

THE JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL  
**JB MW**  
MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

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A Review of Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*  
*Thomas R. Schreiner*

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and the State of the Gender Debate  
*Wayne Grudem*

Sweet Sacrifices: The Challenges of a Woman in Ministry  
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Order in the Court: God's Plan for Marriage  
*James MacDonald*

The Metaphysics of Subordination:  
A Response to Rebecca Merrill Groothuis  
*Steven B. Cowan*

**THE JOURNAL FOR  
BIBLICAL MANHOOD  
AND WOMANHOOD**

is a biannual publication of the  
Council on Biblical  
Manhood and Womanhood  
ISSN: 1544-5143

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Single issue price \$10.00.

Subscriptions available at \$15.00 per year.

Canadian Subscriptions \$20.00 per year.

International Subscriptions \$25.00

per year. Ten or more copies  
to the same address, \$12.00 per year.

Contact CBMW for institutional rates.

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obedience to Scripture and for the health  
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## Editorial: A Collision of Worldviews and the Complementarian Response

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### Gender Confusion at SBL

The Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender/Queer Hermeneutics Section is a regular part of the program at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL).<sup>1</sup> The average lay person would probably be nonplussed by the existence of such a group, given that a plain reading of the Old and New Testaments seems to militate against a homosexual lifestyle. But for those who have been following recent developments in the academic study of the scripture, this group is no surprise at all. It merely follows a trend that has become standard fare for a whole sector of biblical and religious studies. Among other things, the LGBT/Queer Hermeneutics Section aims to explore “the intersections between queer readers and biblical interpretations.”<sup>2</sup> In general, participants in this section support the normalization of homosexual orientation and practice in spite of what the Bible teaches.

They seek to read the Bible as those who would “interrogate” traditions (biblical and otherwise) that they deem to be oppressive to that end.<sup>3</sup>

I sat in for a portion of the LGBT/Queer Hermeneutics Section at the annual SBL meeting this past November in Boston. What I heard there was both startling and sobering. The presentation that I attended featured a female theologian from a small seminary in Atlanta, Georgia. She delivered a paper on Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians—a presentation which included a variety of vulgar double-entendres involving the text of scripture and which would hardly be useful to repeat here.

What was noteworthy, however, was her stance toward the apostle Paul, which was decidedly antagonistic. Going against the current trend of counterimperial readings of Paul, she said that Paul was not “anti-imperial” but “alternate imperial.” She complained that Paul’s letters reveal an

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attempt not to undermine empire but to substitute one empire for another (the Christian empire in place of the Roman empire). Thus Paul's politics were as flawed as Rome's. The apostle's flawed political views were no doubt informed by his flawed views of gender and his embrace of patriarchy.

One contemporary application that she drew from the scripture was this. The current American political system is also flawed because it is organized on the basis of a patriarchal definition of the family. The traditional definition of the family (with one man and one woman in covenanted union at the center) is a structure that oppressively limits who can have sex with whom. Thus this definition of the family has become an obstacle to liberty, and the American political system is flawed because it is organized around a notion of "family" that restricts individual liberty. In effect, she was arguing that a just society would not recognize any definition of the family that limits who can have sex with whom.

### **An Unbiblical Worldview**

This professor's presentation at SBL is but one example of a worldview that is increasingly coming into conflict with a biblical view both of the family and of manhood and womanhood. This worldview is unified in its antagonism of the nuclear family, even though the worldview has both secular and religious expressions. What both the secular and the religious versions hold in common include at least three items.

1. *Gender is something that you learn, not something that you are.* In other words, the idea of *male* and *female* comprises a set of stereotypes that we absorb from our culture. *Male* and *female* does not designate a universal, innate distinction among humans. Thus gender is merely a social construct. Except for obvious biological differences, all other social distinctions between male and female are purely conventional. If there are any psychological distinctions between males and females, they are learned, and they can and need to be unlearned so that there can be a total equality between the sexes. This worldview is so entrenched in today's culture that one can hardly suggest that there might be innate differences between male and female with-

out being dismissed as a sexist and a bigot.<sup>4</sup>

2. *Sex is for pleasure, not for God.* We might call this the Sheryl-Crow-philosophy-on-sexuality. If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad. This perspective affirms any and all attempts to get sexual pleasure so long as such attempts do not harm others. If it feels good and you're not hurting anyone, then how could it possibly be wrong? The encroachment of this worldview explains to some extent why only about 74 percent of evangelical "Christian" teenagers say that they believe in abstaining from sex before marriage<sup>5</sup> and why about 36 percent of white evangelical Protestants make their "sexual debut" shortly after turning sixteen.<sup>6</sup> This libertine attitude has had its impact on Christian mores with devastating effect.

This worldview also accounts for the normalization of homosexuality in the wider culture. If the goal of sex is pleasure and if gender is just something we learn not something we are, then same-sex attraction is okay (so long as it's between consenting adults and you don't hurt anybody). This mindset is not merely a feature of the secular culture, but now some "evangelical" Christians are revisiting the issue. In fact, at least one "evangelical" has called on Christians to give up their prophetic voice on the homosexual question so as not to offend a culture that is already put-off by evangelical theology.<sup>7</sup> And that leads us to the third feature of this worldview.

3. *Marriage is cultural, not universal.* In other words, marriage is something that came from human culture, not from God. It has a human origin, not a divine one. With God out of the picture, humans are free to make marriage into whatever they want. This final piece accounts for much of the confusion and the conflict surrounding the so-called "culture war" on the issue of marriage in our society. Not only is this worldview evident in skyrocketing divorce rates and in legal outrages such as "no fault" divorce; it also undergirds the current push in our society for states to recognize same-sex "marriage." If gender is something you learn and not something you are and if sex is for pleasure and not for God, then same-sex relationships should not be treated any differently than hetero-



sexual relationships. Once a society divorces *maleness and femaleness* and their respective sexualities from their Creator's design, there is no moral basis for privileging heterosexual unions over any other kind of union (homosexual or otherwise). The heterosexual norm of the scripture is regarded merely as a social convention forced on the masses to limit who can have sex with whom—a convention that must be cast-off in a just society. Already in some sectors of our society, to privilege the heterosexual ideal of scripture over homosexual sin is to engage in bigotry and hatred.

### Worldviews Collide

This worldview forms the social context in which complementarians and egalitarians engage the evangelical gender debate. And it is in this context that complementarians are called to bear faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Complementarians who desire this witness will have to constructively engage some of the more radical elements that are informing the larger debate over gender in our culture. I am by no means suggesting that complementarians should leave off their engagement with evangelical feminists. I am saying, however, that the points at issue in the intra-evangelical debate are fairly narrow and do not always address or adequately engage the kind of gender confusion that plagues the families and the communities in which we live. So how are we to do this?

Complementarians must both *proclaim* and *embody* the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that God's design for gender, sex, and marriage is clear and compelling. That will require both a countercultural *message* from churches and countercultural *living* among individuals and families in those churches. Let me briefly outline three counterpoints to the aforementioned worldview that must be at the core of evangelical witness on these matters.

1. *Gender is something you are before you learn anything.* In other words, the distinctions between *male and female* find their origin in God's good creation, not in what we learn from culture. That is not to say that people do not absorb ideas about gender from the culture, some of which are quite

unhelpful. But that fact should not be used to suppress the truth that in the beginning God differentiated humankind as male and female as a part of His original creation-work. Nor should it obscure the fact that God unambiguously called this differentiation "good" (Gen 1:27, 31). The union of the first man and the first woman was the most healthy, wholesome, and satisfying union that has ever existed and it involved a man leading his wife and a wife following the leadership of her husband (Genesis 2). And though no other marriage will reach this perfection this side of glory, complementarians need to strive with integrity toward this ideal.

2. *Sex is for God before there is any lasting pleasure.* When people treat pleasure as the goal of sex, not only do they inevitably end up in immorality but they also end up with less pleasure. God is not a cosmic killjoy when it comes to sex. He intends for His creatures to enjoy this great gift for His sake, and that can only happen when God's people realize that the body is not for immorality but for the Lord (1 Cor 6:13). Thus, we are called to glorify God with our bodies (1 Cor 6:21). This means that the covenanted union of marriage is the most pleasurable and the most God-glorifying context in which to enjoy this gift. The Christian sexual ethic does not call people away from joy, but toward it.

