself, only because the Father has given him this highest of all callings and roles. In full acknowledgment of the Father's supremacy, the Son displays his submission to the Father by delivering up the now-conquered kingdom to the Father, and then, remarkably, by subjecting himself also to his Father. Though all of creation is subject to the Son, the Son himself is subject to his Father. There is no question, then, that this passage indicates the eternal future submission of the Son to the Father, in keeping with his submission to the Father both in the incarnation and in eternity past.

Consider also Philippians chapter 2. When Christ is exalted above all and presented before all of the created order, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, "to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:11). This parallels exactly what we have seen in 1 Corinthians 15. While the Son is exalted over all of creation, the Father himself is seen as preeminent over the Son. Similarly, in the grand heavenly scene portrayed by John in the Apocalypse, notice that the Lamb who had been slain proceeds up to him who sits on the throne and takes the scroll to open its seals. And at the end of this account, we read, "And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them saying, 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!'" (Rev 5:13). Once again, while the Lamb is worshipped with him who is on the throne, so that the Father and the Son are seen equally and fully as God, yet the Son (i.e., the Lamb) approaches the throne at the right hand of him who sits on it. In this scene picturing worship in the ages to come, the Son is shown to be under the authority of the Father—for the Father gives him the scroll to open, and the Son is located at the

right hand of the Father—while he is equal with the Father—for he is worshipped along with the One who sits on the throne.

Is it not clear, then, that Scripture teaches that Jesus' submission to the Father extends from eternity past to eternity future, and what we see in the incarnational mission of Christ over and over again is simply the manifestation, in time and history, of what is eternally true in the relationship between the Father and the Son? While the Son eternally is *God* the Son, he always has been, was during the incarnation, and always will be, God the *Son* of God the *Father*. Authority and submission reside eternally in this Father-Son relationship, as taught clearly in Scripture. As Colin Gunton has commented, reflecting on 1 Cor 15:28, this description of the Son's future subjection to the Father has "implications for what we may say about the being of God eternally, and would seem to suggest a subordination of *taxis*—of ordering within the divine life—but not one of deity or regard. It is as truly divine to be the obedient self-giving Son as it is to be the Father who sends and the Spirit who renews and perfects."¹⁴ We are enabled to see here something of what constitutes the beauty, the wisdom, and the goodness of the relations among the trinitarian Persons when we see the Son at work accomplishing the will of the Father. It is the nature of God both to exert authority and to obey in submission. And since this is the eternal nature of God, we may know that it is beautiful and it is good, and because of this, we are prompted to marvel a bit more at the glory that is our Triune God.

Historical Tradition Acknowledging Authority and Submission in the Trinity

While the early church clearly embraced, in time, the full essential equality of the three trinitarian Persons, nonetheless the church has affirmed likewise the priority of the Father over the Son and Spirit. Since this priority cannot rightly be understood in terms of a distinction of essence or nature among the Persons of the Godhead (lest one succumb to Arian subordinationism), it must exist in terms of relationship. Although this historical evidence has been provided by several elsewhere,¹⁵

consider just a few citations from church fathers and later theologians affirming both the equality of essence and functional authority-submission structure between the Father and the Son.

In Justin Martyr's *Dialogue* with Trypho, a Jew, he responds to a question about whether Old Testament saints will live in the resurrection. He writes,

Since those who did that which is universally, naturally, and eternally good are pleasing to God, they shall be saved through this Christ in the resurrection equally with those righteous men who were before them, namely Noah, and Enoch, and Jacob, and whoever else there be, along with those who have known this Christ, Son of God, who was *before the morning star and the moon*, and *submitted to become incarnate*, and be born of this virgin of the family of David, in order that, by this dispensation, the serpent that sinned from the beginning, and the angels like him, may be destroyed, and that death may be condemned.¹⁶

That Christ is both the "Son of God, . . . before the morning star and the moon," and yet he "submitted to become incarnate" manifests Justin's view that Christ is both eternally God and yet he obeyed his Father in coming to be a man. In similar manner, Tertullian's *An Answer to the Jews* speaks in one place on the Psalms' predictions of the Son who would come, stating that the Son "was announced as about to come to earth *in obedience to God the Father's decree*."¹⁷ Tertullian, likewise, sees the priority of the Father's will in explaining the very coming to earth of the Son.

Novatian's *Treatise Concerning the Trinity* responds to arguments presented by modalists in which he replies that since the Son is sanctified by the Father and sent into the world, clearly the Son and the Father both exist while the Son, under the authority of the Father, is not the Father himself. He writes,

He is therefore the Son, not the Father: for He would have confessed that He was the Father had He considered Himself to

be the Father; and He declares that He was sanctified by His Father. *In receiving, then, sanctification from the Father, He is inferior to the Father.* Now, consequently, He who is inferior to the Father is not the Father, but the Son; for had He been the Father, He would have given, and not received, sanctification. Now, however, by declaring that He has *received sanctification from the Father*, by the very fact of proving Himself to be *less than the Father*, by *receiving from Him sanctification*, He has shown that He is the Son, and not the Father. Besides, He says that *He is sent*: so that *by that obedience wherewith the Lord Christ came, being sent*, He might be proved to be not the Father, but the Son, who assuredly would have sent had He been the Father; but being sent, He was not the Father, lest the Father should be proved, in being sent, to be *subjected* to another God.¹⁸

It is the Father's prerogative to sanctify and send the Son into the world, and by this he demonstrates that the Son is "inferior" to the Father. Clearly Novatian means only here that the Son follows the Father's command and submits to the Father's will. In refuting the modalists he affirms the deity of the Son but also insists on the functional submission of the Son to the Father.

One of the strongest statements among the church fathers comes from Hilary of Poitiers. In his *On the Councils*, he writes,

That the Son is not on a level with the Father and is not equal to Him is chiefly shewn in the fact that *He was subjected to Him to render obedience*, in that the Lord rained from the Lord and that the Father did not, as Photinus and Sabellius say, rain from Himself, as the Lord from the Lord; in that *He then sat down at the right hand of God* when it was told Him to seat Himself; in that *He is sent*, in that *He receives*, in that *He submits in all things to the will of Him who sent Him*. But the *subordination of filial love is not a diminution of essence, nor does pious duty cause a degeneration of nature*, since

in spite of the fact that both the *Unborn Father is God and the Only-begotten Son of God is God*, God is nevertheless One, and the *subjection and dignity of the Son are both taught in that by being called Son* He is made subject to that name which because it implies that God is His Father is yet a name which denotes His nature. Having a name which belongs to Him whose Son He is, *He is subject to the Father both in service and name*; yet in such a way that the subordination of His name bears witness to the *true character of His natural and exactly similar essence*.¹⁹

Finally, Augustine also affirmed that the distinction of persons is constituted precisely by the differing relations among them, in part manifest by the inherent authority of the Father and inherent submission of the Son. This is most clearly seen in the eternal Father-Son relationship in which the Father is eternally the Father of the Son, and the Son is eternally the Son of the Father. Hear how Augustine discusses both the essential equality of the Father and Son, and the mission of the Son who was sent, from eternity past, to obey and carry out the will of the Father:

If however the reason why the Son is said to have been sent by the Father is simply that the one is the Father and the other the Son, then there is nothing at all to stop us believing that the *Son is equal to the Father* and consubstantial and co-eternal, and yet that the Son is sent by the Father. *Not because one is greater and the other less*, but because one is the Father and the other the Son; one is the begetter, the other begotten; the first is the one from whom the sent one is; the other is the one who is from the sender. For the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son. In the light of this we can now perceive that *the Son is not just said to have been sent because the Word became flesh, but that he was sent in order for the Word to become flesh*, and by his bodily presence to do all that was written. That is, we should understand that *it was not just the man who the Word became that was*

sent, but that the Word was sent to become man. For he was *not sent in virtue of some disparity of power or substance or anything in him that was not equal to the Father*, but in virtue of the *Son being from the Father, not the Father being from the Son*.²⁰

Notice two observations from Augustine's statement. First, Augustine sees no disparity between affirming, on the one hand, the full *equality* of the Son to the Father, and on the other hand, the Son's eternal position as *from* the Father, whose responsibility it is to carry out the will of the Father as the one *sent* from all eternity from the Father. Paul Jewett's claim, repeated by Bilezikian, Giles, and others,²¹ that functional subordination entails essential inferiority is here denied by Augustine. Second, notice that Augustine denies the false but repeated claim that all subordination of the Son to the Father rests fully in the Son's incarnate state. To the contrary, Augustine affirms that "the Son is not just said to have been sent because the Word became flesh, but that he was sent in order for the Word to become flesh," and for emphasis he adds that "it was not just the man who the Word became that was sent, but that the Word was sent to become man." In other words, the sending of the Son occurred in eternity past in order that the eternal Word, sent from on high from the Father, might take on human flesh and then continue his role of carrying out the will of his Father.

In two places in his book, *Jesus and the Father*, Kevin Giles takes issue with my treatment of Augustine here. Both discussions by Giles refer to the same chapter, "Tampering with the Trinity," previously published in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by Wayne Grudem. The second discussion by Giles (pp. 229–30) repeats in shorter form nearly verbatim the identical objection he raised earlier (pp. 191–92) to my understanding of Augustine. Since the first of these is longer and more complete, allow me to quote it in full:

[Complementarians] want us to believe, unlike Augustine, that the language of sending indicates that the divine Father has

authority over the divine Son like husbands have over wives and men over women in the church. Professor Bruce Ware gives a classic example of such reasoning. Choosing Augustine of all people as proof of his thesis that historic orthodoxy teaches that the Son is eternally set under the Father's authority, he argues that this great Latin-speaking theologian "affirmed the distinction of persons is constituted precisely by the differing relations among them, in part manifested by the inherent authority of the Father and the inherent submission of the Son." ["Tampering," 246]. In support he quotes a paragraph from Hill's translation of *The Trinity* on the sending of the Son by the Father [4.27, p. 172]. The strange thing is that the passage he quotes denies the very thing he is asserting. In this paragraph Augustine says that when the Bible speaks of the Father sending and the Son as sent, "there is nothing [in these words] to stop us believing that the Son is equal to the Father and consubstantial and co-eternal One is not greater and the other less, but because one is the Father and the other Son: one is the begetter, the other the begotten; the first is the one from whom the sent one is; the other is the one who is from the sender. For the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son." As I read this quote it seems to me it is emphatically denying what Bruce Ware is affirming. Augustine is insisting on the complete equality of the persons and on their irreversible distinctions. The Father and the Son are one in substance, inseparable in operations, indivisible in power and authority, but the Father is not the Son and never can be, and the Son is not the Father and never can be. For Augustine divine differentiation does not imply the Son or the Spirit's subordination in any way.²²

Two comments are in order. First, I emphatically affirm here what Augustine affirms, as quoted by Giles. That is, I affirm fully and unequivocally the complete essential equality of the Father and the Son. The Father and the Son each possesses the

identically same divine nature. Hence, I agree fully that any and every semblance of Arian subordinationism must be rejected as Augustine has done in his affirmation of the complete equality of nature of the divine Persons. Second, I also affirm what Augustine affirms in the portion from Augustine *not* quoted by Giles. Oddly, the readers of Giles's book, in both passages (pp. 191–92, 229–30) where he discusses my quotation and treatment of Augustine, have been sadly misinformed. For some inexplicable reason, in both discussions of my treatment of Augustine, Giles provides for the reader only the first portion of the longer quote from Augustine that I have provided in my previous published chapter (and even here he puts ellipses in the place of the phrase, "and yet that the Son is sent by the Father," where Augustine indicates he is making two points about the Father-Son relation, not just one). And of course, in that first portion, Augustine truly does affirm clearly and boldly that the Father and the Son are consubstantial and co-eternal. But in the same block quote reproduced in my chapter (see figure 1, next page),²³ immediately following where Giles has quit quoting, Augustine continues as follows:

In the light of this we can now perceive that *the Son is not just said to have been sent because the Word became flesh, but that he was sent in order for the Word to become flesh*, and by his bodily presence to do all that was written. That is, we should understand that *it was not just the man who the Word became that was sent, but that the Word was sent to become man*. For he was *not sent in virtue of some disparity of power or substance or anything in him that was not equal to the Father*, but in virtue of the *Son being from the Father, not the Father being from the Son*.

So, what I wrote earlier of Augustine's view in fact is born out by the longer and complete quotation that readers would have been able to see if Giles had simply continued the quotation of Augustine fully. Yes indeed, the Father and Son are fully and completely equal in essence (stressed by Augustine in the first part of his longer statement, the portion

Figure 1

246

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

relationship.²⁶ As Augustine affirmed, the distinction of persons is constituted precisely by the differing relations among them, in part manifest by the inherent authority of the Father and the inherent submission of the Son. This is most clearly seen in the eternal Father-Son relationship, in which the Father is eternally the Father of the Son, and the Son is eternally the Son of the Father. But, some might wonder, does this convey an eternal authority of the Father and eternal submission of the Son? Hear how Augustine discusses both the essential equality of the Father and Son and the mission of the Son who was sent, in eternity past, to obey and carry out the will of the Father:

**Quoted
by Giles**

If however the reason why the Son is said to have been sent by the Father is simply that the one is the Father and the other the Son then there is nothing at all to stop us believing that the *Son is equal to the Father* and consubstantial and co-eternal, and yet that the Son is sent by the Father. Not because one is greater and the other less, but because one is the Father and the other the Son; one is the begetter, the other begotten; the first is the one from whom the sent one is; the other is the one who is from the sender. For the Son is from the Father, not the Father from the Son.

In the light of this we can now perceive that *the Son is not just said to have been sent because the Word became flesh, but that he was sent in order for the Word to become flesh*, and by his bodily presence to do all that was written. That is, we should understand that *it was not just the man who the Word became that was sent, but that the Word was sent to become man*. For he was *not sent in virtue of some disparity of power or substance or anything in him that was not equal to the Father*, but in virtue of the Son being from the Father, not the Father being from the Son.²⁷

**Not
Quoted
by Giles**

²⁶For a discussion of evidence that early church theology upheld the simultaneous eternal equality of essence and the functional relationship of authority and obedience among the persons of the triune Godhead, see also Robert Letham, "The Man-Woman Debate: Theological Comment," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990), 65-78; and Stephen D. Kovach and Peter R. Schemm, Jr., "A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son," *JETS* 42/3 (September 1999), 461-476. In limited space, Kovach and Schemm cite examples from Hilary of Poitiers, Athanasius, the Cappadocian fathers, and Augustine, with supporting commentary from John Calvin, Philip Schaff, Jaroslav Pelikan, J. N. D. Kelly, Charles Hodge, and W. G. T. Shedd, and they cite (471) the conclusion of Paul Rainbow, "Orthodox Trinitarianism and Evangelical Feminism," 4 (unpublished paper based on his dissertation, "Monotheism and Christology in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6" [D.Phil. dissertation, Oxford University, 1987]), in which Rainbow concludes, "From the earliest form of the creed we can see that the Father and the Son are united in being, but ranked in function."

²⁷St. Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, Vol. 5, *The Works of St. Augustine* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991), IV.27 (italics added).

quoted by Giles), while the Son as from the Father is under the authority of his Father, having come to earth to become incarnate precisely because he was sent from his Father to become a man (stressed by Augustine's double statement of this understanding in the second part of his longer statement, the portion omitted by Giles). I cannot say why Giles omitted the very portion of the quotation that supported my claim that Augustine affirms the pre-incarnate authority of the Father over the Son. But whatever the reason, the fact remains that Augustine affirms both the essential equality of the Father and the Son along with the pre-incarnate functional submission of the Son to the Father. Giles' own discussion, by its attenuated quotation of Augustine, turns out to be the treatment of Augustine that in fact denies what Augustine affirms.