3. *Marriage is universal, not cultural.* The apostle Paul says that the great "mystery" of the Genesis 2 norm of marriage (one man and one woman in covenanted union) is that God intended it all along to be a shadow of a greater reality. From the Garden of Eden forward, God intended marriage to be an enacted parable of another marriage: Christ's marriage to His church (Eph 5:31-32). Thus, marriage is not defined by the culture, but by the gospel itself. Jesus loves His bride, the church, exclusively and self-sacrificially; and Jesus' bride is to respect and to submit to her husband. Marriage is meant to be a portrayal of a gospel archetype that is rooted in the eternal purposes of God. The gospel that shapes this archetype is also the hope for humanity and the context in which human happiness reaches its fullest potential. Herein is the innermost meaning of marriage, and faithful churches will engage the

culture with proclamation and living that bears out this truth.

## Conclusion

The presentation that I heard at SBL reveals just how much the ambient culture stands in opposition to a Christian worldview. But the response from Christians to that opposition should not simply be to curse the darkness and to retreat from culture. Rather, what the culture needs more than anything is for the Christian church to engage the culture with proclamation and a wholesome living-out of God's design for human sexuality and marriage. The Christian church should be a counter-culture that images forth an alternative set of priorities. In other words, the church should be a place where marriage is held in high esteem both in living and in teaching and discipline, and it should be that way because of its commitment to the gospel.

In the end, papers delivered at SBL are not the main problem. They are but a symptom of a larger system that is set against Christ and His purposes in the world (1 John 2:15-17). And what our friends and neighbors need more than anything is for Christians to set forth a faithful counter-witness on these issues. The messages coming from culture are clear. The church's should be even more so.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>14</sup>The Society of Biblical Literature is the oldest and largest international scholarly membership organization in the field of biblical studies. Founded in 1880, the Society has grown to over 8,500 international members including teachers, students, religious leaders and individuals from all walks of life who share a mutual interest in the critical investigation of the Bible" ("About SBL" [cited March 23, 2009]. Online: <http://www.sbl-site.org/aboutus.aspx>.

<sup>24</sup>"Meeting Program Units" [cited March 23, 2009]. Online: [http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses\\_CallForPaperDetails.aspx?MeetingId=15&VolunteerUnitId=350](http://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_CallForPaperDetails.aspx?MeetingId=15&VolunteerUnitId=350).

<sup>3</sup>Peter Jones argues that that the "queer hermeneutics" project works "in cooperation with feminist biblical interpretation." He describes it this way: "Queer readings merely seek to take one more step in the hermeneutics of suspicion and expose the 'heterosexist bias' of the Bible and Bible interpreters. Identifying exegesis as an exercise in social power, queer theorists reject the oppressive narrowness of the Bible's male/female binary vision and boldly generate textual meaning on the basis of the 'inner erotic power' of the gay interpreter" (Peter Jones, "Androgyny: The Pagan Sexual Ideal" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43 [2000]: 444).

<sup>4</sup>For example in a 2005 speech in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the President of Harvard University, Lawrence Summers, tried to

account for the "shortage of elite female scientists." He attributed the shortage in part to the fact that there may be "innate" differences between men and women. In the speech, he shared an anecdote about his daughter to illustrate the point. He once gave his daughter two trucks in an effort at "gender-neutral parenting." His daughter soon began referring to one of the trucks as "daddy truck" and the other as "baby truck." The event led him to ponder whether there was any truth to the notion that certain neurological inclinations might be connected to gender. For his daughter, at least, her playtime activity matched a feminine stereotype that she had not learned from him. In fact, he was conscientiously working against it.

A firestorm of controversy ensued after Summers's remarks. One female biology professor from MIT who attended the speech responded this way. She said, "I felt I was going to be sick. My heart was pounding and my breath was shallow. I was extremely upset." Then she got up and walked out of the speech. After that speech, Summers was reprimanded by the faculty of Harvard. He was on the outs with the faculty from then on and eventually had to resign. The foregoing account comes from Michael Dobbs, "Harvard Chief's Comments on Women Assailed" *Washington Post*, January 19, 2005, A02.

<sup>5</sup>Margaret Talbot, "Red Sex, Blue Sex: Why do so many evangelical teen-agers become pregnant?", *The New Yorker* November 3, 2008 [cited April 6, 2009]. Online: [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/11/03/081103fa\\_fact\\_talbot?printable=true](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/11/03/081103fa_fact_talbot?printable=true).

<sup>6</sup>Mark Regnurus, *Forbidden Fruit: Sex & Religion in the Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford University, 2007), 123, 127.

<sup>7</sup>Brian McLaren, "Brian McLaren on the Homosexual Question: Finding a Pastoral Response" [cited April 3, 2009] Online: [http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian\\_mclaren\\_o.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/outofur/archives/2006/01/brian_mclaren_o.html): "Frankly, many of us don't know what we should think about homosexuality. We've heard all sides but no position has yet won our confidence so that we can say 'it seems good to the Holy Spirit and us.' . . . If we think that there may actually be a legitimate context for some homosexual relationships, we know that the biblical arguments are nuanced and multilayered, and the pastoral ramifications are staggeringly complex. We aren't sure if or where lines are to be drawn, nor do we know how to enforce with fairness whatever lines are drawn."

"Perhaps we need a five-year moratorium on making pronouncements. In the meantime, we'll practice prayerful Christian dialogue, listening respectfully, disagreeing agreeably. When decisions need to be made, they'll be admittedly provisional. We'll keep our ears attuned to scholars in biblical studies, theology, ethics, psychology, genetics, sociology, and related fields. Then in five years, if we have clarity, we'll speak; if not, we'll set another five years for ongoing reflection."

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# Odds & Ends

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## Over My Dead Body, Son

Come on, dads, have some courage. Just say, “Over my dead body are you going to wrestle a girl.” Of course, they will call you prudish. But everything in you knows better.

Yes, I am talking to the boys’ fathers. If the girls’ fathers don’t care how boys manhandle their daughters, you will have to take the lead. Give your sons a bigger, nobler vision of what it is to be a man. Men don’t fight against women. They fight for women.

They called it history-making here in Minneapolis. In March 2009, Elissa Reinsma became the first female to compete in the state high school wrestling tournament. It was not a step forward. Some cultures spend a thousand years unlearning the brutality of men toward women. This is an odd way to make history. Relive prehistory maybe.

One cheerleader said, “I’m sure it’s weird for other people, especially if they’ve never experienced having to wrestle a girl.” That’s hopeful. Because it is “weird.” Most people feel it. But who has the courage to trace this sense of weirdness back to the profound principles of mature manhood and womanhood?

It’s just too uncool. The worst curse that can fall on us is to be seen as one of those nutcases who hasn’t entered the modern world. This is not about courageous commitment to equality; it’s about wimpy fear of criticism for doing what our hearts know is right.

Wrestling obliges you to grab, squeeze, and pull with all your might. If a boy tries not to touch or grasp a wrestler around the chest, or not to let his legs entwine with the other wrestler, or not to slam his full body length on hers, he will wrestle with a handicap. Of course, he is being taught that handicap is not a virtue.

Get real, dads. You know exactly what almost every healthy boy is thinking. If a jock from Northern Minnesota encircles her around the breasts and twists his leg around her thighs, trust me, he will

dream about that tonight. Only in his dream she won’t have clothes on. And if he doesn’t dream it, half the boys in the crowd will. Wake up dads. You know this.

Manly gentleness is not an epidemic in our culture. Rap videos, brutal movies, fatherless homes, and military madness have already made thousands of women the victim of man’s abuse. Now we would make the high school version of feministic nature-denial a partner in this undermining of masculine gentleness.

When the apostle of Jesus tells us to live with our wives “in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel” (1 Pet 3:7), he dumps a truckload of wisdom that fathers should build into their sons.

There is a way to honor a woman. That’s our job as men. This honor “understands” something. It understands that women are the “weaker vessel.” This has nothing to do with less personal worth and in many cases not even with physical stamina. It has to do with pervasive realities that shape the way healthy societies work.

It means that we should raise sons to think of themselves as protectors. Tell them they should lay their lives down to protect girls. Help them know that God designed them to grow up to be a picture of Jesus in their marriage. Nurture the instinct of a boy to fight for girls not against them.

I just watched a wrestling instructional video on line, illustrating some basic moves for the take-down and pin. These two guys are pressing and pulling on each other with unfettered and total contact. And it isn’t soft. It’s what we do not allow our sons to do to girls.

Okay, dads, here’s what you tell your son. You say, “There will be no belittling comments about her being ‘a girl.’ There will be no sexual slurs. If you get matched with her, you simply say to the judges, ‘Sir, I won’t wrestle a girl. My parents have taught me not to touch a girl that way. I think it

would dishonor her. I hope you will match me with a guy. If not, I am willing to be disqualified. It's that important.”

Be a leader, dad. Your sons need you. The peer pressure is huge. They need manly restraints. They know this is wrong. But then they look around, and the groundswell of conformity seems irresistible. It will take a real man, a real father, to say to his son. “Not on my watch, son. We don't fight women. I have not raised you that way.”

– John Piper

*This essay originally appeared at [www.desiringGod.org](http://www.desiringGod.org).*

### Has Modern English Really Gone Gender-Neutral?

In his address to Congress on February 24, 2009, President Barack Obama had this to say concerning the economy:

We have launched a housing plan that will help responsible families facing the threat of foreclosure lower their monthly payments and refinance their mortgages. It's a plan that won't help speculators or that neighbor down the street who bought a house **he** could never hope to afford, but it will help millions of Americans who are struggling with declining home values.

Note that he used “he” in a gender-neutral sense to refer to “that neighbor down the street.” The Bible does something like this thousands of times: “I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with **him** and **he** with me” (Rev 3:20 NIV). But this kind of verse was at the heart of the controversy over the gender-neutral TNIV, because the TNIV translators insisted that this kind of usage of “he” is not currently understood by English speakers today! So the TNIV changes Jesus' invitation to one-on-one personal fellowship into a church banquet, and you don't know if Jesus will meet with you personally: “I will come in and eat with **them** and **they** with me” (TNIV). Changes to generic “he” alone resulted in thousands of changes from

singulars to plurals, distorting the meaning of the original text.

The NIV's Committee on Bible Translation, and Zondervan, were simply wrong back in 1997 when they said that this usage is no longer acceptable or will soon disappear. The pronoun “he” referring back to a specific antecedent that is used as an example of a general case continues to be commonly seen in standard English. Except not in the TNIV! There, such singulars all become plurals, thus removing from the Word of God the use of such specific singular examples to teach a general truth, and thus diminishing the Bible's emphasis on the relationship between God and an individual person, and on individual, personal responsibility for our actions.

Would the TNIV supporters say that President Obama's words would likely be understood by young hearers to refer only to **men** who bought houses they could not afford? I doubt it. But that is their objection to “he” used in this sense in the Bible.

When they quote President Obama, would they change his words to refer to “that neighbor down the street who bought a house **they** could never hope to afford”? Or to “**those neighbors** down the street who bought houses they could never hope to afford”? If not, why should they change God's words?

– Wayne Grudem

### *Newsweek* Comes Out for Gay “Marriage”

In December 2008, Lisa Miller penned an article for *Newsweek* that turned out to be a bit of a bombshell. The title of the article says just about everything that you need to know about this piece: “The Religious Case for Gay Marriage.” In essence, Miller argues that a right understanding of the Christian tradition would actually favor gay “marriage” rather than oppose it. She appeals to the Bible and to history to make her point.

This piece is disappointing on a number of levels, and the subsequent critiques were sharp and justified (e.g., Albert Mohler, *Christianity Today*, Mollie Hemingway). For the most thorough response, see Robert Gagnon's 23-page essay posted



online at <http://www.robagnon.net>. I have little more to add to these, but a few remarks are in order.

Miller sets forth two lines of argument in this piece that are fundamentally at odds with one another. The first line is that the Bible (rightly understood) actually encourages gay “marriage.” The second line is that the Bible is not a reliable guide for ordering the family or society. These two themes are present throughout the essay, and Miller doesn’t seem to realize that they are self-defeating. It’s fallacious to appeal to the Bible for guidance while simultaneously arguing against the Bible’s relevance for modern culture.

Miller also profoundly misstates the New Testament teaching on marriage. She writes,

The New Testament model of marriage is hardly better. Jesus himself was single and preached an indifference to earthly attachments—especially family. The apostle Paul (also single) regarded marriage as an act of last resort for those unable to contain their animal lust. “It is better to marry than to burn with passion,” says the apostle, in one of the most lukewarm endorsements of a treasured institution ever uttered ... while the Bible and Jesus say many important things about love and family, neither explicitly defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

Jesus’ teaching about marriage can hardly be characterized as one of indifference. Jesus taught that faithfulness in marriage is a matter of discipleship. He even defined marriage according to Gen 2:24 as the union of one man and one woman—a union that should not be dissolved cavalierly by divorce (Matt 19:5).

The apostle Paul also defined marriage according to Gen 2:24 and argued that God intended the one flesh union of man and wife to symbolize the relationship that Christ has with his church (Eph 5:21-33). For Paul, the gospel itself is the innermost meaning of marriage. To distort the one is to distort the other.

Time and again, Jesus looked at the most learned people of his day and said, “Have you not read?” We might ask the same question of Ms. Miller.

– Denny Burk

### Same-Sex “Marriage” in the Dictionary

In March 2009, the conservative news website WorldNetDaily.com reported that the latest edition of the Merriam-Webster dictionary has revised its definition of the word *marriage* (“Webster’s dictionary redefines ‘marriage,’” [www.worldnetdaily.com](http://www.worldnetdaily.com)). In its online and print editions, the dictionary includes in its definition of marriage the following line: “*the state of being united to a person of the same sex in a relationship like that of a traditional marriage.*” The WorldNetDaily report implies that the expanded definition somehow means that the dictionary’s publisher has taken sides in the current debate over same-sex “marriage.”

Contrary to what many may think, the inclusion of this definition in the dictionary is almost totally irrelevant to the current debate about same-sex “marriage.” Dictionaries are not *prescriptive* books but *descriptive* ones. In other words, dictionaries do not *prescribe* for users how they are to speak and use words. On the contrary, they *describe* how speakers and writers use words at any given time. There was a time when the English word “gay” only meant “happy” (see for example the King James version of Jas 2:3). But no one thinks that fact should prohibit Webster from publishing its modern definitions as well. Likewise, it is without question that “same-sex marriage” and “gay marriage” are common fare among current users of the English language. That a dictionary would include that fact is not surprising at all.

This pseudo-hubbub is troubling, however, because it appears that some conservatives (and I fear some Christians) still don’t understand what the same-sex “marriage” debate is all about. That is why I cringe whenever I hear someone appeal to the dictionary definition of “marriage” as if it were some kind of an authority to settle the whole issue. It is not. Do not misunderstand me. I believe

that faithful Christians would do well not to give in to the culture's drift on the definition of marriage. Our language should reflect the definition of "marriage" that is established in Genesis 2, and we should resist the distorted use of the term that is currently on the ascent.

What Christians need to realize is that they have but one authoritative word on this question, and that word does not change though English usage and dictionaries might. "For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). The Bible sets forth the covenanted union of one man and one woman as God's ideal and prescription for the family (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6), and it is this ideal that we are supposed to contend for in our churches and in our families.

– Denny Burk

### **Feminism the Culprit for Family Breakup? A Controversial UK Study Says So**

Is female empowerment to blame for the breakup of the traditional family? A recent study backed by the Anglican Church in Great Britain argues that very idea: "Female empowerment has contributed to the break-up of the traditional family, leaving a generation of children emotionally damaged" in the U.K. To no surprise the study and its claims have caused no small controversy in the U.K.

The study describes an increase in the number of mothers going back to work when their babies are less than a year old as a "massive" social change from generations past. This reality means that women are now less dependent on their husbands and this combination has greatly damaged the family, the study concludes. The study is based on responses from data gathered from 35,000 poll participants. The report says,

Compared with a century ago, two changes stand out: first, most women now work outside the home and have careers, as well as being mothers. Sev-

enty percent of mothers of nine-to-12-month-old babies now do some paid work, this compares with only 25 percent 25 years ago—a massive change in the way of life. Meantime, the children are cared for by someone other than their parents. Women's economic independence contributes to this rise. It has made women much less dependent on their male partner, as has the advent of the welfare state. As a result of increased break-up, a third of 16-year-olds in Britain now live apart from their biological father.

While the poll's findings are certainly worth pondering, a report by the London Telegraph quotes something from the research that is equally telling: 90 different studies suggest that children who do not have two parents living with them at home "suffer long-term damage."