Many more theologians throughout the history of the church could be added to this list. Grudem provides additional citations from Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, Augustus Strong, Louis Berkhof, J. N. D. Kelly, Geoffrey Bromiley, Robert Letham, and others—all of whom display the same understanding of the trinitarian Persons, equal in essence but distinct in roles that display an authority and submission structure.²⁴ And to the consternation of many who follow much of his theology otherwise, Karl Barth also defended both the eternal functional submission of the Son to the Father and its implications for gender relationships.²⁵ Barth stressed that if the God who reveals himself is not God as he is, it follows that we have no true knowledge of God. The triune God of revelation is one in which the Son submits to the Father, and the Holy Spirit submits to the Father and the Son. So too, reasoned Barth, is the immanent Triune God apart from creation. One recent theologian who has observed the beauty of the Son's submission to the Father is the eminently-quotable P. T. Forsyth. He asserts that the Son's obedience to the Father demonstrates that "subordination is *not* inferiority, and it *is* God-like. The principle is imbedded in the very cohesion of the eternal trinity and it is inseparable from the unity, fraternity and true equality of men. It is not a mark of inferiority to be subordinate, to

have an authority, to obey. It is divine."²⁶ And in another place, Forsyth makes clear that the Son's obedience to the Father was indeed an eternal obedience, rendered by an eternal equal, constituting an eternal subordination of the Son to do the will of the Father. With this we conclude our historical overview. Forsyth writes,

Father and Son co-exist, co-equal in the Spirit of holiness, i.e., of perfection. But Father and Son is a relation inconceivable except the Son be obedient to the Father. The perfection of the Son and the perfecting of his holy work lay, not in his suffering but in his obedience. And, as he was eternal Son, it meant an eternal obedience. . . . But obedience is not conceivable without some form of subordination. Yet in his very obedience the Son was co-equal with the Father; the Son's yielding will was no less divine than the Father's exigent will. Therefore, in the very nature of God, subordination implies no inferiority.²⁷

Conclusion

We have examined what it means that the Father is the eternal *Father* of the Son, and that the Son is the eternal *Son* of the Father. We have defended the thesis that while Scripture clearly teaches, and the history of doctrine affirms, that the Father and Son are fully equal in their deity as each possesses fully the identically same divine nature, yet the eternal and inner-trinitarian Father-Son relationship is marked, among other things, by an authority and submission structure in which the Father is eternally in authority over the Son and the Son eternally in submission to his Father. There is, then, an eternal and immutable equality of essence between the Father and the Son, while there is also an eternal and immutable authority-submission structure that marks the relationship of the Father and the Son. Ultimately the credibility of this thesis depends on the teaching of God's word. Because in his inspired word, God has made known his own triune life, we must with renewed commitment seek to study, believe, and embrace the truth of God as made known here. Where we have been misled by

the history of this doctrine or contemporary voices, may Scripture lead to correction. But where contemporary revision departs from Scripture's clear teaching, may we have courage to stand with the truth and for the truth. For the sake of the glory of the only true and living God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, may we pledge to him alone our fidelity, obedience, love and devotion.²⁸

ENDNOTES

¹This article was originally presented at the 58th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Washington D.C., November 16, 2006. An expanded version of it (entitled, "Christ's Atonement: A Work of the Trinity") was published in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introduction to Christology* (ed. Fred Sanders & Klaus Issler; Nashville: B&H, 2007). It appears here with permission.

²See, e.g., Gilbert Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40, no. 1 (1997): 57–68; Stanley J. Grenz, "Theological Foundations for Male-Female Relationships," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 4 (1998): 615–30; Royce G. Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986); Millard Erickson, *God in Three Persons: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordination: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002); and Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

³Giles, *Jesus and the Father*, 9.

⁴Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: Where the Church Stands or Falls," *Interpretation* 45 (1991): 120 (emphasis added).

⁵John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University, 1994), 22.

⁶Most egalitarians admit freely to the Son's submission to the Father during the incarnation. So many texts indicate such that it is impossible really to deny it while taking seriously the teaching of the Gospels. Nonetheless, some egalitarians (e.g., Grenz and Bilezikian) endeavor to support their idea of "mutual submission" of the Father and Son in the incarnation. For discussion of this view and response, see Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 430–37.

⁷Some egalitarians acknowledge the eternal inner-trinitarian Father-Son relation yet do not understand this as implying or entailing relations of authority and submission in the created order. See Craig Keener, "Is Subordination Within the Trinity Really Heresy? A Study of John 5:18 in Context," *Trinity Journal* 20 NS (1999): 39–51.

⁸For helpful discussion of the interpretation of *kephalē* ("head") and its bearing on this text, see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 568–94.

⁹Christopher Cowan, "The Father and Son in the Fourth Gospel: Johannine Subordination Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 49, no. 1 (2006): 115–35.

¹⁰Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-Existent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006),

72–73. Gathercole's quotation of Jenson is from R.W. Jenson, *The Triune God* (vol. 1 of *Systematic Theology*; Oxford: Oxford University, 1997), 88.

¹¹Gathercole, *Pre-Existent Son*, 72. In a footnote, Gathercole expresses gratitude to Dr. Audrey Dawson for suggesting this example.

¹²See, e.g., Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 *Peter, Jude* (New American Commentary; Nashville: Broadman & Holman), 87–88. Schreiner comments, "In the Greek text of v. 19 the word 'Christ' appears last, separated from the term 'blood' by five words. The text was likely written in this way so that it would be clear that the Christ was the subject of the participle commencing v. 20. The Christ 'was chosen before the creation of the world'" (87).

¹³Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 410–11.

¹⁴Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (2d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 197.

¹⁵For a discussion of evidence that early church theology upheld the simultaneous eternal equality of essence yet functional relationship of authority and obedience among the persons of the triune Godhead, see also Robert Letham, "The Man-Woman Debate: Theological Comment," *Westminster Theological Journal* 52 (1990): 65–78; and Stephen D. Kovach and Peter R. Schemm, Jr., "A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 3 (1999): 461–76. In limited space, Kovach and Schemm cite examples from Hilary of Poitiers, Athanasius, the Cappadocian fathers, and Augustine, with supporting commentary from John Calvin, Philip Schaff, Jaroslav Pelikan, J. N. D. Kelly, Charles Hodge, W. G. T. Shedd. Kovach and Schemm cite (p. 471) Paul Rainbow, "Orthodox Trinitarianism and Evangelical Feminism," 4 (unpublished paper, based on his dissertation, "Monotheism and Christology in 1 Corinthians 8:4–6," [D. Phil. diss., Oxford University, 1987]), who concludes, "From the earliest form of the creed we can see that the Father and the Son are united in being, but ranked in function." See also Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 415–22.

¹⁶Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Justin: Philosopher and Martyr, with Trypho, a Jew* 45, in vol. 1 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* [hereafter *ANF*] (ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe; New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1885–1897), 217 (emphasis added).

¹⁷Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews* 9 in vol. 3 of *ANF*, 163 (emphasis added).

¹⁸Novatian, *A Treatise of Novatian Concerning the Trinity* 27 in vol. 5 of *ANF*, 638 (emphasis added).

¹⁹Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Councils* 51, in vol. 9 of *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series* (ed. Philip Schaff; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952–57), 18–19 (emphasis added).

²⁰St. Augustine, *The Trinity* 4.27, in part 1, vol. 5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (trans. Edmund Hill; ed. John E. Rotelle; New York: New City, 1991), 172 (emphasis added).

²¹See, e.g., Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study of Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), where he asks, "[H]ow can one defend a sexual hierarchy whereby men are over women . . . without supposing that the half of the human race which exercises authority is superior in some way to the half which submits?" (71). He continues by asking further whether anyone can "establish the mooted point—woman's subordination to the man—by underscoring the obvious point—woman's difference from the man—without the help of the

traditional point—woman's *inferiority to the man*? The answer, it appears to us, is no" (84). Cf. Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," 67, who says, e.g., that any talk about subordination "smacks of the Arian heresy;" and Giles, *Jesus and the Father*, 9, "To set God the Son eternally under God the Father is to construe the Trinity as a hierarchy and thereby undermine the coequality of the differentiated divine persons, the core truth of the doctrine of the Trinity."

²²Giles, *Jesus and the Father*, 191–92.

²³Bruce A. Ware, "Tampering with the Trinity," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 246.

²⁴Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, 415–29.

²⁵Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 1:157–210.

²⁶P. T. Forsyth, *God the Holy Father* (1897; repr., London: Independent Press, 1957), 42.

²⁷P. T. Forsyth, *Marriage, Its Ethic and Religion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), 70–71.

²⁸I am grateful for the capable and helpful research for this article conducted by my teaching assistant, Mr. Oren Martin, along with thoughtful suggestions from several colleagues, especially Drs. Peter Gentry and Thomas Schreiner.

Complementarianism and Eschatology: Engaging Gordon Fee's "New Creation" Egalitarianism

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Introduction

The New Testament teaches that the redemptive work of Jesus Christ marks a pivotal transition in history because it finally addresses humanity's deepest problems. Christ's sacrifice atones for sin and propitiates God's wrath against sinners. His resurrection defeats the curse of death. His victory thwarts the schemes of the devil and accomplishes his Father's mission so that the kingdom of heaven might eventually become a full reality on the earth. Taken together then, these realities indicate that Old Testament promise has moved to new covenant fulfillment in inaugurated form. Now the present age simply commences on a divinely-set stopwatch ticking down the last days until the age to come arrives in its complete form, a day which is otherwise known as the Day of the Lord when the glorified Christ returns to save his people and judge his enemies.

Yet as the church awaits the fulfillment of these events, it would be an error to miss the implications that our eschatological hope has for the present time. Though the anticipation of the future does address how all things will be made new, this hope also goes to the very heart of New Testament ethics and the dynamics of church life in the present. The way things will one day be informs us on how we should conduct ourselves now. To think biblically then, one must learn to *think* and *live* with an eschatological orientation. But this being said, many questions still remain as to how this kind of theological mindset should be expressed in

practical terms. This indeed is a complex question, especially when it pertains to gender issues.

Our interests about such topics as male headship, spousal roles, and Christian service are all intertwined not merely because they pertain to how God's people should co-exist relationally but, at a deeper level, they reflect our views of what it means to be a part of the new creation in Christ. This is why complementarian and egalitarian polemics are often engaged in terms of how male and female roles should be defined in light of the results of salvation. Egalitarians, for example, contend that all present categories of identity such as economic status, ethnic background, and gender have now been "Christified" under the new covenant so that they no longer have any relevance for defining the functional roles of believing men or women.¹ It is not that such categories no longer exist. Indeed they do and believers cannot escape them entirely. Nevertheless they are now passing away in lieu of a new kingdom that is presently amassing a citizenry of people who are all equal recipients of its inheritance. Hence all of the current networks that define function and status are now rendered ontologically irrelevant for Christians.² In contrast, complementarians argue that male headship is not a culturally arbitrary distinctive eradicated by the new covenant. It is not simply an expendable practice intrinsic to the present age. Rather it is embedded in the ordinances of creation itself and must be modeled by God's people so the world can behold the power of the age to come.³

Obviously the disagreement here is not minor. It is theologically significant for many reasons including the fact that it affects how we live out our faith both corporately as well as individually. That is why this essay intends to explore this impasse in more detail by addressing Gordon Fee's assessments of gender roles as they relate to the church's existence and ministry in the present age.⁴ Our thesis is that Fee's egalitarian reading of Scripture falls prey to a form of "over-realized" eschatology. More specifically, *he exhibits a theological fallacy by arguing that certain functional structures within the home and the church are culturally arbitrary and/or functionally legalistic because they will eventually cease to exist once the eschatological future arrives. Contra Fee, we contend that the preservation of certain gender distinctives helps to reflect the Christian hope of a new heavens and new earth because they act as a bridge showing both how the original creation is delivered from the curse of sin and how God's kingdom transforms human relationships.* To support this, we will (1) summarize Fee's attempts to use the concept of new creation against complementarianism;⁵ and (2) argue that his relativizing of male headship focuses upon the "not yet" aspects of eschatology, and thereby misrepresents how biblical writers believed new covenant living should be expressed prior to the inception of the final age.

Gordon Fee & New Creation Egalitarianism

At the outset we should acknowledge that Fee has established himself as a first-rate scholar and contributor to NT studies. He has produced helpful books at the popular level,⁶ in-depth monographs on Pauline theology,⁷ insightful texts on issues in hermeneutics,⁸ and several technical commentaries including volumes on the Pastoral Epistles, Philipians, and 1 Corinthians, for which he is most well known.⁹ His career has been so prolific that several of his academic peers contributed to an anthology in honor of his 65th birthday.¹⁰ And in surveying the scope of his work, he clearly has offered substantial defenses of egalitarianism by providing thorough treatments of NT passages that explicitly pertain to women in ministry. However, an analysis of his polemics reveals that his denial of male headship

is primarily based upon two arguments.¹¹ These include (1) his proposal that the NT relegates the value of gender roles to the futility of the present age; and (2) his related contention that the apostle Paul never recognized gender-based authorities in the church.

Clarifying Fee's Hermeneutical Approach

Fee rightly asserts at the outset that division among evangelicals on gender issues exists because of disagreements on how to interpret all the pertinent biblical texts. Fee believes thinkers on both sides of the debate have a commitment to biblical authority.¹² The underlying problem, however, is that there is no consensus for reconciling the theological tension between the supernatural and human elements of Scripture. The Bible is a combination of transcendence and temporality, the merging of divine messages with human words that are set within the plane of human history. Likewise, since it is ultimately inspired by one Author, it possesses an inherent canonical unity. The key issue is how these dynamics are to be balanced hermeneutically. Fee thinks it can only be done by embracing both human and divine authorship, and this is why he adopts the concept of the *analogia fidei*. Yet he only does so reservedly. He warns that this concept can often blind us to the meaning of a given biblical passage because

sometimes a highly improbable interpretation can be superimposed on a text in order to make it conform to other texts for the sake of unity—which is often the result of a prior commitment to the shape of that unity as much as to the unity itself. Unity is often understood to mean uniformity. That Scripture might reveal a diverse witness on matters is summarily ruled out before one even looks at the texts.¹³

Now indeed this claim is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. We can all acknowledge that our zeal for doctrinal synthesis may inadvertently lead us to shortchange certain biblical passages. But we are still responsible to ascertain some kind of

criteria that can help us avoid this danger. And all the more so when it comes to dealing with how the NT addresses such a critical issue as gender.

Fee is well aware of this and that is why he argues complementarianism cannot be the solution. He deduces that theological commitment to male headship eliminates any potential for interpreting Scripture holistically. The reason for this is because its core ideas are based upon spurious cultural implications scattered throughout the NT as opposed to its more explicit thematic teachings.¹⁴ Complementarians allow contrasting pieces of advice on gender roles to dictate how they understand much broader theological categories instead of vice versa. The net result is that sporadic ad hoc imperatives regarding men and women are converted into legalistic axioms requiring universal observance.¹⁵ Consequently, Fee concludes that the practical outworking of this approach openly distorts the essence of NT teaching regarding the church as the community that supersedes all present-day social distinctions.

As an alternative to complementarianism, Fee proposes that there is no *explicit* NT teaching about male headship at all.¹⁶ Rather biblical writers addressed specific, problematic scenarios and have left us with a wide variety of practices.¹⁷ This leads to a perplexing question though. How should contemporary believers interpret and apply these texts today? Fee's initial response is that it is premature for complementarians to collect the random occasions of patriarchal advice and simply treat them as ethically normative. Instead, he believes a better guide for our twenty-first century reading of these texts is the NT emphasis on the Spirit-indwelt church as the current expression of the new creation.¹⁸ The act whereby the Holy Spirit unifies Jews and Gentiles into the one people of God and makes them equal heirs of the kingdom of Christ is what brings symmetry to the NT. So when biblical writers make peripheral comments about gender roles, they are not laying down divinely-ordained instructions about how all human cultures are to function *ad infinitum*.¹⁹ They are only discussing multiple ways of preserving the gospel witness within the given culture in which first century

believers lived.²⁰ Paul, for example, never endorsed the patriarchal structures of his day but wisely gave instructions on how believers were to relate to a society that did. And now in God's providence the church can live out those principles without the shackles of patriarchy.

Tolerating Social Boundaries while Ignoring the Significance of Patriarchy

Fee enlists the Apostle Paul to support his egalitarian reading of the NT. This is in no way surprising since Pauline literature has always been a primary source for this exegetical debate. Typically, complementarians are quick to insist that his well known remarks about the adornment of women in corporate worship (1 Cor 11:2–16), qualifications for pastors (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), instruction on teaching authority in the church (1 Cor 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:12–15), and comments on relationships between husbands and wives (Eph 5:22–33; Col 3:18–19) are all clear referents to theological assumptions he had about male headship. Egalitarians respond to this perspective by appealing to Paul's teachings about the soteric equality of all believers (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 12:13, 2 Cor 5:27) in order to counterbalance texts which appear to endorse certain role distinctions.²¹ Fee employs this latter strategy by viewing Paul as a proponent of what might be described as a kind of Christified androgyny wherein the covenantal giving of the Spirit brings about a new corporate identity which transcends all present cultural categories including patriarchy.²²

Fee defends this point in more detail by appealing to the entire epistle of Galatians, which he interprets as primarily being concerned with the theological significance of what it means to be a part of the people of God. The real motif is ecclesiology, not soteriology *per se*.²³ Fee claims this theme unfolds as Paul elaborates upon the implications of the Spirit making both Jew and Gentile one new creation in Christ. Specifically, this reality abrogates all previous means of covenant demarcation including circumcision, food laws, and Torah observance.²⁴ Now it is strictly pneumatological in nature because all believers are justified by faith and

equal recipients of the Spirit, thereby constituting one new race in Christ.