Though this study does not establish a causal link between feminism and the destruction of the family, it is at least suggestive. Feminism, particularly in its more extreme manifestations, does not represent a worldview that promotes healthy families. God's ideal plan (Titus 2; Proverbs 31) is for mothers to serve in the home as the primary nurturers of children while fathers lead, provide, and protect the family.

The blame for the breakup of the traditional family certainly cannot be laid solely—or perhaps even mostly—at the feet of feminism. Given the crucial role that the father is called to play in the life of the family (as set forth in Ephesians 5, for instance), AWOL fathers are equally—if not more (see God's dialogue with Adam in Genesis 3)—blameworthy for the meltdown of the family. Many mothers who are in the workplace are not there to build a formidable portfolio, but are working out of financial or circumstantial necessity.

While feminism, at least as a worldview, is not what you might call "family-friendly," it, indeed, seems to be only one of a number of factors that have left families gasping for life in a fallen world.

– Jeff Robinson

## Philip Towner, 1 Timothy 2, and Paul's Use of the Old Testament

Last year a significant and much anticipated book was published by Baker Academic: *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson. It is an outstanding contribution to scholarship on a very important issue—the use that New Testament authors make of the Old Testament Scriptures. Serious Bible students will profit greatly from the work of the many contributors to this project.

In light of the popularity of this new commentary, a response to the treatment of 1 Tim 2:13-15 by one of the contributors seems worthwhile. Philip H. Towner, an egalitarian who comments on 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, writes the following in opposition to the complementarian view of the passage:

Determining the use to which the Genesis material is put in this passage begins with the question why Paul prohibited women from teaching and holding authority. If the reason was simply Paul's general principle, based on Genesis (the creation order), then one has to correlate this assumption with the evidence that women took vital roles in ministry elsewhere, and one also has to accept the inescapable implication of 2:14 that Paul believed women to be more susceptible to deception than men or less capable by nature to deal with false teachers. If, however, the instructions and backing were given in response to a particular interpretation of the Genesis account in Ephesus that somehow fueled inappropriate activities of women (teaching in a way that shamed men/husbands, somehow furthering the heresy, eschewing marriage because of the false teaching, etc.), then 2:13-15a supports the measures to be taken (2:11-12) by reproducing a better reading of the Genesis story. There are strong indications that women were involved in the heresy and so were teaching false doctrine; there are strong indications that certain elements of the traditional role of women (marriage and

childbearing) were being set aside on the basis of the false teaching or secular cultural developments (p. 897).

Thus, according to Towner, the complementarian interpretation that women were prohibited from teaching and holding authority over men because of the creation order is (1) inconsistent with the biblical testimony of how women actually functioned in ministry roles and (2) stumbles over the “inescapable implication of 2:14” that women are by nature more easily deceived than men. Rather, he argues, (3) the reasons given in 2:13-15a are in response to a heretical interpretation of the Genesis account, which women in Ephesus were teaching.

However, neither Towner's two objections to the complementarian view nor his proposed reading of the verses stand up under scrutiny:

(1) There is no necessary contradiction between Paul's prohibition against women teaching and having authority over men in 1 Tim 2:8-15, on the one hand, and his description of the vital roles in ministry they performed within the early church, on the other. Women do indeed fill vital roles in the church (then and now). But this is not irreconcilable with Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2. In his study, “Women in the Pauline Mission,” Andreas Köstenberger considers every reference to women in the Pauline letters and writes,

Paul's teaching on the role of women and the way in which women actually functioned in the Pauline churches are consistent. Paul taught that women were not to serve as pastor-teachers or elders, and there is no evidence in Paul's epistles or Acts that women functioned in such roles in churches established by Paul (“Women in the Pauline Mission,” *The Gospel to the Nations* [ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson; InterVarsity, 2000], 237).

Towner has assumed a contradiction that is not supported by the evidence.

(2) The conclusion that women are more prone to deception than men is not an “inescapable implication” for the complementarian interpretation. In his chapter in *Recovering Biblical Manhood*

and *Womanhood* (Crossway, 1999), Douglas Moo is one of many complementarian scholars who argues that, more likely,

Verse 14, in conjunction with verse 13, is intended to remind the women at Ephesus that Eve was deceived by the serpent in the Garden (Gen 3:13) precisely in taking the initiative over the man whom God had given to be with her and to care for her. In the same way, if the women at the church in Ephesus proclaim their independence from the men of the church, refusing to learn “in quietness and full submission” (verse 11), seeking roles that have been given to men in the church (verse 12), they will make the same mistake Eve made and bring similar disaster on themselves and the church (p. 190).

This leads to the third point, Towner’s explanation for 2:13-14.

(3) Towner believes verses 13-14 are a response to a heretical reading of the Genesis account. This, then, supports the injunction against women teaching in 2:12 since there are “strong indications that women were involved in the heresy and so were teaching false doctrine.”

However, in *Women in the Church* (2d ed.; Baker, 2005) Thomas Schreiner suggests that “egalitarians, who often complain that the proponents of the complementarian view cannot handle verse 14, are actually in an even more indefensible position” (p. 113). This is because verse 14 provides *no evidence* that women were teaching the heresy. Verse 14 says that women were *deceived* and, so, could be used to say that women in Ephesus were *influenced* by false teaching (there is evidence of this in 1 Tim 5:11-15). But it cannot be used to prove that women were propagating false teaching.

Furthermore, it is significant that Paul prohibits *all women and only women* from teaching and having authority over men in 2:12. Were *all* women teaching the heresy? If only some were doing so, why forbid all of them? Were only *women* teaching the heresy? Actually, it is clear from the Pastoral Epistles that *men* were spreading heresy (1 Tim

1:19-20; 2 Tim 2:17-18; 3:5-9). So why only forbid women from teaching?

In the end, it is Towner’s explanation that lacks evidence and fails to persuade. While the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* is a very useful tool for one’s library, Towner’s take on 1 Tim 2:13-15 should be rejected.

– Christopher W. Cowan



# Personal Reflections on the History of CBMW and the State of the Gender Debate<sup>1</sup>

Wayne Grudem

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## **“Why did I spend so much time on this?”**

On October 5, 1979, I was a third-year professor at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota, and I was surprised to see that *Christianity Today* had come out with an article written by my neighbors just six houses down the street, Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen (Berkeley taught New Testament at Bethel Seminary and Alvera taught journalism at Bethel College). Their article was titled, “Does male dominance tarnish our translations?” They argued that the Greek word *kephalē* (literally, “head”) often means “source” but never “authority,” so that “the husband is the *head* of the wife” (Eph 5:23; cf. also 1 Cor 11:3) means “the husband is the *source* of the wife” and does not have authority over his wife. I thought the argument was wrong, but I didn’t have the time or material at hand to answer it. Then, a little later, Dr. George Knight came to Bethel College to lecture, and I said to him in passing, “George, you really need to write an article answering Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen’s claim that ‘head’ means ‘source.’” “No,” said George, “you need to write it.” Little did I know that that encouragement would affect the next thirty years of my life.

Six years later, in 1985, I published a twenty-one-page article in *Trinity Journal*, “Does *kephalē* Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’? An Examination of 2,336 Examples”<sup>2</sup>—examples which took me some time to look up in ancient Greek literature!

There were several responses from egalitar-

ians to that twenty-one-page article. So, five years later, in 1990, I published a seventy-page article in *Trinity Journal*,<sup>3</sup> responding to other studies on the meaning of *kephalē* and showing that there were now over fifty examples where it meant “someone in authority,” or “a leader,” but *never* an instance where someone is said to be the “head” of someone else and was *not* in the position of authority over that person. Never.

But there were still more responses, and more people disagreeing. So eleven years after that, in 2001, I published another article, forty-one pages in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, on “The Meaning of *kephalē* (“Head”): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged.”<sup>4</sup>

So that’s 132 pages of lexicographical research published in academic journals on one word in the Bible. And these articles spanned sixteen years of my life.

Why did I do this? Because it was a crucial word in a crucial verse in a crucial issue. Destroying the meaning “authority over” for *kephalē* is crucial to the egalitarian argument. If in fact the Bible says in Eph 5:23 that “the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church,” and if *head* means, as I am convinced it does, “person in position of authority,” then the egalitarian cause is lost. That is because that verse anchors the husband’s headship in the headship of Christ over the church, which is not something culturally variable (and 1 Cor 11:3 makes it parallel to the eter-

nal headship of the Father with respect to the Son in the Trinity). So the egalitarians cannot lose this argument, because if they lose on the meaning of that word, then they have lost their fundamental argument with regard to manhood and womanhood in marriage.

Why did I do this? So that commentaries, Greek lexicons, and Bible translations in future generations will accurately teach and translate a crucial verse in the word of God. If *head* equals “authority over” as has been shown now in over sixty examples, then the ballgame is over. And even today, twenty-four years after my first article, there are still *zero* examples where a person is called “head” of someone else and is not in authority over that person. Zero. That kind of evidence would normally settle the debate forever in ordinary exegesis of ordinary verses.

But this is not an ordinary verse. Because the evangelical feminists cannot lose this verse, they continue to ignore or deny the evidence. I think that is very significant.

It now seems to me that, for some people in this dispute who have thought through the issue and are committed to the egalitarian cause and have the academic knowledge to evaluate the evidence for themselves, what the Bible says on this question is not decisive. And, sadly, InterVarsity Press (USA), in spite of being given evidence of multiple factual errors in Catherine Kroeger’s article on “*head*” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*,<sup>5</sup> still continues to refuse to make any changes to the article.

That’s the history of one issue. But what about CBMW, and how did that issue affect CBMW?

### **CBMW: The Early History**

When I published that first article on *head* in 1985 it led to an invitation to be a plenary session speaker in 1986 at the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) meeting in Atlanta. The theme was “Manhood and Womanhood in Biblical and Theological Perspectives.” The program chairman (Walter Dunnnett) had invited six plenary session speakers. I was the complementarian—that is, the token complementarian. The other five were egalitarians (Gilbert Bilezekian, Catherine Kroeger,

Walter Liefeld, Aida Spencer, and David Scholer). And the program was set up so that all of the plenary session speakers would respond to the other plenary sessions, so it was a five-to-one situation. Quite exciting!

But the imbalance in the program was certainly not representative of the membership of the ETS as a whole, and several members were troubled about it. Wayne House (then at Dallas Seminary) and I talked over the situation, and we then met secretly one evening with several others (including John Hughes, Jim Borland, and I think Ken Sarles and Sig Schatzmann) who shared our concerns. We all were saying that we had to do something because egalitarians were taking over the ETS in a way contrary to the convictions of the vast majority of the members of ETS. So I made an announcement at the end of the ETS meeting that if any others would want to join us in a new organization dedicated to upholding both equality and differences between men and women in marriage and the church, they should please talk to Wayne House or me. (Gleason Archer was still president at that last session, and he gladly let me make the announcement.)

Those events then led to a meeting a month later in Dallas with Wayne House and me, as well as John Piper, Dorothy Patterson, James Borland, Susan Foh, Ken Sarles, and perhaps some others. Wayne House chaired the meeting, and we drafted a statement on principles for manhood and womanhood. In fact, I still have the handwritten page on which I wrote some ideas for a statement while on the plane from Chicago to Dallas (echoes of the eventual Danvers Statement can be heard in these handwritten notes):

- (1) Adam & Eve equally in God’s image.
- (2) Adam’s headship in family & human race: established by God before the fall, not a result of sin.
- (3) The fall introduced strain in relationships—sin—tendency for women to try to usurp authority over men, tendency for men to rule harshly and selfishly.

And so on. Point (4) speaks of Old Testament

history, (5) of redemption in Christ and the family, (6) of the New Testament church, (7) of these roles as part of the created order, and so forth. It was the bare bones of the Danvers Statement, and the group in Dallas modified and added to it (especially using substantial wording that John Piper supplied). We left Dallas encouraged that God was guiding our work.

We next met at the Sheraton Ferncroft Resort in Danvers, Massachusetts, on December 2-3, 1987, just prior to the 1987 ETS meeting at Gordon-Conwell Seminary. We finalized our statement, called it the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, and voted to incorporate as the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. CBMW was off and running.

But we were still meeting secretly in 1987, not posting the meeting anywhere, not letting anyone know what we were doing. We just didn't want to get involved in controversy and argument while we were still getting organized and deciding what exactly we would stand for.

Dr. Lane Dennis, the President of Crossway Books, was also at that meeting, and sometime that weekend, at that same hotel (the Sheraton Ferncroft in Danvers), he talked to John Piper and me about John's idea from two years earlier, the idea of editing a book of essays on manhood and womanhood. That idea eventually became *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. (Lane Dennis had also been in on the meeting that finalized the Danvers Statement.)

We also talked during those meetings about the future of the ETS, and how important it was to show up at the ETS business meeting and vote for candidates for the nominating committee who held to our principles. So we began to show up and vote every year, and I think that has had a positive influence on the officers elected year after year to head the ETS.

(When I reflect on the fact that the incorporation of CBMW, the finalizing of the Danvers Statement, and the agreement to produce *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, all came out of that one meeting at the Sheraton Ferncroft Resort, I think it is one of the Lord's pleasant acts

of providence that twelve years later, on November 17, 1999, I had the honor of giving the ETS presidential address in that very same hotel. Those were the only two occasions in the sixty-year history of the ETS that the Sheraton Ferncroft was the primary hotel for the conference.)

### Going Public with CBMW

For those first two years we were still a very secret, by-invitation-only group. But by December, 1988, at the ETS meeting at Wheaton College, we were ready to go public. We announced the formation of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and handed out brochures. We even had a press conference (*Christianity Today* showed up, but nobody else). We coined the term "complementarian" as a one-word representation of our viewpoint. So we were now known to the ETS, but not yet in the general evangelical world.

However, at that same meeting, Dr. S. Lewis Johnson (who has since gone to be with the Lord) told me he thought he could come up with a gift from some people at his church in Texas who would pay for a full-page ad in *Christianity Today*. To this day I don't know if Dr. Johnson paid for that personally, or somebody else. But, he came up with \$5000 and we placed an order for the ad, which was two full pages.

We were thrilled when the January 13, 1989, issue of *Christianity Today* arrived. They had given us the two center pages, and the magazine just fell open to that spot! The ad proclaimed, "We are pleased to announce the formation of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood." It was very text-heavy and included some questions and answers, the list of Council Members and Board of Reference members, and the entire Danvers Statement! No photos at all! But there was a clip-out coupon to mail in (this was pre-e-mail days). That one ad brought over 1000 responses, which, we were told, astounded the people at *Christianity Today* when they heard about it—that a single ad that was so text-heavy would bring that much response. People would write us saying, "I wept when I saw your ad. I didn't know that people held this any more." We began to sense that this was a big issue and that

God was surely blessing our work.

In 1991 *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, with twenty-six essays by twenty-two different authors, came out from Crossway Books. Crossway has been an ally for CBMW from day one.

In 1992 we found out that *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, by a vote of readers, was chosen as *Christianity Today* “Book of the Year,” meaning the book that had had the most significant influence on the evangelical world in the previous year—once again, a surprising blessing from the Lord! (I heard later that there was some frustration on the part of some staff at *Christianity Today* as they counted the ballots that poured in by mail, because our book did not represent a viewpoint that most of them favored. I don’t know if there is a causal relationship, but it was that year that they decided to stop taking readers’ votes for “Book of the Year,” and that honor has since been decided by a committee of experts that they have selected.)

In 1994, three members of CBMW met privately with three members of Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE), the egalitarian organization (at their request). Dr. Ray Ortlund (the president at that time), Mary Kassian, and I met with three of their leaders in Chicago to talk about where we could come to points of agreement. As we talked, we overcame some misunderstandings on both sides, and the Lord gave a measure of blessing to that time.

As we talked, there seemed to be agreement that one thing we could do together would be for both organizations to agree publicly that abuse within marriage is wrong. So we agreed to work on a joint statement on abuse. After the meeting, Mary Kassian drafted such a statement, and we got some feedback from the CBE people, and we were going to issue it. But, then on October 10, 1994, we received a letter from them saying that their board had considered it, and they would not join with us in the joint statement opposing abuse. I was shocked and disappointed when the letter came. I wondered then if their highest goal in this issue was to be faithful to Scripture above all and stop

the horrors of abuse, or was to promote the egalitarian agenda. We ended up publishing the statement ourselves in *CBMW NEWS* (later renamed *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*).