Fee then expands upon this idea by claiming that Paul alludes to it elsewhere in his writings in one of two ways.²⁵ First, he sees Paul's perception of his mission to the Gentiles as indicative of his belief that divisions of ethnicity and gender were rendered meaningless because they had been eradicated by the resurrection of Christ. The new order inaugurated by the cross links these prejudices with the fading present age.²⁶ Second, Fee highlights the "new exodus" language Paul occasionally adopts to describe the present significance of the resurrection (cf., Rom 6:1–14; Eph 4:20–24; Col 3:1–11). Herein, the Old Testament expectation for God to deliver His people from exile by redeeming the very earth itself (e.g., Isaiah 40–66) has now come to pass in preliminary form through the existence of the church. People are now able to experience a foretaste of the new creation in the present fallen world by becoming a part of the new covenant community. Moreover, Fee believes that these motifs of Gentile inclusion and Israel's deliverance illustrate Paul's belief that the church now exists to prove that redemption overcomes all of the social, personal, and cosmic obstacles that separate humanity from God and each other.²⁷

Fee finally synthesizes this "Pauline ecclesiology" by offering several practical observations. One is that Paul's statement in Gal 3:28 is really a manifesto that completely reverses the idea of social roles in ways modern-western readers typically miss. To claim there is no longer Jew and Gentile, slave nor free, male or female "equally *disadvantages* all by equally *advantaging* all."²⁸ Whereas in the first century social significance was almost solely determined by one's position of authority or status, Fee argues that Paul's theology strikes at the heart of the most central ways in which this attitude was fostered in his day. He says that Jews have no priority over Gentiles as the people of God, masters have no ultimate authority over their slaves, and that males have no intrinsic authority over women, married or not.

This leads to another deduction: even though Paul negates the significance of these social barriers,

he does tolerate their existence because the age to come has not arrived in its fullness. Hoping to preserve the testimony of the gospel, Paul on occasion instructs believers on how to conduct themselves within the cultural parameters in which they lived.²⁹ Yet Fee shrewdly qualifies that Paul only gives deference for the sake of proper piety. He never allows believers to exclude one another by enforcing these boundaries. For example, the Corinthians are all to eat together at the Lord's table, regardless of who is rich or poor (1 Cor 11:17–34); Philemon should accept Onesimus back not simply as a slave but as a brother as well (Philem 16); and husbands no longer have authority over their own bodies but are to be given to their wives and love them as Christ does (cf., 1 Cor 7:3–4; Eph 5:25).³⁰

So coming back to Fee's original argument, his thesis is that Paul's understanding of the new creation defies a first-century male-oriented society because it is a part of the age that is rendered obsolete by the impending eschatological kingdom. Likewise, patriarchal structures are not even intrinsic to all modern-day societies. What this means then for Fee is that male headship is something inherently temporal, culturally arbitrary, and theologically subversive because it is a norm that is part of this world alone.³¹ Consequently, if complementarianism is correct, then, theoretically, a Jew can demand a Gentile to be circumcised, a believing slave owner can demand that his servants remain as such even if they become Christians, and husbands can demand humble servitude from their wives.³² Clearly Fee desires to avoid these abuses and thereby contends that we should see the church as the community of Spirit-indwelt saints who are equally gifted to serve each other, regardless of gender.³³

Egalitarianism as Over-Realized Eschatology

There is no question that Fee's model of "new creation" egalitarianism demands a careful response. Not only are his interpretive deductions antithetical to male headship in any context, but his very approach to reading the writings of Paul (or all of the Bible for that matter) is theologically untenable. This being the case, we will address Fee's

proposals by highlighting three central concerns: (1) his misconstrued presentation of how Paul relates eschatological expectation to the present functions of both genders in the church; (2) his unacceptable way of interpreting our moral accountability to Paul's original commands regarding gender; and, finally, (3) the veneer of pragmatism that seems to be driving his endorsement of egalitarianism.

Neglecting the "Not Yet" of Eschatology

It is apparent that Fee's misuse of the new creation motif is based upon an interpretive error that was somewhat of a problem even in Paul's day. This fallacy, of which Fee is well aware because he has treated it numerous times in his studies on Pauline literature, entails the tendencies of Paul's hearers sometimes to overemphasize the present significance of certain theological realities. For instance, Paul taught that believers encounter some of the benefits of the new creation now. Believers are already glorified positionally (Rom 8:30), seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph 2:6–7), and raised with Christ to be in union with Him through their new Spirit-filled identity (Rom 8:11; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:18–20). At times, though, his readers misinterpret the existential significance of these facts in the present, which then leads some of them to deny other critical truths. On occasion some questioned the future resurrection (2 Tim 2:16–18), the church's need for ongoing discernment and spiritual giftedness (1 Cor 1:28–31; 4:8–13), and in one case, some believers inadvertently bordered on denying the resurrection of Christ himself (1 Cor 15:12–13). In each of these cases, Paul's strong emphasis upon the current manifestation of future eschatological blessings compelled some to conclude wrongfully that all of them were completely experienced in the present. As a result, they exchanged the redemptive necessity of deferred eschatology for the ontological extremes of realized eschatology. And it is this very mistake that Fee ironically repeats by arguing all gender roles are functionally dissolved since the new creation renders both believing males and females as equal heirs of the new covenant.

Now to make a proper qualification at this

juncture, it is true that certain gender distinctions will one day transition into a different context via the culmination of Christ's kingdom. Male headship *as presently expressed* will indeed change when creation is redeemed. At that time glorified believers will not be given in marriage (Matt 22:29–30; Mk 12:25; Lk 20:35–36) nor will the church only be an alien embassy on the earth since Christ's authority will be fully obeyed by all the nations (Rev 5:9–10; 21:3–4). Nonetheless, the fact that gender distinctions will indeed experience modifications at the eschaton does not mean they are necessarily nullified in the present. For Paul as well as the other New Testament writers, the means of currently expressing the freedom of the new creation is not to abandon gender roles or ignore their functional ramifications. Rather they are to be fleshed out in ways that reflect Christ-likeness and gospel-centered holiness. Husbands love their wives as Christ loved the church, wives submit to their husbands as the church follows Christ, and churches proclaim the gospel in ways that restore proper deference to the created order and male headship.

Also contra Fee in this regard, Paul does not deal with the matters of gender by simply tolerating cultural patriarchy. He does not instruct churches on how to live out their faith in the world with hopes that one day they will reach egalitarian maturity. If that were the case, he would be just as guilty of compromising the ideals of New Testament community as Peter was in Antioch (Gal 2:11–16). Peter acted one way around Gentile converts but when delegates of James from the church at Jerusalem arrived, he changed his behavior to show deference to Jewish believers and Paul rightly confronted him about this hypocrisy. Yet at the same time, if Paul was truly an egalitarian at heart as Fee argues, then it is a similar compromise for him to claim in certain passages that gender roles are irrelevant and then in other cases hold churches accountable to "patriarchal" mandates.

The reality is that Paul was unequivocal in the practical outworking of his theology of gender. His eschatological emphasis regarding equal access to covenantal blessings did not lead him to conclude all heirs had synonymous functions.³⁴ He

taught that in Christ, inheriting the kingdom of God is not based upon whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, a master or a freeman, a male or female. All those who have the Spirit are one in Christ. But this unity did not exclude male headship. It was only through the preservation of both salvific equality and functional complementarity that the church illustrated its hope for the future (i.e., *a balanced realized eschatology*). That is why, for Paul, the only way to make theological sense out of ideas like wives not submitting to husbands, husbands not sacrificially loving their wives, or churches not being led by men is to speak of Christ's return as already having transpired because only then will gender roles be redefined in a new eschatological context (i.e., *hence the need for deferred eschatology*).³⁵

Living Out the New Creation in a Fallen World

A second concern also warranting attention is Fee's deduction that all forms of complementarity reflect the spiritual vanity of the present age. He defends this claim by adopting an argument advocated by many egalitarians. The argument goes like this: if complementarians are to be consistent hermeneutically, they must not only defend male headship in the contexts of the family and the church, but they should be equally concerned about defending the rights of masters to rule over their slaves.³⁶ But clearly this leaves complementarians in an unacceptable quandary, and so they should recognize *every* social category that establishes a hierarchy of value is spiritually irrelevant for God's people. This would include opposition to slavery as well as "patriarchy" in the home or the corporate life of the church.

To illustrate this approach, Fee attempts to highlight pertinent egalitarian principles supposedly found in the NT itself. One example is that, as far as the family goes, husbands and wives are brothers and sisters in Christ first, which eliminates any true authority one has over another since both may pray and prophesy in the church as well as serve as leaders.³⁷ Another is Fee's more emphatic assertion that Paul himself never sanctified any particular structure in the home or the church since it would contradict the liberty of the new covenant incurred

by the gifting of the Spirit.³⁸ According to Fee, if the apostle wished to speak of roles that were to be filled by the people of God, the criteria for potential candidates would be whether the Spirit had equipped a mature disciple for such a capacity, not whether the believer was a man or a woman.

There are at least two problems with Fee's claims in this regard. One is the unwarranted assumption that we must interpret Paul as either fully endorsing or rejecting every social context that was a part of his culture. More to the point, it is equally unjustifiable for egalitarians to say Paul repudiated gender distinctions altogether and likewise to say that complementarians must embrace slavery in order to be hermeneutically consistent. The simple reason is that Paul's writings show that he saw some structures as essential and others as dispensable. For example, while the classic household texts do describe how husbands are to relate to wives, children to parents, and slaves to masters, Paul does not treat these topics in the same ways.

When Paul addresses slavery, he instructs believers on how to emulate a Christ-like spirit. We see this in his admonishment to Philemon as a slave owner to forgive and receive his former servant Onesimus back as a brother (Philem 16). Obviously this makes perfect sense because this is a virtue that is indicative of all believers regardless of whether they are slaves or masters. Likewise, in another setting Paul claims believing slaves have permission to obtain their freedom if the opportunity presents itself (1 Cor 7:21–22). For Paul then, choosing to become or remain a slave is optional for believers, but the proper conduct as a Christian slave is not. This means Fee is right to assert that Paul did not endorse slavery as a practice. He instructed believers on how to live in relation to it. What Fee refuses to acknowledge, however, is that Paul never claims that Greco-Roman slavery has its institutional roots in the theological fibers of creation or eschatological expectation. Only the family and the church are described as such (e.g., 1 Cor 11:7–9; Eph 5:31; 1 Tim 2:12–15) because marital and ecclesiological concerns have theological strings attached to them that slavery does not.

When it comes to marriage, for example,

Paul does not speak to husbands and wives in the same way he does to slaves or masters. He does not endorse a husband seeking freedom from his wife or vice versa in the same way that he advises Christian slaves to possibly obtain release (cf. 1 Cor 7:21, 27). Nor does he call a master the head of his slave as Christ is the head of the church, or command slaves to obey their masters as the church obeys Christ. But he clearly interprets the marriage relationship with such constructs. Husbands typify Christ by sacrificially loving their wives, and wives typify the church by following their husbands. And as they do so, the balance between leadership and trust not only highlights the original reciprocation that Adam and Eve forfeited, but it also points to the unending submission that the church will experience under Christ's headship (Eph 5:24–25). The eternal relationship that Christ will always have with his people is to be exemplified currently through the temporal relationship between husbands and wives. Furthermore, when Paul instructs single believers on the possibility of matrimony, he does not treat marriage structures as arbitrary. He simply sees the decision to marry as optional (1 Cor 7:25–26). Believers have the freedom to enter or avoid this binding covenant, but if they choose to do so, obedience to the proper roles is non-negotiable (1 Tim 5:14).

Related to this, another troubling argument requiring attention is Fee's emphasis upon Spirit giftedness as being the primary criteria for service in the church. We concede this observation is helpful insofar as it corrects unbiblical attitudes that many evangelicals have about ministry. Fee rightfully asserts that often Christian ministry becomes one-dimensional or politically top heavy because the clergy are perceived as the ministers while the members are ill-equipped spectators.³⁹ He also mentions that many men tend to think they are initially qualified for ministry simply by virtue of being male as opposed to having a certain level of spiritual ability.⁴⁰ Finally, Fee is justified in asserting that all men are not intrinsically more gifted or equipped for service than women.⁴¹ Under the new covenant, both receive the Spirit and are empowered to be used by Him. What Fee misses is the

same basic axiom that has always separated complementarians from egalitarians—the distinction between ability and authority. These reservations in and of themselves are legitimate, and complementarians would agree with each one of them. Nonetheless, they have nothing whatsoever to do with functional diversity and biblical male headship.

The NT gives no simple endorsement to any man or woman to serve the Lord in a particular fashion simply because they exhibit certain spirit-empowered abilities. It is certainly essential, but it is not sufficient. Believers are to exhibit various levels of spiritual maturity, integrity, and sometimes authorization from the church or leadership to fulfill certain tasks (e.g., 1 Cor 14:31–33; 1 Tim 3:1–2a). And contrary to Fee's attempts to resolve them, it is clear that Paul in certain texts restricts specific responsibilities to men. What seems to be the dilemma for Fee is he simply wants to remain ambivalent when it comes to delineating functional gender distinctions because there is no universal consensus on what all the relevant NT texts teach about the matter.⁴² So his solution is to let the Spirit move and allow a kind of pneumatic church polity to take its course. The only dilemma is how to discern the "moving" of the Spirit in the church apart from how He has revealed His will in the boundaries of Scripture.

The Impracticality of Complementarianism

Finally our last area of concern is Fee's occasional resorting to cultural pragmatics as justification for his egalitarian views. This can be seen in his occasional charge that complementarian readings of the NT provoke a hermeneutical crisis because human cultures are always in flux. Fee's point is that when complementarians promote contextualized patriarchal insights to the rank of transcultural mandates, they eventually face an insurmountable problem. Male-dominant interpretations of the Bible are only accessible to cultures that are disposed to patriarchy.⁴³ Yet as we see in western culture today, "patriarchal" ideals are simply incompatible with how men and women relate to each other socially, economically, and, apparently for Fee, ecclesiologically.⁴⁴ Thus, complementar-

ians are caught on the horns of a dilemma. They must constantly backtrack and redefine the ideals of male headship in order to ensure some kind of continuity with what they believe the NT writers originally taught. And at the same time, they must strive to maintain relevancy with cultures that are moving further away from patriarchy every day. Fee deduces that this tension leaves complementarians in a quagmire of legalism because they are forced to analyze every conceivable situation in which women could possibly exercise authority over men and then judge them case by case to see if each one potentially violates male headship.⁴⁵

Now at first glance, Fee's critique seems to have some merit. Many times complementarians do struggle to maintain their voice in evangelical guilds because they do not always have consensus on what male headship should look like in every possible scenario that a given family or church may face. But this does not mean the idea of gender distinctives is necessarily wrong. It means that theological fidelity and serious discipleship require us to diligently apply ourselves in understanding how biblical manhood and womanhood is to be lived out in whatever century we may find ourselves. Likewise, aside from this, egalitarians can justifiably be accused of a similar crime. What would egalitarians say about applying their views of gender to cultures that are still stringently patriarchal? Should egalitarian missionaries and church planters attempt to change the mindsets of those people and lead them away from all of their unenlightened paradigms regarding gender? Or should egalitarians adopt a distorted view of Paul's first-century "approach" and meet them where they are while hoping to put them on a trajectory where they might abandon patriarchy several generations down the road. One can become just as legalistic by demanding new believers in a patriarchal environment become egalitarian at the possible expense of losing their voice in their culture. Consequently, the accusation of legalism does not readily solve this debate for either side.

Even more disconcerting than this inconsistency, however, is the open capitulation Fee displays with his negative remarks about male headship. His

caricature of complementarianism as being culturally meaningless reveals somewhat of a cavalier attitude that should elicit tremendous concerns for evangelicals because it casts doubt on how we as the church are to maintain our witness before the unbelieving world. Essentially, part of Fee's repudiation of male headship is based upon the deduction that it cannot be applied to modern-day life in western culture consistently.

The problem with this approach is that social accessibility is not the criterion for determining how we should exhibit our discipleship. There are many challenging beliefs in the Christian faith which are currently untenable to our post-modern intellectual climate, including the exclusivity of the gospel, the eternal judgment of the unrighteous, the concept of divine revelation, miracles in general, creation, and the list goes on and on. Should we forsake these as well because the church now exists in a cultural landscape that repudiates these beliefs? Obviously the answer is no. We do not surrender these theological convictions in order to rescue Christianity from cultural extinction. We maintain them as our doctrinal foundations so we can act as a contemporary voice in the wilderness sounding the truth to the world. The church's witness is clearest when it resists the current of the culture, not when it follows it. In the end then, Fee is guilty of the very crime that he accuses complementarians of committing. He scolds them for distorting the significance of the new creation, when, in reality, he has simply domesticated it in terms that are comfortable to the egalitarian ears of western individualism.

Conclusion

Upon final reflection, we must affirm that complementarianism does not compromise any NT teaching on how believers should presently relate to each other in light of the eschatological future. Scripture does not teach that the church should presently function as a redeemed androgyny because one day gender roles will enter a different context in the new heavens and new earth. Whatever our roles may be in the kingdom that is to come, we will still have unique roles to play, and

even though we will be like the angels because we will not be given in marriage, we will indeed retain our distinct essence as male and female creatures. Hence male headship in and of itself is not a part of the sin-cursed fallen age. Its extremes of abuse and neglect are the errors needing remedy. And, thankfully, the new creation provides the answer by reconciling believers with God as well as each other.

ENDNOTES

- ¹For instance, cf., Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 193; Craig Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 204–06; Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002), 170–79; and Stanley Grenz, “Anticipating God’s New Community,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 604.
- ²Note egalitarians differ as to whether the age to come *restores* or *transcends* the original created order. See a treatment of this issue in Richard Hove, *Equality in Christ? Galatians 3:28 and the Gender Dispute* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999), 96–101.
- ³This is why complementarians argue that the concept of male headship is a part of the divine blueprint of creation itself rather than a post-fall contamination of the Edenic garden of egalitarianism. For succinct assessments of this point, cf. Raymond C. Orlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 95–112; and W. Robert Godfrey, “Headship and the Bible,” in *Does Christianity Teach Male Headship* (eds. David Blankenhorn, Don Browning, and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 82–91. It is also because of this conviction that complementarians consider it seriously defective when some egalitarians reject the authenticity of how the Genesis-creation narrative unfolds. To question the veracity of the account is to put biblical authority in jeopardy; see Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 35–42.
- ⁴Gordon Fee is professor emeritus of New Testament studies at Regent College.
- ⁵Fee has become a major contributor to egalitarianism having produced numerous essays including several which will be examined in this article. He currently serves on the Board of Reference for Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE). Moreover it is to be acknowledged that *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (JBMW) has already provided responses to Fee. See the volume dealing with the egalitarian manifesto *Discovering Biblical Equality*, especially the articles by Robert Saucy, “Male and Female in the New Creation: Galatians 3:26–29,” *JBMW* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 29–37; and Andreas Köstenberger, “Biblical Hermeneutics: Basic Principles and Questions of Gender,” *JBMW* 10, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 88–97.
- ⁶Probably his most well known books for laypeople, new believers, and pastors are introductory texts that he has co-written with other authors including Gordon Fee and Douglas Stewart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth* (3d ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); and Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).
- ⁷His most pertinent contributions entail treatments on Paul’s understanding of Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, and most recently

Christology. Cf. Gordon Fee, “Gifts of the Spirit,” in *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 339–47; idem, *God’s Empowering Presence* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994); idem, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996); and idem, *Pauline Christology* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007).

- ⁸See Gordon Fee, *God and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991); Fee and Eldon Epp, *Studies in the Theory of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993); Gordon Fee, “History as Context for Interpretation,” in *The Act of Bible Reading* (ed. Elmer Dyck; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 10–32; idem, *Listening to the Spirit of the Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); idem, *To What End Exegesis?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); and idem, *New Testament Exegesis* (3d ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).
- ⁹Gordon Fee, *I Corinthians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; 2d rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); idem, *Philippians* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); idem, *I & II Timothy, Titus* (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995); and idem, *Philippians* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999). Note also that he currently serves as the general editor for the New International Commentary on the New Testament.
- ¹⁰See Sven K. Soderlund and N.T. Wright, ed., *Romans and the People of God: Essays in Honor of Gordon Fee on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).
- ¹¹The primary works under consideration will include Gordon Fee, “Male and Female in the New Creation,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality* (ed. Ronald Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004), 172–85; idem, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 241–54; and idem, “Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 364–81.
- ¹²Fee, “Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate,” 364–65. Note that this cannot be said of all egalitarians. Fee argues that Scripture actually affirms egalitarianism, whereas other egalitarians see biblical writers as being diluted by first century prejudices that are now unacceptable. Cf., Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty, *All We’re Meant to Be* (Waco: Word, 1974); and Clarence Boomsma, *Male and Female, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993). Consequently, we can distinguish between those who believe Scripture teaches their views and those who argue that Scripture must be reinterpreted to allow for their views.
- ¹³Fee, “Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate,” 370–71.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, 371–72.
- ¹⁵*Ibid.*, 373.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, 374–75; idem, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 247–48. Remarkably, Fee is even leery to affirm that the NT gives much definitive material for church government, to the point that he prefers using the term ecclesiology with reference to the subject of the people of God rather than concerns pertaining to functional structures, offices, and ministries. As an alternative, he cordially suggests that we possibly adopt the word “laology” when discussing the general concerns of being the people of God. See Fee, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 242, n. 3.
- ¹⁷Fee, “Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate,” 377; idem, “The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry,” 247–48.
- ¹⁸Fee, “Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate,” 380–81.

¹⁹Fee does acknowledge that human government is a special exception. See Fee, "Male and Female in the New Creation," 181.

²⁰Fee, "Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate," 377–79.

²¹Works that address the implications that Gal 3:28 has for the discussion of gender roles are too numerous to mention here. Yet one that succinctly highlights many of the hermeneutical and theological complexities of how Gal 3:28 fits into this debate is Hove, *Equality in Christ?*

²²Fee concedes that we cannot ignore all differences between being male or female because the genders represent part of what it means to be created beings. Nonetheless, at the same time, because of the age to come, the intrinsic differences both matter and do not matter in terms of final eschatological reality. See Fee, "Male and Female in the New Creation," 177, n 11.

²³Fee also acknowledges that justification by faith is a crucial factor in discussing this subject. However, it is only a subset of a larger concern in defining the new identity of Jew and Gentile in God's new Christological economy. See *ibid.*, 174–75.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 175.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 177–79.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 178.

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*, 180 (emphasis in original).

²⁹*Ibid.*, 181.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 182–83.

³¹*Ibid.*, 185.

³²*Ibid.*

³³Fee expands this last point in "The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry," 241–54.

³⁴This is no small matter because it obviously goes against the very grain of Fee's polemics. For example, to imply that Paul truly prescribed complementarian ideals for any ecclesiological context is so foreign to Fee's approach that he is even willing to reject Paul's clear comments in 1 Cor 14:33–35 regarding male headship as it relates to the adjudication of tongues and prophecy in the corporate worship setting. Fee contends this segment of Paul's argument cannot be reconciled with his earlier allowance of women to pray or prophesy in the church (1 Cor 11:1–15). He believes the pericope in 14:33–35 is actually a spurious scribal insertion of some kind. Cf. Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 708; *idem*, *God's Empowering Presence*, 273–81; *idem*, "The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry," 250–52. For responses to this textual issue, see D. A. Carson, "Silent in the Churches: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 141–45; Anthony Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1148–50; C. Niccum, "The Voice of the Manuscripts on the Silence of Women: The External Evidence for 1 Cor 14:34–35," *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 242–55; and Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism*, 49–52.

³⁵This is not to imply believers will not still exist as glorified-resurrected men and women. It only means that, as such, our relationships to one another will function with certain dynamics we simply cannot define in detail until the parousia.

³⁶Fee, "Male and Female in the New Creation," 184. Fee asserts that if one justifies a given order in marriage, one must likewise maintain that God ordained slavery as well since Paul assumes both realities in the same Greco-Roman structure in his discussions of household codes (Eph 5:21–6:9; Col 3:18–4:1). See *ibid.*, 184 n. 25.

³⁷Fee even argues that in certain first century instances when a woman was the head of a household where a given congregation

met, it is reasonable to assume that she had a measure of ecclesiastical authority as well. See Fee, "Male and Female in the New Creation," 184. However, this is historical conjecture without any explicit exegetical evidence.

³⁸*Ibid.* Though we cannot address these matters here, Fee's dismissal of virtually any functional offices in the church is perplexing because one is left wondering whether there are any practices described in the early church that are normative for us today. Fee tries to solve this conundrum by proposing that the gospel of freedom and the gifting of the Spirit be our hermeneutical guides for determining what is prescriptive today. But this simply begs the question.

³⁹Fee, "The Priority of Spirit Gifting for Church Ministry," 254.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*, 252–53.

⁴³Fee, "Hermeneutics and the Gender Debate," 379.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 380.

The Power of a Consecrated Life Lived Out in The Ministry of Miss Lottie Moon (Romans 12:1)

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Introduction

Lottie Moon was born Charlotte (Lottie) Diggs Moon on December 12, 1840, in Albemarle County, Virginia. She entered the world as a part of Southern aristocracy prior to the Civil War, a war that would devastate her family's fortunes. Her family's wealth was 1/40 of its pre-war value after the war ended. She would die on December 24, 1912, aboard a ship in the Japanese harbor of Kōbe. She was frail, weak, and nearly starved having just passed her seventy-second birthday. She weighed no more than fifty pounds.¹

Lottie served our Lord for thirty-nine years on the mission field, mostly in China. "Best estimates" say that this mighty, little woman towered all of four feet, three inches. It was never said that she was beautiful, but this little lady had a certain attractiveness about her and a powerful personality that would be essential in her service on the mission field. She taught in schools for girls and made many evangelist trips into China's interior to share the gospel with women and girls. She would even preach, against her wishes, to men, because then as now there were not enough men on the mission field.

I have no doubt, having spent many months in her biography and letters, that Miss Lottie would be both amazed and embarrassed at all the fuss that is made about her each year by Southern Baptists.

She knew that in 1888 Southern Baptists, at her request, raised \$3,315.00, enough to send three new women missionaries to China. She, however, could never have imagined, that:

- In 2007, \$150,409,653.86 was raised in her name.
- In 2008, a goal of \$170 million is set in her name.
- Since the offering's inception, \$2.8 billion has been raised for missions in her name.
- 52% of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) International Mission Board's 2008 budget comes from the offering that honors her name.

Here is the power of a consecrated life, a life sold out to the lordship of Christ, a life our Lord sovereignly chose to multiply many times over. This is the life we see outlined by the apostle Paul in Rom 12:1. Having spent eleven chapters explaining sin and salvation, sanctification and sovereignty, he now moves *on that basis* to address service and what I call the consecrated life. Such a life is seen in Lottie Moon. Hers was not a perfect life no doubt. It was, however, a powerful life; a life lived for King Jesus, and a life worthy of our careful study and attention.

Four marvelous truths emerge from this text that find a beautiful echo in the life of Lottie Moon, an echo I pray will find its sound in my life and yours.

I. Live a Grateful Life

Paul encourages us “by the mercies of God,” a shorthand for the many blessings he has unpacked for us in Romans 1–11. Gratitude should overwhelm every man or woman who has grasped the magnitude of sin and the majesty of salvation. Accepted in Christ by my heavenly Father, I live a life of gratitude for all that He has done for me. No request is deemed out of bounds or too great.

Lottie came to this conviction but not until she was in college. As a child her mother read to Lottie and her siblings the Bible and other religious books. One was the story of Ann Judson, the wife of Adoniram Judson and the first Baptist woman missionary from America. In December 1858 (Decembers were special to her!), at the age of eighteen, Lottie placed her faith and trust in Jesus. The preacher was the famous Baptist leader John Broadus. He would also be the man who would baptize her and encourage her in her service to our Lord. In fact, it was Broadus’s challenge to missions that planted the seed for foreign service in her heart; though at the time, a single woman going to the nations was unthinkable.

This grateful life was born of a confidence in the providence and sovereignty of God. She wrote, “I do not believe that any trouble comes upon us unless it is needed, and it seems to me that we ought to be just as thankful for sorrow as for joys.” She would oft recall Broadus’s prayer, “Send us affliction and trouble, blight our dearest hopes if need be, that we may learn more fully to depend on Thee.” And later in a letter to J. C. Williams, on February 25, 1876, she wrote, “But the work is God’s and we do not fear the final results. ‘The heathen shall be given to His son for His inheritance,’ and we must be content to await His Own time.” Thus gratitude, growing of a trust in divine providence, colored Lottie’s perspective on life. She needed this.

When she was twelve, her wealthy father died

of a heart attack or stroke while on a business trip. His widow, Lottie’s mother, Anna-Maria Moon, assumed family leadership.

Famine raged in north China as Lottie returned to the field in December 1877. She and other missionaries gave to relief programs and shared personally as they could to relieve the suffering.

Early in 1878 Lottie opened a girls’ boarding school for higher-class Chinese. Her purpose was evangelistic: She knew the school would help her enter pupils’ homes, since the exclusive citizens of Tengchow wanted little to do with “foreign devils” otherwise. God also accomplished other noble purposes. She managed to save about a third of her pupils from the practice of binding girls’ feet. The custom usually began about the time a girl would be entering school. The four small toes were bent under and bandaged and drawn toward the heel until bones broke. The suffering young women wound up with a three-inch foot and a pointed big toe. Often infection, illness, and even death resulted. God was at work in surprising ways.

Lottie’s life was frequently one of extended loneliness. Often she would be the only Southern Baptist missionary in northern China. Her lone companion was her Lord. But she stayed with the work God had for her. She relocated to P’ingtu in December 1885. Aided by a Chinese couple from Tengchow, she rented a four-room, dirt-floor house for \$24 a year, planning to stay until summer. She ate and lived as the Chinese did. No one she knew spoke English.

She quickly adapted to the local dialect. She began visiting surrounding villages and within a few months had made 122 trips to thirty-three different places. She gratefully trusted our Lord in trying and difficult circumstances.

Her gratitude to God was also the basis of her challenging folks back home to give to the work of missions. She opposed raising funds by entertainments or gimmicks. She wrote,

I wonder how many of us really believe that it is more blessed to give than to receive. A woman who accepts that statement of our Lord Jesus Christ as a fact and not as “impractical idealism,” will make

giving a principle of her life. She will lay aside sacredly not less than one-tenth of her income or her earnings as the Lord's money, which she would no more dare touch for personal use than she would steal. How many there are among our women, alas, who imagine that because "Jesus paid it all," they need pay nothing, forgetting that the prime object of their salvation was that they should follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ!

Persecution broke out against Christians in Sha-ling in 1890. Relatives of one of the first inquirers, Dan Ho-bang, tied him to a pole and beat him, but he refused to worship at ancestral tablets. A young convert, Li Show-ting, was beaten by his brothers, who tore out his hair; still, he remained steadfast in his faith. He was to become the great evangelist of north China, baptizing more than 10,000 believers.

Lottie rushed to Sha-ling and told the persecution leaders, "If you attempt to destroy his church, you will have to kill me first. Jesus gave Himself for us Christians. Now I am ready to die for Him." One of the mob prepared to kill her but was restrained. Lottie calmed the terrified believers and remained with them until the persecution waned. When the believers did not retaliate with the usual legal action, the Chinese grew in their respect of Christians and asked to hear of the new faith. The church became the strongest in north China, its members evangelizing in nearby villages.

One final example of her confidence in the God of providence is inspiring. China's revolution broke out late in 1911. Fighting was intense around Baptist mission stations in north China. The U.S. consul asked missionaries in Hwanghsien to move to a safer port city, and they agreed—all but Lottie. When she learned Chinese hospital personnel had been left alone in Hwanghsien, she made her way safely through warring troops and took charge of the hospital, encouraging the terrified nurses and other personnel by her courage.

They resumed work caring for the ill and wounded. When Dr. Ayers and other male missionaries risked their lives to return, they were

amazed to find Lottie directing the hospital quite efficiently, as she had done for ten days. With the hospital in rightful hands, Lottie packed to return home, but the men warned that heavy fighting made this impossible. When she insisted, they sent word to the opposing generals that Miss Moon would be passing through at a set hour. A young missionary escorted her, and as they made their way through the battle lines, firing stopped on both sides.

II. Live a Total Life

In Rom 12:1 Paul calls us to "present [our] bodies." This is a personal and individual decision we all must make. It is volitional. It is to be total. "All of you all of the time" captures the thrust of Paul's challenge. Once she came to Christ, Lottie Moon made such an agenda her life's calling and commitment.

(1) In college she mastered Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Italian, French and Spanish. In 1861 she graduated from Albemarle Female Institute, counterpart to the University of Virginia, one of the first women in the South to receive a master's degree. Broadus would call her, "the most educated (or cultured) woman in the South."

(2) During the Civil War she, her sisters Colie and Mollie, nursed soldiers at Charlottesville, as well as her brother Orie back home.

(3) Prior to leaving for China, she taught Sunday School to both black and white children.

(4) Lottie felt her call to China "as clear as a bell" in February 1873, after hearing a sermon on missions at First Baptist Church in Cartersville, Georgia. Lottie left the service to go to her room, where she prayed all afternoon. On July 7, 1873, the Foreign Mission Board of the SBC appointed Charlotte Diggs Moon. She was asked to join her sister who actually had preceded her to the mission field in Tengchow. About to sail from San Francisco, Lottie got word that Baptist women in Cartersville would support her. There was no SBC Cooperative Program at this time. It would not come into existence until 1925!

(5) In village after village she would travel to speak from early morning to late evening, from the kang, on the street, in the yard of dirty homes, trav-

eling in shentzes or riding donkeys, in the heat and dust of summer or wintry rain and snow. She was constantly in contact with the people, continually at risk of exposure to smallpox and other diseases. Yet she suppressed her craving for cultured life and conversation and her Southern tastes—all for the cause of Christ. “As I wander from village to village,” she said, “I feel it is no idle fancy that the Master walks beside me, and I hear His voice saying gently, ‘I am with you always, even unto the end.’”

She found strength in prayer and Bible reading and in devotional classics. She often wrote quotations from spiritual writings in the margin of her Bible or devotional books. One favorite was from Francis de Sales: “Go on joyously as much as you can, and if you do not always go on joyously, at best go on courageously and confidently.”