### **The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy**

A new chapter for CBMW began in November 1996 at the ETS meeting in Jackson, Mississippi. I read a paper called “What’s Wrong With Gender Neutral Bible Translations?” I analyzed many verses in the NRSV, but I didn’t mention the NIV because there was no public information that they were planning to change the gender language in the NIV. In fact, I gave fifteen or twenty copies of my paper to Dr. Ken Barker, Secretary of the NIV’s Committee on Bible Translation, and he told me he would distribute them to the members of their committee.

But a few months later the whole issue of gender-neutral Bible translation exploded. The March 1997 issue of *World* magazine had an NIV Bible on the cover that was morphing into a stealth bomber, and the magazine’s cover announced that the NIV was quietly going gender-neutral. The entire gender-neutral Bible controversy resulted, and the following issue of *World* had an article by me analyzing several verses where I thought the British Inclusive-Language NIV (NIVI) was distorting Scripture.

Eventually Dr. James Dobson called a meeting of twelve people at Focus on the Family in late May, 1997. It included representatives from CBMW, *World* magazine, the NIV’s Committee on Bible Translation, Zondervan (the distributor of the NIV), and the International Bible Society (the copyright holder for the NIV), and some others. But just before the meeting began, the IBS issued a statement saying they had “abandoned all plans” for changes in gender-related language in future editions of the NIV. So we thought the controversy was done and the NIV would remain faithful in its translation of gender-related language in the Bible.

Little did we know, however, that the Committee on Bible Translation for the NIV had not “abandoned all plans”! Far from it! Unknown to anyone outside their circles, for the next four years



the Committee on Bible Translation, apparently with the quiet cooperation of people at Zondervan and the International Bible Society, continued working to produce a gender-neutral NIV. They had publicly “abandoned all plans,” but privately they were going full-steam ahead. Then suddenly in 2001, they announced unilaterally they were abandoning the agreement not to publish gender-related changes in the NIV, and they published the TNIV New Testament in 2001 and the whole Bible in 2005.

To put it mildly, the TNIV has not met with large success. I see this as God’s protection on the accuracy of his Word in English, and I think it is, in large part, a legacy of CBMW’s work in the evangelical world. If we had not existed there would not have been a focal point for the opposition to the TNIV. But CBMW served as the focal point, and God gave blessing to that effort.

The long-term result of that controversy, which no one expected or foresaw at the time, was a new awareness of differences in Bible translation theory in the evangelical world. The dominance of dynamic equivalence theory has clearly been broken, and the trend now is decidedly toward essentially literal translation. CBMW played a large role in that, and I am thankful to the Lord that we were able to do that.

### Other Positive Results

In 1998 we rejoiced to see that the Southern Baptist Convention added to the “Baptist Faith and Message” (the doctrinal statement of the denomination) and included some strong new statements on marriage and the church that affirm the complementarian position. This is wonderfully helpful because it sets the denomination on the right course on this issue for a generation or more to come.

In 2000, we held a conference on marriage and family in Dallas, co-sponsored by Family-Life under the leadership of Dennis Rainey. That conference had a wonderful impact with ongoing influence in terms of books published and much networking and encouragement for others.

Personally, I think I am now coming to an

end of my active advocacy of this issue. In 2004, I published with Multnomah Books a book called *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*. It started out to be a 150-page handbook and ended up to be an 856-page book. It includes everything I’ve learned on biblical manhood and womanhood for the last twenty-five years.

After that, in 2006, my book *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?*<sup>6</sup> solidified a new viewpoint for me—the conviction that many evangelical feminists are not going to change their minds or be convinced because, it seems to me, they have repeatedly adopted principles or chosen exegetical decisions that undermine or deny the authority of Scripture. Once that abandoning of scriptural authority comes about, then a movement will not be persuaded by Scripture, and in that case, when the culture is going the other way, they will not ever be persuaded on this issue. That conclusion has affected a lot of what I think about where this controversy is going.

### Accomplishment and Challenge

What has God allowed CBMW to accomplish?

(1) To define a standard—the Danvers Statement—that is faithful to the Bible, so there are not 1000 conservative views on this issue that can be attacked one-by-one but one responsible view (embodied in the Danvers Statement) that has guided the church and has been widely used around the world.

(2) To defend the statement with hundreds of articles, books, and internet publications at the highest academic level as well as at the popular level.

(3) To act as a key player in stopping what was in 1985 a floodtide of evangelical feminism sweeping through the evangelical world almost completely unchallenged. (But even though it is no longer a flood, there is still a steady stream of egalitarianism flowing through the evangelical world, and it continues to harm marriages and the church.)

(4) CBMW has had a significant influence in the thinking of many who have gained positions of guardianship in strategic organizations in the evangelical world.

(5) CBMW has had massive downstream impact on many denominations and parachurch organizations.

But there remain some challenges, and I would encourage younger pastors and scholars who support CBMW in the following ways:

(1) Play offense and not just defense. ETS is an excellent place for many young scholars to do that, and so are denominational study groups and public presentations. More complementarians need to write clear answers, and to participate in public debates, to show the incorrectness of arguments put forth by influential egalitarians like Kevin Giles, Sarah Sumner, William Webb, and others. I want to say to younger CBMW supporters in the academic world, “We need you to publish on this issue. There is no lack of evangelical feminist material to respond to. You will always find something to write about. Continue to engage this issue and win the arguments at the highest academic levels.”

(2) Beware the opposite error of male supremacy and dominance. Whenever you fight against one error, those who hold the opposite error will cheer you on and seek to become your allies—but beware. Some will become harsh and demeaning and argumentative, and they will not truly honor women as equals in the sight of God.

(3) Try somehow to ensure that institutions and organizations have some public accountability on this issue—that their constituencies know what is going on—and that there is a price to be paid for adopting evangelical feminist policies and positions. I’m concerned about future trends where an institution can become more and more egalitarian and there is no public price to pay, no public accountability to its supporters or members.

(4) Be courageous in teaching the truth and trust God to give victory.

## Conclusion

I am surprised that this controversy has gone on so long. In the late 80s and early 90s when we began this, I expected that this would probably be over in ten years. By force of argument, by use of facts, by careful exegesis, by the power of the clear word of God, by the truth, I expected the entire

church would be persuaded, the battle for the purity of the church would be won, and egalitarian advocates would be marginalized and have no significant influence. But it has not completely happened yet!

I still believe it will happen. Jesus Christ is building and purifying his church that he might present it to himself without spot or wrinkle. But on this issue Christ’s purification process is taking much longer than I expected!

The issue of manhood and womanhood has become one of the focal points of a much larger controversy over whether the Bible will reign supreme over cultural pressures in the church, the home, and the academy. In fact, I think it is now the largest of several issues and it has implications for all of them. In the near future, I expect that this controversy increasingly will become the focal point of the larger realignment in the entire evangelical world between those for whom the Bible is still the ultimate authority and those for whom it is not.

Finally, my testimony after nearly thirty years in this controversy is that faithfulness to the Lord always carries a price, but it’s always worth the price. Whatever you spend, God will richly repay with his presence, his favor, his blessing on you and those you love, and in the end he will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:21).

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This essay has been adapted from a talk given at a CBMW luncheon, November 14, 2007, in San Diego, California.

<sup>2</sup>Wayne Grudem, “Does *kephalē* Mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’? An Examination of 2,336 Examples,” *Trinity Journal* 6 NS (1985): 38–59.

<sup>3</sup>Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephale* (‘Head’): A Response to Recent Studies,” *Trinity Journal* 11 NS (1990): 3–72. Reprinted as an appendix in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 424–76.

<sup>4</sup>Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of *Kephale* (‘Head’): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 1 (2001): 25–65. Reprinted (with some added material interacting with Anthony Thiselton) in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (ed. Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 145–202; and also in Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 552–99.

<sup>5</sup>Catherine Clark Kroeger, “Head,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (ed. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid; Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 1993), 375–77.

<sup>6</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006).

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# On the Loquacity of Women, Homeboys, and 1 Tim 2:11–12

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I guess I had no idea that one of the most popular rap songs of 1985—and one that my friends and I sometimes quoted to one another as high school seniors—was so theologically interesting. The group was known as Run D.M.C., and they broke into hip hop with a track titled “You Talk Too Much.” Perhaps you have heard it in a movie or an advertisement. The chorus (if we may call it that) says,

You talk too much,  
You never shut up,  
I said you talk too much,  
Homeboy, you never shut up.