(6) It was Lottie who suggested to H. A. Tupper, head of the Foreign Mission Board, that the board follow the pattern of some other mission groups and provide for a year of furlough after ten years on the field. The board eventually adopted such a policy, but not until several missionaries in China died prematurely and others returned home in broken health.

(7) Lottie repeatedly struggled with the tragic fact that more did not answer the call to missions, especially men. Consider the following comments from her writings:

Nov 1, 1873, letter to H. A. Tupper

What we need in China is more workers. The harvest is very great, the laborers, oh! so few. Why does the Southern Baptist church lag behind in this great work?...I think your idea is correct, that a young man should ask himself not if it is his duty to go to the heathen, but if he may dare stay at home. The command is so plain: “Go.”

Apr 27, 1874, letter to H. A. Tupper

Oh! that we had active and zealous men who would go far and wide scattering books and tracts and preaching the word of the vast multitudes of this land.

Nov 4, 1875, letter to H. A. Tupper

I write today moved by feelings which come over me constantly when I go out on country trips. “The harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few....” What we find missionaries can do in the way of preaching the gospel even in the immediate neighborhood of this city, is but as the thousandth part of a drop in the bucket compared with what should be done. I do not pretend to aver that there is any spiritual interest among the people. They literally “sit in darkness & in the shadow of death.” The burden of our words to them is the folly and sin of idol worship. We are but doing pioneer work, but breaking up the soil in which we believe others shall sow a bountiful crop. But, as in the natural soil, four or five laborers cannot possibly cultivate a radius of twenty miles, so cannot we, a mission of five people, do more than make a beginning of what should be done.... But is there no way to arouse the churches on this subject? We missionaries find it in our hearts to say to them in all humility, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ’s stead,” to remember the heathen. We implore you to send us help. Let not these heathen sink down into eternal death without one opportunity to hear that blessed Gospel which is to you the source of all joy & comfort. The work that constantly presses upon us is greater than time or strength permit us to do.

Apr 14, 1876, Letter to H. A. Tupper

There was a large crowd pretty soon in attendance, so many that the hall would not hold them & they adjourned to the yard. I hope you won’t think me desperately unfeminine, but I spoke to them all, men, women, and children, pleading with them to turn from their idolatry to the True & Living God. I should not have dared to remain silent with so many souls before me sunk in heathen darkness.

Oct 10, 1878, Letter to H. A. Tupper

Odd that with five hundred Baptist preachers in the state of Virginia we must rely on a Presbyterian minister to fill a Baptist pulpit. I wonder how these things look in Heaven: they certainly look very queer in China. But then we Baptists are a great people as we never tire of saying at our associations and Conventions, & possibly our way of doing things is the best!

Nov 11, 1878, Letter to H. A. Tupper

But how inadequate our force! Here is a province of thirty million souls & Southern Baptists can only send one man & three women to tell them the story of redeeming love. Oh! That my words could be as a trumpet call stirring the hearts of my brethren & sisters to pray, to labor, to give themselves to this people. "But," some will say, "we must have results, else interest flags." I have seen the husbandman go forth in the autumn to plow the fields; later, I have seen him scatter the seed broadcast; anon, the tiny green shoots came up scarcely visible at first; then the snows of winter fell concealing them for weeks; spring brought its fructifying rains, its genial sunshine, & lo! in June the golden harvest. We are now, a very, very few feeble workers, scattering the grain broadcast according as time & strength permit. God will give the harvest; doubt it not. But the laborers are so few. Where we have four, we should have not less than one hundred. Are these wild words? They would not seem so were the church of God awake to her high privileges & her weighty responsibilities.

1889 Letters to the *Religious Herald*

I am trying honestly to do the work that could fill the hands of three or four women, and in addition must do much work that ought to be done by young men.

Our dilemma—to do men's work or to sit silent at religious services conducted by men just emerging from heathenism.

Jan 8, 1889, Letter to H. A. Tupper

There is so much work to be done, too, that ought to be done by men. A young woman could not do the work & retain the respect of Chinese men.... While I do not a little for the men & the boys, I do not feel bound to stay on their account. Still, I must add that the work is suffering & will continue to suffer in that department for want of a man living on the spot.

Published in the Sep 1877 *Foreign Mission Journal*.

In the vast continent of Africa, we have one white missionary & one colored. In Japan we have—not one. In China we have at present eight missionaries. Putting the population of China at four hundred million, this gives one missionary for fifty million people. Yet, we call ourselves Missionary Baptists. Our Lord says, "Go ye into all the world & preach the gospel to every creature." Are we obeying this command?

Published in the Jan 1888 *Foreign Mission Journal*.

The needs of these people press upon my soul, and I cannot be silent. It is grievous to think of these human souls going down to death without even one opportunity of hearing the name of Jesus. People talk vaguely about the heathen, picturing them as scarcely human, or at best, as ignorant barbarians. If they could live among them as I do, they would find in the men much to respect and admire; in the women and girls they would see many sweet and loving traits of character. They would feel, pressing upon their heart and conscience, the duty of giving the gospel to them. It does seem strange that when men and women can be found willing to risk life—or, at least, health and strength—in order that these people may hear the gospel, that Christians withhold the means to send them. Once more I urge upon the consciences of my Christian brethren and sisters the claims of these people among whom

I dwell. Here I am working alone in a city of many thousand inhabitants, with numberless villages clustered around or stretching away in the illumi- nate distance: how many can I reach?

It fills one with sorrow to see these people so earnest in their worship of false gods, seeking to work out their salvation by supposed works of merit, with no one to tell them of a better way. Then, to remember the wealth hoarded in Christian coffers! The money lavished on fine dresses and costly living! Is it not time for Christian men and women to return to the simplicity of earlier times? Should we not press it home upon our consciences that the sole object of our conversion was not the salvation of our own souls, but that we might become co-workers with our Lord and Master in the conversion of the world?

Published in the May 1889 *Foreign Mission Journal*

One cannot help asking sadly, why is love of gold more potent than love of souls? The number of men mining and prospecting for gold in Shantung is more than double the number of men representing Southern Baptists! What a lesson for Southern Baptists to ponder!

III. Live a Sacrificial Life

Paul says the presenting of our bodies is to be as “a living sacrifice.” The phrase sounds odd, oxymoronic. And yet is its meaning not plain? The consecrated life is both alive and dead and all at the same time. Sold out to Christ there are some times when I am active, vibrant, alive. Sold out to Christ, there are some things that once thrilled me, delighted me, consumed me, and now I am dead to them. I know them but am dead to them. They are not my life, my passion, any longer. It is now all about Christ and His calling upon my life. Such a life the Bible says is holy and acceptable to God.

The little aristocratic lady from Virginia lived such a life on many levels. Listen to her spirited correspondence to H. A. Tupper, dated November

11, 1878, concerning living conditions on the field:

Possibly you may have noticed throughout this letter that I have made frequent illusions to physical discomforts & to weariness of mind & body. I have always been ashamed in writing of missionary work to dwell upon physical hardships & then too we get so accustomed to take them as a matter of course that it does not occur to us to speak of them save in a general way. In this letter I have purposely departed from my usual reticence upon such matters because I know that there are some who, in their pleasant homes in America, without any real knowledge of the facts, declare that the days of missionary hardships are over. To speak in the open air, in a foreign tongue, from six to eleven times a day, is no trifle. The fatigue of travel is something. The inns are simply the acme of discomfort. If anyone fancies that sleeping on brick beds, in rooms with dirt floor, with walls blackened by the smoke of generations—the yard to these quarters being also the stable yard, & the stable itself being in three feet of the door of your apartment—if anyone thinks all this agreeable, then I wish to declare most emphatically that as a matter of taste I differ. If anyone thinks he would like this constant contact with what an English writer has called the “Great Unwashed,” I must still say that from experience I find it unpleasant. If anyone thinks that constant exposure to the risk of small-pox & other contagious diseases against which the Chinese take no precautions whatever, is just the most charming thing in life, I must still beg leave to say that I shall continue to differ in opinion. In a word, let him come out & try it. A few days roughing it as we ladies do habitually will convince the most skeptical. There is a passage from Farrar’s “Life of Christ,” which recurred forcibly to my mind during this recent country tour. “From early dawn ... to late evening in whatever house He had selected for His nightly rest, the multitude came crowding about him, not respecting his

privacy, not allowing for his weariness, eager to see Him ... There was no time even to eat bread. Such a life is not only to the last degree trying & fatiguing, but to a refined & high strung nature ... This incessant publicity, this apparently illimitable toil becomes simply maddening unless the spirit be sustained." He was the Son of God but we missionaries, we are only trying in a very poor way to walk in His footsteps & this "boundless sympathy & love" is of the divine & not the human.

A few words more & I have done. We are astonished at the wide door opened us for work. We have such access to the people, to their hearts & homes as we could not have dared to hope two years ago.

But there is one living sacrifice Lottie made that I especially wish to draw to your attention. Miss Moon never married, though she did receive a proposal that she would turn down. There was a brilliant Hebrew and Old Testament scholar named Crawford Toy. Some have called him the "crown-jewel" of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as he was one of their earliest and, without question, brightest young faculty members. Though all of the precise details are not clear, a general outline of the relationship between Dr. Toy and Miss Moon can be sketched.

They met when she was a student at Albemarle Female Institute and he was an assistant to the principal, a noted educator named John Hart. At the time Lottie "was considered a brain and a heretic." It appears Lottie and Crawford developed something more than a student-pupil relationship during her time there.

Toy committed himself to be a missionary. Lottie would make the same commitment a few years later. Set to sail for the mission field in 1860, Toy mysteriously did not go.

In 1870, Toy returned from studying in Germany to teach at Southern Seminary. He had ingested the liberal historical criticism popular in European Universities.

Around 1876 Lottie returned from China

accompanying her sister Edmonia ("Eddie") who had suffered an emotional breakdown while on the field. At this time she and Crawford Toy saw each other and apparently rekindled their relationship. This would continue in some measure until 1882.

Controversy on the mission field led Lottie to consider leaving China and returning to America to marry Toy (Some Moon scholars believe the proposed marriage may have occurred earlier when Toy was planning to go to Japan and Lottie was beginning to sense God's call to missions as well.)

The wedding never took place. According to Toy's own family, the engagement was broken because of religious differences. It appears Toy's slide into theological liberalism and backtracking on going to the mission field led Lottie to break off their engagement. Toy would go to Harvard and die a Unitarian. Lottie would remain in China and die alone. Lottie was later asked by a young relative, "Aunt Lottie, have you ever been in love?" She answered, "Yes, but God had first claim on my life, and since the two conflicted, there could be no question about the results."

Later, in 1888, Lottie would forcibly address the "new theology" of Toy and others that was being much discussed in America. With keen insight, she saw it would be fatal to the missions enterprise. She used the occasion to critique its danger and chide her fellow Baptists for their missionary indifference. Her biographer Catherine Allen summarizes her prophetic call:

Although she was committed primarily to teaching the women, and next to dealing with the children, she could not keep the men from listening from adjoining rooms. In the case of Sha-ling, the men were the primary inquirers. Each evening and on Sunday she would conduct a service of worship. In a little low-ceilinged room, lit by wicks in saucers of bean oil, the worshipers would gather. A makeshift screen of grain stalks divided the crown of men from women. With Miss Moon's direction, the semiheathen men would lead singing, read Scripture, rehearse the catechism, and pray. Miss Moon would sometimes comment on the Scripture. If

Mrs. Crawford were present, she would be willing to deliver what amounted to a sermon.

With such ready response to the gospel, Miss Moon was incredulous that Southern Baptist preachers and young women were not flocking to China. From Pingtu she quickened the flow of appeals. Now she turned to shaming, chiding, flattering—any tactic to get the attention of the apathetic Baptists. In one appeal she concluded that the folks back home had all adopted the “new theology” the Baptist editors had been criticizing ever since the Toy episode. One had predicted that “new theology” would quench the missionary spirit.

“I conclude that the large majority of Southern Baptists have adopted this ‘new theology,’” she wrote. “Else, why this strange indifference to missions? Why these scant contributions.... The needs of these people press upon my soul, and I cannot be silent. People talk vaguely about the heathen, picturing them as scarcely human, or at best, as ignorant barbarians. If they could live among them as I do, they would find in the men much to respect and admire; in the women and girls they would see many sweet and loveable traits of character.... Here I am working alone in a city of many thousand inhabitants with numberless villages. How many can I reach?”

IV. Live a Worshipful Life

The consecrated life is what Paul calls “your reasonable service” (NKJV). Other English translations render it: “your spiritual act of worship” (NIV), “your spiritual service of worship” (NASB), and “your spiritual worship” (ESV; HCSB).

The point Paul is making is a consecrated life is a worshipping life. It is a constant and continuous life of service lived out 24/7 in thanksgiving for all that we enjoy in Christ. It is a life truly satisfied in God, His good, His glory.

Such a life grows out of love and reverence for the Bible

In Lottie Moon’s Bible she wrote, “Words fail to express my love for this holy Book, my gratitude for its author, for His love and goodness. How shall I thank him for it?”

Such a life grows out of a confidence in the providence and sovereignty of God

“I have a firm conviction that I am immortal til my work is done.”

Such a life grows out of dependence on the Holy Spirit

“I feel my weakness and inability to accomplish anything without the aid of the Holy Spirit. Make special prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in P’ingtu, that I may be clothed with power from on high by the indwelling of the Spirit in my heart.”

Such a life grows out of a love for the lost

Lottie wrote, “We must go out and live among them, manifesting the gentle, loving spirit of our Lord. We need to make friends before we can hope to make converts.” During the 1890’s Lottie set a goal to visit two hundred villages every three months. She would write, “I have never found mission work more enjoyable.... I constantly thank God He has given me a work I love so much.” Lottie adopted traditional Chinese dress and learned their customs. Not only did she serve them, she identified with them, even in her death.

Published in the Aug 1887 Foreign Mission Journal

I feel that I would gladly give my life to working among such a people and regard it as a joy and privilege. Yet, to women who may think of coming, I would say, count well the cost. You must give up all that you hold dear, and live a life that is, outside of your work, narrow and contracted to the last degree. If you really love the work, it will atone for all you give up, and when your work is ended and you go Home, to see the Master’s smile and

hear his voice of welcome will more than repay your toils amid the heathen.

Lottie wrote, "I would I had a thousand lives that I might give them to the women of China." The year of her death, 2,358 persons were baptized in her field of service, nearly doubling the Baptist population in the area.

Such a life grows out of a love for Jesus

May 10, 1879, Letter to H. A. Tupper

Recall for a moment the thoughts that crowd upon the mind. This ancient continent of Asia whose soil you are treading was the chosen theatre for the advent of the Son of God. In a rush of grateful emotion there came to your mind the lines of that grand old hymn the "Dies Irae," "Seeking me Thy worn feet hasted, On the cross Thy soul death tasted," and your heart is all aglow with longing to bear to others the priceless gift that you have received, that thus you may manifest your thankfulness & love to the giver. He "went about doing good"; in a humble manner you are trying to walk in his footsteps. As you wend your way from village to village, you feel it is no idle fancy that the Master walks beside you and you hear his voice saying gently, "Lo! I am with you always even unto the end." And the soul makes answer in the words of St. Bernard, that holy man of God, "Lord Jesus, thou art home and friends and fatherland to me." Is it any wonder that as you draw near to the villages a feeling of exultation comes over you? That your heart goes up to God in glad thanksgiving that he has so trusted you as to commit to your hands this glorious gospel that you may convey its blessings to those who still sit in darkness? When the heart is full of such joy, it is no effort to speak to the people: you could not keep silent if you would. Mere physical hardships sink into merited insignificance. What does one care for comfortless inns, hard beds, hard fare,

when all around is a world of joy and glory and beauty?"

On her deathbed, speaking to her friend and fellow missionary Cynthia Miller, Lottie said, "Jesus is here right now. You can pray now that he will fill my heart and stay with me. For when Jesus comes in, he drives out all evil.... Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so. Little ones to him belong. They are weak, but he is strong. Do you know this song, Miss Miller?" Miss Miller would write following her death, "It is infinitely touching that those who work hardest & make the most sacrifices for the Master should suffer because those in the homeland fail to give what is needed." T. W. Ayers, a fellow missionary to China, wrote, "[Lottie Moon] is one woman who will have her crown covered with stars. She is one of the most unselfish saints God ever made."

Conclusion

Miss Lottie Moon died at age seventy-two, a frail fifty pounds, refusing to eat that her food portion might go to others. Her remains were cremated at Yokohama, Japan, on December 26. Personal effects consisted of one streamer trunk. The executor of her estate W. W. Adams sold off all of her personal property and cleared her bank account of \$254 in inflated local currency. He would write with a broken heart, "The heiress of Viewmont did not have enough estate to pay her way back to Virginia." She had given all she had to King Jesus. Twenty years following her death, Chinese women in remote villages would ask, "When will the heavenly Book Visitor come again?" Their testimony about her was, "How she loved us."

One year following her death, Agnes Osborne suggested the annual Woman's Missionary Union foreign missions offering being taken be collected as a living memorial to Lottie Moon, since her suggestions launched the offering to begin with. In 1918 Annie Armstrong, for whom the SBC Home Missions offering was established, said, "Miss Moon is the one who suggested the Christmas offering for foreign missions. She showed us the way in so many things. Wouldn't it be appropri-

ate to name the offering in her memory?" The issue was settled, and the rest is history. Every year, SBC churches contribute to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions.

Following her death fellow missionaries came in possession of her Bible. On the flyleaf words were found which she had penned that remain to this day a perpetual encouragement to those who go for Christ to the nations, "O, that I could consecrate myself, soul and body, to his service forever; O, that I could give myself up to him, so as never more to attempt to be my own or to have any will or affection improper for those conformed to him."

She did. Will you?

ENDNOTES

¹I am indebted to the following valuable works that served as sources for Lottie Moon's biography and her correspondence: Catherine B. Allen, *The New Lottie Moon Story* (Nashville: Broadman, 1980); and Keith Harper, *Send the Light: Lottie Moon's Letters and Other Writings* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2002).

Is This Good News for Women?

A Review of Carolyn Custis James, *The Gospel of Ruth: Loving God Enough to Break the Rules*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

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Carolyn Custis James is the wife of Frank James, president of Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, Florida. She is president of Whitby Forum, which is “dedicated to helping women go deeper in their relationship with God and serve him alongside their Christian brothers,” and she has also published *When Life and Beliefs Collide: How Knowing God Makes a Difference* (2001) and *Lost Women of the Bible: Finding Strength and Significance through Their Stories* (2006).

In *The Gospel of Ruth*, James carefully analyzes the Old Testament book of Ruth, asking the question, “Is God good for women?” She carefully works through the story, demonstrating God’s hand at work in the lives of Ruth and Naomi. The ten chapters follow the chronological structure of the book of Ruth, and each one also deals with a specific topic pertinent to women. For example, in chapter 2, “A Woman on Her Own,” she explains the widowhood of Ruth, Orpah, and Naomi and then deals with the topic of widowhood and loss both in their day and ours. Throughout the book, James examines the loss, grief, and response of both Ruth and Naomi in chapters on widowhood, barrenness, submission, love, self-sacrifice, and God’s sovereignty. By dealing with specific topics on issues affecting women, James seeks to illustrate through the backdrop of the book of Ruth that God is good for women in their specific walks of life.

The Gospel of Ruth has at least four strengths:

(1) Literary analysis: James superbly describes

the book of Ruth’s setting, characters, and events. She makes the text come alive. She evidences diligent research, meditation, and analysis, and her character analysis is probing, deep, and insightful. She carefully develops each layer of her characters: their motives, hearts, and desires. She makes readers feel like they know Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. James knows the story inside and out and explains it carefully. This is not your typical fluffy women’s book.

(2) Writing style: James writes in a crisp, engaging manner that propels readers to continue reading even though they may already know how the story ends.

(3) Cultural analysis: James skillfully explains cultural issues in Ruth’s day, helping readers to better understand the book’s historical context. For example, she explains the cultural stigma of widowhood and barrenness, the destitution that a widow would feel in ancient Israel, the Old Testament custom of “raising up a seed” for the deceased husband, and the yearly harvest and reaping rituals. Her insights significantly increase the understanding of a twenty-first century reader.

(4) Theological analysis: James exults in God’s sovereignty while acknowledging that He allows acutely painful situations into our lives that we will never fully understand. Chapter 5, “The Power of *Hesed*,” contains the moving account of her brother-in-law’s death in a blizzard while skiing. James acknowledges the pain and confusion that accompanies such a tragic loss, but she still exalts

God as both good and sovereign.

The Gospel of Ruth has at least four weaknesses:

(1) Misleading title: James is consistently unclear in her use of the word “gospel.” She frequently identifies self-sacrifice (e.g., Ruth to Naomi, Naomi to Ruth, Boaz to Ruth) as the gospel, but she inadequately explains how this self-sacrifice either advances or pictures the gospel. She uses the term loosely as “good news” without drawing consistent connections to the death and resurrection of Jesus. The title *The Gospel of Ruth* makes the book sound more sensational than the actual content of Ruth justifies.

(2) Misleading subtitle: The book’s subtitle is *Loving God Enough to Break the Rules*. The emphasis on “breaking the rules,” however, is not a major theme in the actual book of Ruth. It seems that James is eisegeting the text by over-exegeting it to emphasize Ruth’s apparent “rule-breaking.” James labels two of Ruth’s actions as explicit rule-breaking: (a) She interprets Ruth’s request to glean behind the reapers as being a “counter-cultural warrior” who teaches Boaz about God’s law. She insists that Ruth boldly asks to glean “with” the reapers rather than “behind” them, which was unheard of in that day. (b) She explains that Ruth changed Naomi’s directions to her and came up with her own idea of challenging Boaz with the kinsman-redeemer law. Both of her explanations seem stretched. Her argument that Ruth is a radical rule-breaker is unconvincing. Ruth loved God enough to break some of her family traditions and to follow His right rules.

(3) Tone: James’s tone occasionally lacks an appropriate reverence for God. For example, she begins by asking the question, “Is God good for women?” (23). This may be a question that we would expect a secular culture to press, but is it really appropriate in a work that supposedly begins and ends with Christian assumptions about the character and nature of God? Although I understand what she is asking (and perhaps it is merely for rhetorical effect), it seems unwise to phrase a question in a way that asks if God, who is *always* good, is indeed good to a group of people for whom He sent His Son to die. The question comes across

as irreverent, not least because it is woman-centered rather than radically God-centered.

(4) Egalitarian-friendly agenda: The book’s most significant weakness is its clear agenda to liberate women from identification with or subservience to men. James seems desperate to prove that women can contribute to the kingdom just as much as men. While I would agree with her, she seems to emphasize that women’s domestic duties are not enough to make them equal contributors. Here are some examples:

(a) She relates a time when she no longer needed to support her husband through working while he was in school: “Did I still have important contributions to make? I wondered if God, in any sense, was counting on me to build his kingdom, or if it was enough for me to help launch Frank to do important kingdom work. Were my efforts now less important—even dispensable—because I am a woman?” (25).

(b) She reveals a not-so-subtle disapproval of staying at home and supporting her husband in favor of advancing the kingdom by working outside the home. Her tone becomes increasingly condescending as she emphasizes that a woman should not self-identify with her role in relationship to a man. She sneers at “the view that a woman’s salvation comes through man, marriage, and motherhood” (142), as if that were a complementarian position.

(c) Rather than explaining Ruth as a woman who willingly sacrificed to support her family and home, James defines Ruth as an *ezer-warrior* (211)!

(d) James’s strongest attacks come in chapters 8–10. In chapter 8, “The Three Faces of Submission,” she fails to define biblical submission. By failing to define it, she insinuates a straw-man definition and then attacks it: women who submit are afraid to defend themselves against men who would take advantage of them (157). James essentially redefines submission as self-sacrifice. Then she happily admits that Boaz was just as submissive as Ruth because *he submitted to her* by his act of sacrifice (166).

(e) Chapter 9, “When Women Initiate and

Men Respond,” contains her interpretation of Ruth’s teaching Boaz about God’s law. She commends Ruth for allegedly “teaching” Boaz about a broader application of God’s law through her request to follow the reapers (175). Thus James pictures Ruth as a sort of theological mentor for Boaz.

(f) Chapter 10, “Good to Great,” defines her agenda. She commends women for advancing their own agenda. I was left pondering how this view meshes with Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 5. It is hard to come away from this book without clearly seeing James’ agenda to embolden and empower women to be independent from men. She wants them to pursue “God’s plan” without being “tied” to a man or a home.

While I enjoyed and profited from James’s *The Gospel of Ruth*, I came away from it grieved. I was discouraged that such a gifted author who thoroughly researched the book of Ruth would color her research with an egalitarian-friendly agenda that is foreign to the book of Ruth. Rather than simply explaining the book, I felt as if she was manipulating the book’s storyline to fit her agenda. Although the book of Ruth contains good news concerning God’s goodness to women, *The Gospel of Ruth* contains some unbiblical advice for women by fostering dissatisfaction with God’s design for them as wives and mothers. That is not good news.

What Are Little Boys Made of?

A Review of Leonard Sax, *Boys Adrift: The Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated Boys and Underachieving Young Men*. New York: Basic Books, 2007.

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Keen powers of cultural observation are not necessary for one to be aware of the phenomenon that Leonard Sax calls a “growing epidemic” in contemporary America—unmotivated boys and underachieving young men. More and more of today’s young males are disengaging from school, not pursuing vocation, and opting out of real-world pursuits. While Sax notes that not all boys and young men are affected with this malaise, it characterizes a considerable number. It is not uncommon for twenty- and thirty-something young men to leave college, get part-time jobs, move back in with their parents, and spend their considerable free time playing X-box. All the while, they are untroubled by their aimless circumstances and oblivious to the concerns of their parents and girlfriends. Sax is certainly not the first to observe this distressing trend of “boys adrift.” However, through his experience as a family physician and research psychologist, he contributes to the subject by identifying what he believes are the five factors driving this problem: changes at school, video games, medications for ADHD, endocrine disruptors, and the devaluation of masculinity.

By “changes at school,” Sax has in mind modifications in teaching methods in recent years. Studies of human brain development have shown differences in the developmental trajectories of boys compared with girls. Particularly, the language area of the brain in young girls develops earlier than in boys. Thus, in general, boys may not be develop-

mentally ready to learn reading and writing at the same time that girls are ready. The problem, says Sax, is that recent decades have witnessed a gender blind acceleration in the pace of education. Today’s kindergarten curriculum resembles the first-grade curriculum of thirty years ago. While girls may be ready for this level of learning, the difference in readiness for boys between the ages of five and seven means that a boy’s first experience at school may be profoundly frustrating. Compounding the problem, Sax argues, is the curriculum shift away from experiential knowledge to solely theoretical knowledge. Cognitive-based educational strategies ignore the important question: what motivates kids to learn? Boys especially benefit from direct experience. According to Sax, if boys are challenged to learn something before being developmentally ready and they are not properly motivated to learn (through experiential knowledge, as well as, Sax adds, through the right kind of competition), they are more likely to develop a negative attitude toward education and disengage from school.

The second factor Sax identifies is perhaps the least surprising to many: playing video games. Sax suggests that video games feed the desire for control over one’s environment, especially prevalent in many boys. Given this and their addictive nature, it is not difficult to see how a boy’s connectedness with the real world can be affected and his motivation “derailed.” Boys who care nothing for schoolwork will spend hours improving their *Halo* score.

Other negative affects suggested by researchers include poor academic performance and antisocial behavior. Moreover, Sax argues, video games teach the wrong lessons about masculinity: in the video game world one can wreak havoc and simply walk away.

Not only has video game use exploded in recent decades, so has use of Sax's third factor: medications for ADHD. In 2007, boys were thirty times more likely to be taking medications for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) than in 1987. Why? Sax suggests several reasons, such as a cultural shift away from personal responsibility and toward third-party explanations (i.e., your son is not disobedient; he has "Oppositional-Defiant Disorder"). Another reason is the curriculum acceleration noted earlier: if a kindergartener frequently fidgets and has trouble focusing on how to read and write, there's a good chance his teacher may suggest an ADHD evaluation. However, many health plans do not cover a complete neurodevelopmental assessment. Instead, according to Sax, many doctors believe in the "empirical trial of medication" (88). So, many boys are placed on ADHD medications and, as a result, are found to have improved attention spans and academic performance. Problem solved, right? Actually, Sax notes a recent study revealing that children *not* diagnosed with ADHD who were given medication demonstrated improved performance *by the same degree as kids who were diagnosed*. Thus, a "positive" response to ADHD medication is no confirmation of an ADHD diagnosis. Moreover, Sax cites international examples of independent researchers who found that, in laboratory animals, stimulant medications (like those used for ADHD) damage a part of the developing brain responsible for translating motivation into action. The result in animals is a loss of drive in adulthood. Of course, Sax is quick to note that the risks are not proven in humans. But who is warning parents and doctors about even possible risks?

The fourth factor that Sax believes is contributing to "boys adrift" was, for me, the most unexpected. Many modern synthetic chemicals are "endocrine disruptors," that is, substances that mimic the action of human sex hormones—the

majority mimicking female hormones. Children are exposed to these chemicals in various ways: through certain pesticide-treated foods and from plastic containers in which small amounts of the chemicals leach into the liquid. Sax claims a growing body of evidence exists demonstrating that endocrine disrupting chemicals accelerate puberty in girls and may delay or disrupt puberty in boys. In addition, lab animals exposed to these chemicals are developmentally affected—with males affected motivationally. Scientists are only beginning to examine the potential long-term health risks of exposure to these chemicals.

Next Sax includes a chapter titled "Failure to Launch," describing the end result that these combined social and biological issues have in the lives of today's young men. The most fascinating aspect of the chapter is the numerous selected emails that he received in response to an op-ed piece and online chat that he hosted for the *Washington Post* in 2006. Unmarried young men still living with their parents and lacking direction unashamedly and indignantly wrote Sax asking, "So what's the problem?" Driven young women repeatedly admitted with chagrin to having boyfriends or husbands who fit Sax's description. Concerned mothers confessed that he accurately portrayed their sons. Clearly, Sax has struck a nerve for many.

Finally, Sax addresses the fifth factor, the devaluation and disintegration of the masculine ideal. He highlights the fact that enduring cultures—cultures that have remained intact for hundreds or thousands of years—use traditions and customs to mark a transition to manhood. We moderns look condescendingly on such traditions, but we do so to our own peril, Sax argues. Our neglect of the transition to manhood is contributing to the epidemic of underachieving young men. Manhood is something a boy accomplishes through the guidance of men. Whether through formal ceremonies or a more gradual process, men in enduring cultures teach boys what is expected of a man. According to Sax, "being a man means using your strength in the service of others" (181). Though he says his definition is not the only one, he insists that we must decide—individually and collectively—how

to define masculinity. If we do not, the marketplace will be sure to define it for us. Sax concludes with a chapter offering practical strategies to counteract the five factors.

Sax's book is a fascinating read. There are probably few people who would disagree with his overall concern (except perhaps the young men in question) or who are unable personally to identify a boy or young man who fits the description. Sax's conversational style also makes the book an easy read. His many examples—from his medical practice and from his own interaction with boys and their parents—are engaging. And yet the abundance of endnotes documenting research and scientific studies demonstrates that Sax has done his homework.

As noted above, the chapter on endocrine disruptors was unanticipated and disturbing. Certainly, Christians should become informed about any risks posed by these synthetic chemicals and, as new scientific evidence comes to light, should seek to ensure accountability in the manufacture and use of them. However, while these substances may have a genuine biological influence on boys (and girls), I remain unpersuaded that this is a significant contributor to the real problem of “boys adrift.”

Above all, I am convinced that unmotivated boys and underachieving young men are primarily (though not solely) a product of the devaluation of masculinity and the inability of our culture to articulate what it means to be a man. In a culture in which it is anathema to affirm sex differences, it should not surprise us that today's young men are muddled about manhood. When told to “grow up,” they have no clear picture of what that looks like. Sax's discussions of changes in education and medications for ADHD are further evidence of a gender-blind society that takes no account of differences between boys and girls—except when boys need medication to cure them of their boyishness. If we are unable to affirm any longer to our boys that being a man involves the noble roles of leading, providing, and protecting, we will continue to see young men shirking responsibility, living off of their parents, and devoting their attention to more motivating pursuits—like video games. Sax is right.

Gender matters.

Make no mistake: Sax does not write as a complementarian. Though he admires enduring cultures that mark a transition to manhood, he finds it unfortunate that many of them are “sexist”—that is, certain roles in those cultures are restricted to men (206; the examples he gives involve religious leadership). He also claims to “fully endorse the idea of a full-time homemaker father,” though he admits, “very few men make that choice” (129). Those who acknowledge the biblical teaching of complementary roles for men and women will view these matters quite differently. It is interesting that Sax is quick to chastise twenty-first-century American condescension toward enduring cultures that guide boys into manhood. Yet he clearly argues from that same twenty-first-century American point-of-view when he warns his readers about the “narrow and limiting” gender roles of those enduring cultures.

Neither does Sax write as an evangelical Christian. He is unconcerned with the specific religious beliefs of various cultures, but rather with the common ways in which they teach the next generation—in gender-separate communities—what is expected of men and women (168–69). He asserts, “Traditional Judaism, the various Christian denominations, as well as Islam, all have long traditions of gender-separate activities” (205). That may be so. However, a biblical view of men and women is worlds apart from that of Islam. In addition, Sax's agenda to reclaim masculinity does not entail an opposition to homosexuality. After all, in “numerous” cultures, homosexuality is a “normal masculine or even hypermasculine orientation” (168). However, this observation highlights the weakness of Sax's efforts to define what it means to be a man. Without a *standard* for defining manhood, one is left to observing the common traits of various cultures. While such an exercise can be helpful, those who understand the effects of human depravity know that it will ultimately prove disastrous. If God is the author of our sexual differentiation, we should expect to see common evidence of his design across cultures and throughout history. Yet Christians also know that, post-Fall, manhood is corrupted, and diverse cultures display common

corruptions (e.g., homosexuality, abuse of women, etc.). Comparing cultural attributes of manhood will not enable one to arrive at the ideal. For that, Scripture is essential.