The success of the rap, in part, was due to the reality it conveyed. Some of the homeboys simply talked too much. And they needed to be corrected. This idea rang true in “the hood” as well as at the local country club.

Why is this song theologically interesting? Because it suggests a curious theological proposition about the nature of male and female.

Fast forward to the year 2008, and I find myself in a chapel service at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary listening to a sermon. Early in the message the speaker reflected on his propensity to talk too much. I think he was warning us about the length of the sermon. He said this: “My wife calls me motor mouth.... ‘You talk more than other men.... You talk too much.’ ...” His wife’s assessment was spot on. Chapel ran about twenty minutes over that day. I actually enjoyed the message. But the point remains. “You talk too much....

Homeboy, you never shut up.”

Why is a preacher’s personal admission about talking too much so theologically interesting? Because it undermines the common assumption that women talk more than men.

Now we are prepared to ask the question that forms the basis for this essay. *Do women talk more than men?* That is, are females inherently more loquacious than males simply because of their gender? If so, what are we to make of the above examples? Are they simply men who are more “in touch” with their “feminine side”?

The answer is not as simple as one might think. And we ought to be careful in how we *use* Scripture to answer this question—as well as other questions like it. That is really the larger point of this two-part essay (I hope to offer a second installment, “On the Gullibility of Women”). In short, the purpose of the essay is to show the importance of exercising a responsible hermeneutic when it comes to reading gender passages in Scripture.

Before I offer an answer to the question, I want to identify a popular, common assumption and then comment on recent studies that yield conflicting answers to the question.

## **The Popular Assumption, Recent Studies, and Personal Observations**

The popular assumption is this: women are by nature more loquacious than men. Women are chatty creatures. They talk because they like to talk. They enjoy talking when they are happy. They also talk in order to solve problems—or at least cope with the problem. Simply put, talking has a place in

a woman's life that it does not have in a man's life. In the words of psychologist John Gray, author of the bestseller *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, when it comes to dealing with life's problems, "men go to their caves and women talk." Is it really the case that men go through life with grunts and nods while women prefer to talk?

Two recent studies offer conflicting answers. One researcher claims that women do in fact talk more than men. Louann Brizendine, a Yale and Harvard trained M.D. and author of *The Female Brain* (Broadway, 2006), claims that women talk about three times more than men. The *disparity, according to her studies, is something like 20,000 words per day vs. 7,000 words per day*. In addition to saying more than men daily, women also speak about twice as fast as men. Speech patterns, then, according to Brizendine, reflect an inherent, gender-based neurological difference between men and women.

Last year NPR reported on a study conducted by Matthias Mehl, Asst. Professor of Psychology at the University of Arizona, that suggests otherwise. Mehl and his assistants outfitted about 400 college students with recording devices in order to determine who talks more. As it turns out, both the men and women spoke on average about 16,000 words a day. There was some variation (women speaking a little more than 16,000 words per day) but the disparity has been interpreted as "not statistically significant." Curiously, the three top talkers in Mehl's study were all men. So much for the taciturn male. According to Mehl the popular myth that women talk more than men is more a result of pop-psychology and overgeneralization than careful research. Mehl hopes that this study will undermine "female chatterbox and silent male" stereotypes and assist in relieving other gender constraints that have put men in "the gender box" far too long.

These two recent studies have yielded interesting results, and I am sure there are more studies like these to come. As to my own personal observations, I have to say that I know some male friends who can gab with the best of women. And on the other hand I know some women who appear to be anything but loquacious. Perhaps we should look to

Scripture to get a better grasp on this aspect of the human condition.

### **Does Scripture Teach the Quietness of Men and Loquacity of Women?**

Not long ago I listened to a complementarian explain that one of the reasons the Apostle Paul requires "silence" of women in the church is that women are prone to talk more than men (cf. 1 Tim 2:11–12 and 1 Cor 14:34–35). Such a proclivity to talk more than men makes women more susceptible to sin—or, is at least a unique manifestation of sin for women. He went on to suggest that such an understanding is how one should read 1 Tim 2:11–12. When Paul says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet," the prohibition is designed, in part, to protect the church from female leadership that is inherently more likely to sin through a multitude of words. The women of 1 Timothy 5 are a vivid example of this potential problem—they go about from house to house as "gossips and busybodies" (1 Tim 5:13). Of course, he also accounts for other, more central reasons for Paul's prohibition found in 1 Tim 2:12. The other reasons that he gives, in my opinion, have a more reasonable basis in the text.

I do not see Paul's requirement for the "silence" or "quietness" of women in any way related to the idea of an inherently loquacious gender. I do not even see it as a sub-point or something implicit in the text. Simply put, Paul's prohibition of 1 Tim 2:12 concerns two defining activities of pastoral leadership—teaching and the exercise of authority in leadership—that are contrasted with a disposition that is willing to follow such leadership without dispute. The words translated "she is to remain quiet" (ESV) refer as much to a nonverbal disposition as to the absence of a spoken response.

Are there other passages of Scripture that might teach us that women talk more than men? It is true that some texts of Scripture describe women who sin through a multitude of words. Probably the one that comes to mind for most of us is the contentious woman of Proverbs. It is better to live alone in the wilderness or in a corner of the



housetop than to live with her (Prov 21:19; 25:24). Another text describes living with her as “a continual dripping on a rainy day” (Prov 27:15). The metaphor used here vividly describes the incessant niggling and nagging of some women. But the point of the metaphor is not that she has an inherent proclivity to talk more than her husband wants. Rather, the point is simply to convey how annoying and demoralizing a contentious wife can be to a husband.

And yet, while it is the case that some texts describe women who sin through a multitude of words, the same may be said of men. It is not a uniquely feminine problem. Again we turn to Proverbs, which warns *both* men and women not to sin through many words. “When words are many, transgression is not lacking” (Prov 10:19). Or, “the mouths of fools pour out folly” (15:2). And again, “a fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back” (29:11). In the New Testament, James explicitly instructs his “beloved brothers” to be quick to listen and slow to speak, and to “bridle” their tongues as a demonstration of true religion (Jas 1:19, 26).

I think, then, we would be hard-pressed to make a biblical case for women talking more than men. Having said that, I can certainly understand those who think that, generally speaking, women tend to talk more than men. That may well be true in a particular marriage, family, or work setting. It may also be true that there are indeed some measurable intellectual and psychological differences between men and women. I happen to think that there are, but Scripture does not explicitly teach us this. Our assumptions, experiments, studies, and conclusions are all based on life experience, and the complexities of factors that make up such a life experience are excessively difficult to assess objectively. My point here is that when it comes to questions we have about male and female and how they relate, we should be responsible with Scripture, trying our best not to allow our own experiences to hinder a responsible reading of the Bible. And as complementarians we ought to be careful not to identify more gender-based differences than really exist, all in the name of “enjoying the difference.”

Doing so could easily result in missing what the Scriptures have to say to all of us.

### On Sanctifying Homeboys *and* Homegirls

Perhaps we should ask a slightly different question—one that I think is a more important question—that yields a very different answer. Do men *and* women talk too much? The answer to this question gets at an undeniably clear answer in Scripture.

Yes. Every descendant of Adam and Eve talks too much. And in doing so we are making a statement about the condition of our souls. We often say the wrong things at the wrong time and in the wrong way. As recently as yesterday I was with a good friend who said, very intentionally, “hear me out before you respond to this.” Apparently, I have a habit of interrupting him and he wanted to prevent that. The failure to listen well is a spiritual problem for all of us.

Have you ever considered that listening is foundational to the Christian faith? Christians above all others should understand *the* ultimate reason for this. God has spoken. He has not remained silent. He has spoken to us in creation, the living Word, and the written Word. He has spoken, and so we listen. From the moment we first believed the gospel, we were listeners. It was because we chose to listen to God’s voice and repent that we were rescued from the damning voice of the accuser, Satan.

I was first introduced to the idea that listening is foundational to the Christian faith by David Wells. As he put it, following the insight of Anders Nigren, “in Christian faith we listen, because in Christian faith we are addressed from the outside—God speaks to us, and before him we are summoned.” Learning to listen is a mark of a distinctly biblical faith. Wells has helped me to see that such an understanding of listening is not only foundational to the Christian faith, but also a lifelong evidence of the Christian disposition. Listening continues to form the souls of both men and women in a distinctively Christian way.