These criticisms are simply a reminder that we must engage everything from a biblical worldview. They are not intended to detract from the importance of Sax's book. Not only are there significant cultural factors with which Christians must engage, we must also be intentional in teaching manhood to our sons. If we do not, they will definitely learn a deceptive and corrosive "manhood" elsewhere.

Church leaders, parents, and educators who are concerned about boys need to read *Boys Adrift*. If read with biblical discernment, it will help Christians further comprehend the culture in which we live, as we seek to raise our boys into godly men.

Sliding the Slippery Slope

A Review of Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006.

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Just over three decades ago, a well-known evangelical Christian leader wrote a book about what he considered to be the most important theological topic of the day: biblical inerrancy. Carefully and meticulously detailing the abandonment of inerrancy by certain scholars in various denominations, this man's particular concern was—ultimately—for the Christian faith itself. After all, he reasoned, if the full inspiration and authority of the Bible is abandoned, how long can it be until evangelicals leave behind the evangel, as well?

More recently, Wayne Grudem has penned an immensely helpful work of scholarship examining what he discerns is the latest challenge to biblical authority—as well as a near certain segue to eventual theological liberalism: egalitarianism. In *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?*, Grudem, Research Professor of Bible and Theology at Phoenix Seminary in Phoenix, Arizona, writes out of a “deep concern about a widespread undermining of the authority of Scripture in the arguments that are frequently used to support evangelical feminism” (11). He examines the commonly employed methods of biblical interpretation and exegesis that time and again drive evangelical feminists, in addition to documenting developments in denominations and other Christian organizations that seem to prove his “slippery slope” argument about egalitarianism—that is, that “[o]nce an evangelical feminist position is adopted, the development only goes in one direction, again and again” (12).

Grudem divides this book into four parts. In the

first part (13-30), Grudem documents a telling pattern: that endorsing women's ordination nearly always results in—or is itself the product of—a denomination's capitulation to theological liberalism. Christians reading *Evangelical Feminism*, Grudem hopes, will be convinced that egalitarianism—through various avenues—leads to an overall undermining of the truthfulness and authority of Bible.

In the second part of *Evangelical Feminism* (31-150), Grudem examines the scholarship of specific egalitarian authors such as—among others—Rebecca Groothuis, William Webb, Gordon Fee, Sarah Sumner, and Kevin Giles, and demonstrates the different ways that these egalitarians espouse views that undermine or even deny the full authority of the Bible. Examples of these kinds of claims include asserting that Paul was wrong in his views on gender, that later theological and cultural developments trump Scripture's teaching on gender, and that contemporary circumstances win out over the Bible. Anticipating the question as to whether the scholars he has discussed are representative of evangelical feminists, Grudem asserts that the claims he has pointed out “are promoted by prominent egalitarian writers and published by leading evangelical publishers” (150). His chapter dealing with Webb's “redemptive-movement hermeneutic” in this section is particularly helpful (65-80).

The third section in Grudem's work (151-220) includes the dissection of various egalitarian views that are based on untruthful or unsubstantiated claims. “This category does not concern a *direct*

denial of the authority of the Bible,” he writes, “but it nullifies the authority of the Bible in another way, through promoting untruthful or unsubstantiated claims about what certain words in the Bible ‘really mean,’ or about some historical facts that change our understanding of the situation to which a book of the Bible was written” (153). Examples of these kinds of claims include the assertion that women deacons had governing authority in the earliest Christian churches, that the Greek word for “head” often meant “source” and not “authority” in the Bible and other ancient sources, and that the Bible never teaches the eternal functional subordination of the Son to the Father.

In the fourth and last part of *Evangelical Feminism* (221–263), Grudem points out the different places that egalitarianism will eventually take evangelical feminists and the churches and organizations that they lead—a denial of anything uniquely masculine, worship of “Mother in heaven,” and the approval of homosexuality as a legitimate Christian lifestyle. In the concluding chapter of the book Grudem declares, “As I have spent more and more time analyzing egalitarian arguments, I have become more firmly convinced that egalitarianism is becoming a new path to liberalism for evangelicals in our generation” (261). Charitable and even-handed throughout his work, Grudem states, “I am not saying that all egalitarians are liberals, or are moving toward liberalism. But I am saying that the *arguments* used by egalitarians actually undermine the authority of Scripture again and again, and in so doing they are leading the church step by step toward liberalism” (262). Ultimately at stake in the gender debate, according to Grudem, is the truthfulness and authority of the Scriptures.

The strengths of this book are its ample documentation, both in terms of Scripture references and contemporary scholarship; its accessibility and usefulness for any Christian who is either quite familiar with the current complementarian-egalitarian debate or any believer in Christ who is just coming into contact with the discussion, and is in need of a faithful primer on the subject; and the tone in which Grudem writes, which is clear and forthright. Grudem does not caricature evangeli-

cal feminists, but rather deals with the best of their scholarship, showing it to be lacking when viewed up against the biblical material.

At times, Grudem appears to have some misunderstanding of how certain denominations operate. For example, resolutions passed at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention—or merely the Convention’s inaction, as was the case in 1964—are not binding on its churches, as Grudem seems to imply (24). Though it is somewhat tangential to the overall point he is making—that parachurch organizations should follow the scriptural mandates for the local church insofar as they are performing the tasks of the local church—Grudem’s apparent suggestion that a parachurch organization such as The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood could observe the Lord’s Supper together (113) may be a bit confusing to some readers.

In all, *Evangelical Feminism* is an excellent resource for showing the liberal outworking of the presuppositions upon which egalitarianism is based. In a fairly succinct manner, Grudem has discovered, discussed, and dismantled common egalitarian arguments. In fact, Grudem’s thesis is so powerfully convincing that perhaps future editions of this book will contain a different subtitle than the one it has at present. For it may be true that Grudem is wrong when he asserts that evangelical feminism is the new path to liberalism; surely Grudem and his fellow complementarians would admit as much. Instead, it may be time for Christians to continue to examine anew the presuppositions upon which evangelical feminism is built. Perhaps the movement has so distorted the clear truths of Scripture that the biblical evangel to which Christians have witnessed for nearly two millennia has become distorted, as well.

If that’s the case, perhaps at that time Christians may stop and exclaim, “Evangelical feminism is no slippery slope toward theological liberalism. Rather, the slope has already been slid.”

Getting to the Heart of Manhood and Womanhood

A Review of John Ensor, *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart*.
Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007.

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Accessible to a wide-ranging audience, John Ensor's *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart* is an excellent discipleship resource for those seeking a better understanding of God's intention for marriage. Written from a complementarian perspective, Ensor argues that men and women perform distinctive roles within the marital relationship. When these roles are carried out correctly, it "is a welcomed sight in which both partners are fulfilled in themselves and delighted in the other" (89). With that in mind, he outlines the principles by which single men and women can develop and nurture godly relationships in preparation for marriage.

This important volume contains fifteen chapters and is broken into two major sections. In section one, some of the most important matters of the book are covered. Ensor challenges the modern approach to dating and courtship by showing that it is ultimately destructive. As he explains, in relationships it is now assumed that "sex is the heart of the matter, rather than the *heart* being the heart of the matter" (25). With all modesty and restraint removed, the dating process is about "repeating the bonding and tearing process till you get a hit" (25). This, according to Ensor, is harmful to both males and females since it is contrary to the way we were designed to function. Ensor then turns to consider what is lacking in the modern approach to dating and marriage. Though he mentions several impor-

tant things (customs, examples, etc.), he spends most of his time dealing with the need to make God the center of our lives and relationships. Without this, men and women will never be truly satisfied and will look to each other to fill voids that no man is able to fill on his own. Thus, relationships are strained by burdens that they were never designed to carry. With God at the center, however, men and women find their greatest satisfaction and are also given a compass by which to guide all other aspects of their lives. Ensor closes this section by making a case for a complementarian approach to marriage. By looking carefully at Genesis 1–2, Ensor highlights the equality of the genders while at the same time showing how God has given special leadership to Adam. He strengthens his case by showing that a complementarian view of marriage is not only biblical, but is also "rooted in nature" (74).

Although many of the most essential issues are covered in section one, section two is also highly important since it offers a glimpse of how a complementary relationship is supposed to work. Among other things, Ensor addresses the issue of male leadership when it comes to matters such as dating, tough marital decisions, parental discipline, sacrifice, and employment. This section is filled with lessons and warnings for men and women as they consider their future or present roles of husband and wife, father and mother. In short, this section gives a

practical application for men and women on how to apply all that is set forth in the first section.

If the book has any weaknesses they are certainly minor in nature. Ensor employs a straightforward style that is effective in getting his point across, but may at times come across as harsh or even crude. Furthermore, throughout the book, Ensor's use of subheadings can be distracting and cause the book to read in a choppy fashion that lacks cohesion. And, though illustrative from time to time, his use of Shakespeare (and other famous people) seems to be forced in some places, which distracts from his overall flow of thought.

These minor criticisms aside, one finds that the positive aspects of this book far outweigh the negatives. To begin with, the book is immensely relevant for a wide-ranging audience. For the unmarried (no matter what age), Ensor's call to renewing sexual purity and patience prior to marriage is necessary for avoiding the heartaches and troubles associated with the sexual promiscuity of the current generation. On the other hand, this book is relevant for married couples in that it calls special attention to the dangers of one or both partners failing in their respective duties within the family. For example, when men fail to be the husbands they are called to be, Ensor reminds them that their "marriage is doomed, and God will hold the men to account for the murder of it" (82). Or, to mothers who sacrifice their children for the sake of a career, Ensor warns that "latch-key kids . . . are in serious danger. Sex, drugs, and alcohol are hunting for our youth, and the feeding hours are three to six o'clock in the afternoon. The mother who is not there to protect them is risking her children to these predators" (154).

In addition to being highly relevant for men and women of all ages, Ensor's book is well argued. Writing with a God-centered focus, he consistently looks to Scripture as the guide and model for the issues in question. Here one finds that Ensor handles key texts of the Bible in a straight forward and balanced fashion that allows the Bible to say what it actually says. At the same time, however, Ensor is careful to show that the Bible does not support some of the unacceptable stereotypes of men that

are often put forward by feminists (i.e., male dominance or male superiority). Likewise, Ensor underscores the need for both husbands and wives to give continuous effort to their marriages since the task of two becoming one flesh is never easy. Indeed, Ensor avoids giving the false impression that a complementary relationship happens without sacrifice and hard work. He does, however, make it very clear that the blessings of this approach are worth it. Finally, Ensor's appeal to common sense and plain reason is quite persuasive. With countless examples and illustrations, he shows that protecting purity and living with integrity is always the best course of action, both before and after marriage.

As a husband and father, I find this book to be enormously beneficial. It confirms convictions that are already present and challenges me in some new ways as well. As a pastor, reading this book makes me want to buy a copy for every member of my church—single and married. It is concise, accessible, and relevant enough to be read by almost any male or female exploring, or living in, a marital relationship. The book is ideal for teenagers who are curious about the opposite sex, couples engaged to be married, or couples who have been married for many years. *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart* has something to say to everyone.

How to Discern a Lie

A Review of Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Dannah Gresh, *Lies Young Women Believe and the Truth That Sets Them Free*. Chicago: Moody Press, 2008.

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From the moment readers pick up the book, *Lies Young Women Believe*, they are immediately struck by its unique look and format. This book is both visually appealing and intellectually stimulating throughout all fifteen chapters. Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Dannah Gresh set out to expose, define, discuss, and disassemble twenty-five of the most common lies that are currently plaguing this generation of young women.

The material is divided into three main sections: "The Landscape of Lies," "Lies Young Women Believe," and "Overcoming Lies." The progression of these three sections allows both the young readers and their teachers to gain a clearer understanding of the biblical principle of how lies enter our minds and hold the potential of taking us captive, unless they are exposed by God's truth. In section one, DeMoss and Gresh use the biblical account of Eve in the Garden of Eden to explore how Satan historically and currently uses doubt to cause people to believe lies that are in contrast to God's truth. Readers are encouraged to examine their own progress of dwelling upon ideas, images, and concepts and the radical impact that has upon their understanding of truth and trust in God. Upon completion of the first section, readers are given a firm foundation for exploring twenty-five lies that they may currently believe as truth.

Section two systematically walks the reader through the twenty-five lies, while also breaking them down into digestible categories such as "Lies About God," "Lies About Satan," and "Lies About Myself." The individual categories provide

the reader with an example of lies in that appropriate context, related statistics concerning the lie among young adults, Scripture that speaks to the truth needing to be exposed, and personal examples from the authors as to how they or others have intimately dealt with the topic of discussion. In this section, the authors engage some controversial modern lies such as "#24: Having a career outside of the home is more valuable and fulfilling than being 'just' a wife and mom," while boldly presenting what Scripture has to say about them in contrast to what society may have taught. Although each category does not exhaustively cover each lie, there is enough substance to evoke a healthy level of discussion in a small group, or with a parent or trusted church leader.

Section three is perhaps the most essential section in the book. Once readers have been exposed to Satan's attempts to create disbelief and doubt in section one, and later exposed to twenty-five of his most common lies in section two, this last section adequately summarizes how to ultimately overcome lies. The sub-sections of section three, entitled "How to Stop Fueling Lies," "How to Find Freedom from the Lies," and "The Truth That Sets Us Free," provide readers with step-by-step guidelines to recognize and respond to lies with God's Word. It is evident throughout the work that the purpose and passion of these authors is to expose lies and aid young women in their battles to overcome them.

The three main strengths of this book are its overall visual appeal to young women, the conver-

sational style of writing used by the authors, and its use of appropriate Scripture to aide readers in identifying and overcoming lies. Having personally led a group of middle school and high school girls through the book, I can testify that it was an immediate hit. From the pink and lime-green cover to the splash of color and blog-bites used throughout the pages, my students were instantly drawn to the book. Beyond the visual appeal, I noticed an immediate air of comfort felt among the students of all ages in reading and understanding the material presented. The authors did an excellent job at presenting difficult material via an age-appropriate manner so that the readers can fully understand and identify with the concepts being taught. Scriptural truth is presented in an age and culturally appropriate form and will definitely leave an impact upon the reader of any age.

One weakness of this book is the lack of evangelistic emphasis. Although this is seemingly not the main thrust of the book, having personally led several non-Christian teenagers through the material, I saw where certain aspects could have been presented a little more basic and clearly for the readers who have no substantial religious background.

Overall, this book is an excellent resource for adults who want a better understanding of the lies currently plaguing this generation of young women, teachers and volunteers who work with youth in the church or public forum, and, most importantly, young women who are asking, "Is there any truth out there that will set me free?"

Annotated Bibliography for Gender-Related Books in 2007

Compiled and Annotated by Barak Tjader and Christopher W. Cowan

Contributing Editor and Associate Editor

The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

Louisville, Kentucky

In this issue of the journal we profile some of the most significant gender-related books from 2007. Here is a brief reminder about the categories we are using and our intent in using them. *Complementarian* designates an author who recognizes the full personal equality of the sexes, coupled with an acknowledgment of role distinctions in the home and church, as articulated in the Danvers Statement (see back cover of *JBMW*). *Egalitarian* classifies evangelicals who see undifferentiated equality—i.e., they see no scriptural warrant for affirming male headship in the home or the church. Under the *Non-Evangelical* heading, we have classified important secular works that address the subject of biblical gender issues from a religious, albeit, non-evangelical point of view. This category also serves as our classification for liberal scholars wanting to retain some sort of Christian identity. Finally, under the *Undeclared* heading, we have listed those authors who do not give sufficient indication of their fundamental stance for us to classify them more specifically, or authors whose position is too ambiguous to classify in light of the category descriptions above.

Complementarian

Ensor, John. *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart.* Wheaton: Crossway, 2007.

John Ensor provides a needed guide for initiating and building relationships that is deeply rooted in biblical complementarianism. He argues persuasively that the innate differences in men and women should

profoundly affect the way they conduct themselves before marriage as well as after. Men must squash timidity as they initiate romantic relationships while women should affirm and joyfully respond to demonstrated leadership. Purposeful pursuit of marriage, rather than the alternatives offered by the modern dating culture, will establish the proper foundations for a Christ-honoring home. For a more detailed consideration, readers should consult the review by James Dew in this issue of *JBMW*.

Lesniewski, Linda. *Connecting Women: A Relational Guide for Leaders in Women's Ministry.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Because of the different responsibilities given to men and women in New Testament church leadership (Titus 2:2-5), Linda Lesniewski emphasizes the vital place of women ministering to other women in the church. She describes the components of a healthy women's ministry and sets forth a practical guide to beginning and developing a thriving ministry to women.

Taylor, Arden. *Family Matters: A Biblical Perspective from Dating Fears to Twilight Years.* Canton, GA: Riverstone Group, 2007.

Arden Taylor offers an overview and biblical foundation for issues related to marriage and family. With great clarity and concision, the volume tackles both the obstacles to and principles for a home centered on God's plan for the family. Taylor suggests that for marriages to be biblically structured, they must meet the mandate for husbands to

lead sacrificially and wives to follow joyfully instead of following the ideology of a feminist society.

Complementarian/Egalitarian

Husbands, Mark, and Timothy Larson, eds. *Women, Ministry, and the Gospel: Exploring New Paradigms*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007.

Its essays coming as the fruition of the 2005 Wheaton Theology Conference, this volume seeks to offer fresh, more nuanced perspectives on the gender debate. As the lone contributor arguing for a complementarian view of church structure, Jim Hamilton suggests that women should be fully embraced in ministries not limited to men in Scripture, namely those involving teaching and authority over men. The other essays include the following: I. Howard Marshall offers a traditional egalitarian exegesis of 1 Timothy 2 by focusing on the socio-historical setting of the passage. Lynn Cohick explores five typologies that attempt to explain 1 Cor 11:2–16, opting for an approach similar to William Webb’s “redemptive movement” hermeneutic. Egalitarian Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen argues that evidence offered by the social sciences on gender differences is often flawed because of uncertainty concerning nature/nurture, questionable statistical significance, and lack of cross-cultural control. In other contributions, Rebecca Idestrom looks at Deborah as a model for ministry, Frederick Long argues for inclusion of women based on New Testament gifts lists and the Acts fulfillment of Joel 2:28–32, Mark Husbands suggests that genderedness has been “hidden with Christ” in the ordering of the church, Margaret Kim Peterson questions the distinction of public and private realms of work and ministry, Cheryl Sanders traces the participation of women in Pentecostal/Holiness movements, and Timothy Larsen argues that egalitarianism has historically been a legitimate evangelical option. The book concludes with three chapters from Henri Blocher, Sarah Sumner, and Timothy George suggesting new ways forward for ministry and dialogue between egalitarians and complementarians. While these essays and the volume as a whole offer some profitable suggestions for a Christ-like approach to

a sometimes contentious debate, the reader is left to question whether, in fact, new paradigms offer any new answers to the question of whether God has indeed given specific roles to men and women in the home and church.

Egalitarian

Barton, Ruth Haley. *Longing for More: A Woman’s Path to Transformation in Christ*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007.

Ruth Haley Barton urges women to embrace their freedom in shedding fear and inhibitions as they move toward transformation in Christ. Christ, she suggests, broke “man-made” regulations regarding gender and modeled God’s attitude toward women which is “summed up in Galatians 3:27–28” (71–72). In keeping with an individualistic focus on Scripture reading, women who are truly free will, according to Barton, accept their role of allowing God to meet their own individual needs.

Bell, Rob. *Sex God: Exploring the Endless Connections Between Sexuality and Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

Rob Bell shows that human sexuality is inextricably linked to the cosmic mystery revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sadly, Bell misunderstands precisely the way in which Scripture connects the two—in the husband and wife’s demonstration of the archetypal headship/submission structure of Christ and His church (Eph 5:22–33). Instead, he argues for an egalitarian model of mutual submission in which a husband and wife each has equal authority over the other.

Davidson, Richard M. *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007.

Richard M. Davidson’s massive study of sexuality in the Old Testament devotes its first two chapters to questions about gender in creation and fall. Davidson rejects a complementarian interpretation of both, arguing that the first chapter of Genesis establishes unequivocal equality between men and women. He responds to five complemen-

tarian arguments from the creation narrative that support a hierarchical structure of gender, not seeing details such as Adam's prior creation and his naming of Eve as compelling support for male headship. Likewise, Davidson rejects the view that the fall narrative shows Eve's usurpation of Adam's authority or that God affirms headship/submission in his judgment pronouncements. He also includes an afterword in the book that tries to show that the views he espouses are compatible with the New Testament authors and can be synthesized into a biblical theology of sexuality.

Eckert, Kim Gaines. *Stronger Than You Think: Becoming Whole Without Having To Be Perfect.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007.

Suggesting that women suffer from brokenness resulting from deep-seated pain, Kim Gaines Eckert contends that a desire for wholeness rather than perfection is at the heart of women's struggles. In addition to other cultural expectations imposed on women, she argues, the church's prohibition of women from leadership has served as an impetus to perpetuate brokenness rather than healing. Besides the problematic egalitarian assumptions of the author, she grounds her emphasis on brokenness and wholeness in modern psychotherapy rather than explicitly biblical categories of sanctification and discipleship.

Gray, Jeanette. *Unleashing Women in the Church: Preparing Servant Leaders to Serve the Church.* St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart, 2007.

Jeanette Gray seeks to raise up a new generation of women leaders in the church. Although cautioning that women must serve humbly within their socio-cultural setting, she argues for an egalitarian church leadership structure that is based on giftedness and character rather than limitations due to gender. She includes two appendices that trace historical approaches to the place of women in church leadership and interpretations of disputed Scripture passages related to gender.

Larsen, Timothy, and Daniel J. Treier. *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007.

According to the editors, "This Companion offers an up-to-date articulation of evangelical theology that is both faithful to historic evangelical convictions and in dialogue with contemporary intellectual contexts and concerns" (i). The following entry is not a consideration of the entire volume, but only chapter 11 by Elaine Storkey, entitled "Evangelical Theology and Gender" (161–76). Storkey—an egalitarian scholar—notes that some evangelical theologians "have entered into dialogue with feminist theology," expressing "faithfulness to evangelical orthodoxy and openness to theological exploration on God and gender." Among others, however, "the debate has become stuck within an obsession with male-female roles" (163). She discusses the debate among complementarians and egalitarians and insists that "there are serious problems with both the methodology and the exegetical assumptions behind the urge to find the true characteristics of 'biblical manhood and womanhood' and replicate these in our Christian communities today" (166). Storkey contends that "our understanding of gender is inextricably influenced by our ideas of human identity" and advocates a recovery of "human identity as relational rather than some substance with an essence or nature." Such a recovery "changes the focus of the gender debate" (168) and owes much to a renewal in Trinitarian theology, particularly discussions of the "relational trinity" (169). Storkey notes that not all evangelicals "have seen in the Trinity the vision for gender interrelatedness and equality" (170). She critiques those who maintain Scriptural support for eternal functional subordination within the Trinity. According to Storkey, (1) this view is "unknown" in church history until the last few decades; (2) Christ's submission to the Father "was, like his humanity, part of his earthly life"; (3) the "idea of subordination" in the Godhead (and among humans) has to do with views of power and authority at odds with the New Testament; and (4) this "eternal subordinationist view" is a heresy dating back to Arius (171). Storkey concludes with a section on the gender of God,

arguing that language about God must “ultimately point away from gender and to the fundamental truth of divine love” (172).

Thompson, John L. *Reading the Bible with the Dead: What You Can Learn from the History of Exegesis That You Can't Learn from Exegesis Alone.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

John L. Thompson's goal is to provide “a digest of the history of the interpretation of some passages and issues that ought to be of great interest to readers and hearers today” (8). In each chapter, he considers a difficult biblical text or a thematic cluster of texts—to include texts of violence and abuse, texts that address domestic relations (particularly divorce), and texts that bear on the role of women in the church (specifically 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 3). Thompson provides a survey of how pre-critical (patristic, medieval, and Reformation era) commentators interpreted these texts and topics. “Although many may assume that they know where these venerable male commentators were likely to come down on issues still contested today,” Thompson writes, “there was considerable dissent and diversity of opinion” (8). Regarding 1 Tim 2:12, for example, Thompson notes the survey of the history of interpretation by Daniel Doriani (from the first edition of *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15* [Baker, 1995]). While Doriani demonstrates that 1 Tim 2:12 has almost always been defended as teaching “the subordination of women,” Thomson contends, it does not address *how* those commentators reached this conclusion (181). Despite the conviction of pre-critical commentators that 1 Tim 2:12 dictated “the exclusive right of men to teach and rule the church,” they “wrestled with the details of these passages, which did not fall neatly in place.” They “were usually wise enough to recognize that Paul's teachings and arguments were not handled well if reduced to simple formulas with simplistic proof-texts that brooked no opposition, exceptions, or contextualization” (182).

Non-Evangelical

Boden, Alison L. *Women's Rights and Religious Practice Claims in Conflict.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Alison L. Boden examines obstacles to women's rights in Islam, Hindu, and Christian traditions. She argues that women's rights and religious freedom often conflict, resulting in women whose lives suffer as the result of the privatization of religious authority.

Browning, Don S. *Equality and the Family: A Fundamental, Practical, Theology of Children, Mothers, and Fathers in Modern Societies.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

Don S. Browning's essays show how the family can be used as case study for an inter-disciplinary approach to practical theology. Browning interacts with law, social sciences, ethics, biology, and biblical studies to argue for a “pro-family” and “pro-marriage” egalitarianism.

Buchanan, Andrea J., and Miriam Peskowitz. *The Daring Book for Girls.* New York: Collins, 2007.

While HarperCollins initially had no plans to publish a girl's version of *The Dangerous Book for Boys* (see below), this stance was apparently short-lived. The authors acknowledge that the book for boys was the inspiration for their own. It seems, then, that the first book's *popularity* was the real impetus for this version. Thus, *The Daring Book for Girls* lacks a clear purpose, as is evident when one compares the introductions to the two books. This is not to say that the girl's version is without merit; there is both fun and learning here. Girls will learn classic games and various crafts. They will receive advice on letter writing and public speaking. They will read about history, weather, social studies, and the outdoors. However, topics dealing with anything tied to domesticity and motherhood are virtually absent. And the advice on boys, in an attempt to emphasize the “common ground” between boys and girls, sends the message that all differences between them are purely illusory. *The Dangerous Book for Boys* sought to capitalize on the differences

between boys and girls and to champion what has become a passé view of gender. *The Daring Book for Girls*—though inspired by the former—cannot, ultimately, bring itself to do the same.

Iggulden, Conn, and Hal Iggulden. *The Dangerous Book for Boys*. New York: Collins, 2007.

Released in Britain in 2006, this book by brothers Conn and Hal Iggulden experienced runaway sales. The American edition, released in 2007, also became a bestseller. Written for boys, the book is a collection of short stories, facts, projects, and—in a word—adventure. Boys will learn about dinosaurs, astronomy, and navigation. They will relive Robert Scott's South Pole expedition, the Battle of Gettysburg, and the Golden Age of Piracy. But they will also be active. Boys will learn how to make a battery, a bow and arrow, and a water bomb. They will discover "five knots every boy should know," how to create secret ink, and how to build a tree house. There's even sections on poems every boy should know, books every boy should read, and advice about girls. In an age of video games and cell phones, the authors believe "there still must be a place for knots, tree houses, and stories of incredible courage" (xi). It's the kind of book the Iggulden brothers wish they had when they were boys. They happily write it now because "these things are important still and we wish we knew them better" (xi). Boys will resonate with this book. It will appeal to their natural sense of adventure and keep them (and their dads!) busy for hours, as they read stories of courage and satisfy their curiosity.

Jacobs, Mignon R. *Gender, Power, and Persuasion: The Genesis Narratives and Contemporary Portraits*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007.

Mignon R. Jacobs applies a critical reading of several Genesis narratives to the question of male-female interaction. She looks at the interaction of status and persuasion in the ancient world to gain insight into modern male-male, male-female, and female-female relationships, arguing that persuasion is a product of preconceived beliefs about relational identity, regardless of gender. Preconceptions

such as male superiority, she argues, engender many abuses in both ancient and modern societies.

Penner, Todd, and Caroline Vander Stichele, eds. *Mapping Gender in Ancient Religious Discourses*. Boston: Brill, 2007.

The contributors to this collection of essays examine views of gender from a variety of ancient sources—Jewish, Christian, and Greco-Roman—at the intersection of socio-historical settings and religion.

Roberts, Christopher Chenault. *Creation and Covenant: The Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage*. New York: T. & T. Clark, 2007.

Christopher Chenault Roberts surveys church history regarding the theological significance of sexual difference in marriage. Keeping the debates over homosexual marriage in the background of his thought, he suggests that revisionist proposals that deemphasize the significance of gender have not yet overcome the more-coherent traditional view passing through Augustine, Luther, Barth, and others.

Rooke, Deborah W., ed. *A Question of Sex? Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007.

This collection of essays reconsiders the social construct of gender and marriage in ancient Israel based on a reading of the Hebrew Bible, archaeological evidence, and post-biblical literature.

Sax, Leonard. *Boys Adrift: The Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated Boys and Underachieving Young Men*. New York: Basic Books, 2007.

As a result of his experience as a family physician and research psychologist, Sax contends that more and more of today's young males are "adrift"—disengaging from school, not pursuing vocation, and opting out of real-world pursuits. Sax contributes to the subject by identifying what he believes are the five factors driving this problem:

changes at school, video games, medications for ADHD, endocrine disruptors, and the devaluation of masculinity. For a more detailed consideration, readers should consult the review of *Boys Adrift* by Christopher Cowan in this issue of *JBMW*.

Schwartz, Matthew B., and Kalman J. Kaplan. *The Fruit of Her Hands: A Psychology of Biblical Woman*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2007.

The authors attempt to differentiate the biblical view of women from the Greek-influenced Western model characterized by an underlying sense of inferiority and lack of individual identity. As opposed to this “female Oedipus complex,” Schwartz and Kaplan argue, biblical women found purpose in their sense of divine purpose, empowering them to develop as an individual human being as well as partner in various relationships and roles

Shalit, Wendy. *Girls Gone Mild: Young Women Reclaim Self-Respect and Find It's Not Bad to Be Good*. New York: Random House, 2007.

Wendy Shalit's first book, *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue* (Simon & Schuster, 1999), was a bold cultural critique of female sexual promiscuity and a re-affirmation of modesty, innocence, and mystery. In her follow-up title, Shalit, who is Jewish and conservative in her faith, continues the critique while highlighting the youth-led rebellion against the status quo. Today's teenage girls have learned quickly that looking sexy is one of the most important things they can do. Young women are expected to take a cavalier attitude toward sex; a girl who is not sexually active is “repressed.” However, rather than bringing freedom, Shalit contends, today's “bad girl” image has led to oppression and the undermining of girls. Going against the grain of the now normative “badness” and the *Girls Gone Wild* mentality, a modesty revolution is underway. Shalit draws on her personal interviews with girls and young women and thousands of email exchanges. Many girls long for new role models, and Shalit presents several hopeful accounts of girls and young women—many of them Christians—who are championing sexual modesty in their own contexts. Parents (especially of girls) will find this

an insightful evaluation of our sexually permissive culture and the modesty reformation that (hopefully) is underway.

Witte Jr., John, M. Christian Green, and Amy Wheeler, eds. *The Equal-Regard Family and Its Friendly Critics: Don Browning and the Practical Theological Ethics of the Family*. Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2007.

This volume is a compilation of ten essays that examine the work of Don Browning. From the perspectives of a spectrum of academic disciplines—though all basically sympathetic to his position—the contributors seek to interact with and build upon Browning's proposals for an “equal-regard” family.

Undeclared

Cohen, Richard. *Gay Children, Straight Parents: A Plan for Family Healing*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007.

Richard Cohen lays out a plan of reconciliation and recovery for families trying to cope with children living a homosexual lifestyle. Significantly, Cohen argues that ultimate causality for homosexual attraction lies not with biology but with gender identity warped during improper development. Whether or not one agrees with every detail of the author's step-by-step plan, the book serves as a helpful reminder of the important place of Christian parents in raising masculine sons and feminine daughters.

Davis, John E. *Extreme Pursuit: Winning the Race for the Heart of Your Son*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2007.

John E. Davis warns parents that teenage boys long to do extraordinary things and are engaging in unprecedented levels of extreme actions. He maintains that relational connectedness to young men is key to channeling their changing hormones and thought patterns into productive actions. While Davis recognizes many of the desires and needs of teenage boys seeking to become men and provides some practical advice for parents pursuing relation-

ships with their sons, he seems to assume an anti-authoritative father-son relationship rather than a hierarchal discipleship structure.

George, Denise. *What Women Wish Pastors Knew: Understanding the Hopes, Hurts, Needs, and Dreams of Women in the Church.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

Trying to help pastors understand and care for women, Denise George offers the results of asking women from over thirty denominations across the country the question: “What do you wish your pastor knew?” George arranges the responses topically under the categories of personal experience, faith, family life, perceptions of pastors, and perceptions of church. The responses vary widely and do so especially in regard to the question of women in church leadership.

Jones, Stanton L., and Mark A. Yarhouse. *Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation.* Inter Varsity: Downers Grove, 2007.

The authors report the findings of their study, which questions commonly held assumptions regarding sexual orientation in the field of psychology—that sexual orientation cannot be changed and that attempting to do so is harmful. Jones and Yarhouse follow a large representative sample of people seeking to change their sexual orientation through various ministries of Exodus International and persuasively argue that change is indeed possible and not harmful.