In one of my favorite books, *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer teaches us the value of listening and its place in forming Christians both in

solitude and in community. He says, “Right speech comes out of silence.” Here Bonhoeffer reminds Christians to practice the habit of silence before entering into conversation with others. Christians need definite times of silence—“silence under the Word and silence that comes out of the Word.” The Word of God is not heard by the chatterer. Rather, the Christian learns to listen in a “simple stillness” under the Word of God. This is just what Christians do. Christians listen more than they talk.

Listening and not talking too much are lost habits these days. But when we do practice silence and the habit of listening, we are more like Jesus Christ who listened perfectly to the voice of God. On the other hand, when we listen to our own voices we are more like the archetypal homeboy, Adam, who listened to the voice of the archetypal homegirl, Eve. Instead of obeying the voice of God both Adam and Eve listened to other voices.

It’s not just the daughters of Eve who talk too much. We all talk too much. We never shut up.

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# Sweet Sacrifices: The Challenges of a Woman in Ministry

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*Editor's Note: This essay was a message originally delivered September 30, 2008, at an event sponsored by the Pendergraph Women's Ministry of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.*

It is not easy to be a woman in ministry today, but when has it been? From Old Testament times when Abram communicated to Sarai God's command to leave their home and family, to the New Testament efforts of Timothy's grandmother and mother to train up in the Holy Scriptures this young pastor in the making, to whatever God has uniquely designed and called you to do in his kingdom advancement program, women have wondered out loud, "This is hard—much harder than I figured on. I wonder if I have what it takes."

Some of you may be married to seminary students. Some of you may be wives of men in ministry. Or you may be a student yourself. But we all have one thing in common—our femininity. I want to encourage you in your unique role as a woman. God made you a woman, and he delights in the varied and mysterious ways that your femininity reveals the image of God displayed for the world to see.

Think with me of all that God has done to bring you to this very moment in your life. God, in eternity past, chose you to be an active soldier in his mighty rescue operation for this needy world. The Bible says that long ago, before the very foundation of the world, God thought you up and chose you for his very own (Eph 1:4). Long ago, before you were even born, God formed and numbered the days of your life (Ps 139:16). Long ago God planned the path for your very own personal race in life (Heb 12:1). Long ago God decided and pre-

pared good works that you would walk in (Eph 2:10). And then He stepped into time and made you in secret, knitting you together in your mother's womb (Ps 139:13,15) and brought you forth into his world and introduced himself to you with irresistible beauty and set you on this pilgrimage toward heaven, which we know as life. Learn to see the big picture of God's eternal purposes. Your calling as a woman deeply involved in ministry is a vital part of God's eternal plan.

I want to encourage you to ponder the sacrifices God is asking of you as a woman in ministry. Let's look at three particular challenges: your reputation, your romance, and your redemption.

## **Risking your Reputation**

The first challenge of a woman in ministry is to choose to risk her reputation. Leaders are talked about. By virtue of his position, your husband will be the subject of many conversations. And some of that talk will find its way back to you. As women in ministry and as daughters of the King, we need to know how to deal with the inevitable rumors, criticism, and gossip that permeate even the Christian world today.

We all know that truth stabilizes relationships. That's why God forbids every kind of falsehood (Exod 20:16; Lev 19:11). He wants us to make truth, dignity, and honor the foundation of all our relationships. But we find this so hard—we are all liars by nature and live in a culture of lies. Paul had to tell the Colossians, "Do not lie to one another, seeing you have put off the old self" (Col 3:9). We all could tell stories of rumors, lies, half-truths, or even times when the truth was just withheld either

about us or by us. And these lies ultimately poisoned relationships in our lives.

### *Your Own Tongue*

Let's consider our own tongues, and then look at how to respond when others use their tongues against us. James 3 speaks of the tongue being such a small part of our body, yet revealing how well we control the rest. "If a man does not stumble in what he says . . . he is able to bridle his whole body . . . but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison" (Jas 3:2, 8).

We need God's help here as leaders in his work. Francis Schaeffer's wife, Edith, put it this way, "If a report is unnecessary and unkind, and might just be a little exaggerated in the retelling of it the next time, we'd better be silent about it. It is my tongue and your tongue that is likened to a bucking horse that is running away with its rider. It is my tongue and yours that is likened to the ship tossing on the waves with the rudder not properly in the hands of the expert" (Edith Schaeffer, *Lifelines* [Wheaton: Crossway, 1982], 189).

A rumor, any kind of gossip, indeed, any word we ever speak—once it is out of our mouths—is impossible to control or retrieve. Do you know the story of a young monk who went to his superior because he had sinned in how he spoke about someone? The young man was told to go and put feathers on the doorsteps of all those he spoken to about this matter. When he finished he came back to ask this superior what he should do now. To the young man's surprise, his superior instructed him go and retrieve every feather. In dismay, the young monk exclaimed, "I can't! By now those feathers have spread all over town." His superior nodded and said, "So also your words are now impossible to retrieve."

As leaders we must pray as David prayed in Psalm 141:3: "Set a guard over my mouth: keep watch over the door of my lips!" We must do all we can to see that honesty, kindness, and love govern the speech in our spheres of influence—in our cars, bedrooms, breakfast tables, phone conversations, and emails. Proverbs 16:24 says, "Gracious words are sweetness to the soul and health to the body."

Do your words bring gracious healing and health to those who hear them?

### *Someone Else's Tongue*

You may be thinking, "Jani, I can deal with my own tongue. It's the rumors and criticism that others spread about me and my loved ones that hurt so deeply." According to Prov 18:21, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue."

In the first place, live so that when someone says something false about you, others will have no reason to believe it. "Let your light so shine before men that they will see your good works and glorify your father in heaven" (Matt 5:16)

But even when you and your husband are living as best you can in faithful integrity, others may find ways to slander you. In one of our pastorates, during a very difficult time, a staff member resigned of his own accord, but came back a few months later and asked Ray to forgive him because he had spread lies about him in the church and community. Of course, Ray did forgive him, but the damage had already been done, and the young man made no effort to retrieve the slander he had sent out into our city. The winds of gossip had blown the feathers of his slander all over and they were irretrievable.

What do you do when others slander you or those you love? Go to others who have endured grievous criticism and evil slander. Saints like Susannah Wesley, Sarah Edwards, Amy Carmichael, and Charles Simeon are a few who have helped me.

Instead of wasting emotional energy defending or protecting ourselves, we must turn to God. The Bible says that love covers over an offense (Prov 17:9). And everyone in ministry will, at sometime, be called to love those who have offended them.

As God fulfills his promise of grace in us, we will feel so humbled in his saving love for us that we won't allow slander and criticism to derail us emotionally or spiritually. Humility—true humility—defuses rumors. To be truly humble means that I am shocked at nothing that someone might say about me, because if they knew me better they would have even more to talk about.



Not only will God's grace fill us with humility, but we will become so deeply secure in Christ, that his love and care for us will overrule our need for acceptance and honor this side of heaven. We will be able to withstand evil reports, or relentless scrutiny, or unfair criticism because our souls will learn to find rest in God alone (Ps 62:1). We will be able to embrace and fulfill his call to us in I Pet 3:9: "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."

And what is God's blessing? When God's purposes are all fulfilled and all wrongs finally righted, God will bear a true witness about his servants. When friends or students or family or church members slander, or even abandon you, you remain in good company. Think of Jeremiah, Paul, and other heroic people. Remember that God will have the last word about you—about your husband—and he will bear a true witness about your godly heart and your true worth.

So we must learn to control our tongues and to bear up under false accusations. "When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat" (I Cor 4:12–13). Jesus did. In fact, it was false witnesses whose testimony sentenced him to death (Matt 26:57–62). Even during his agony on the cross, he did not lash out. The Bible says that Jesus entrusted himself to him who judges rightly (I Pet 2:23). You can, too.

### **Refining your Romance**

Some of you married never dreaming your husband would end up in the ministry. Others knew you were headed into ministry, but were unaware of the sweet sacrifices that you would need to make.

You are one of the main vehicles God uses to show your husband his favor. Proverbs 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord." It's as if God was thinking, "How can I help this man as I call him to serve Me? I know. I'll make \_\_\_\_\_, introduce them, and ignite their hearts to yearn to be one. Then I'll use her as my main channel to show him my favor."

You have the unique privilege of knowing intimately a man seeking hard to gain knowledge

of God and his Word, and then striving day after day, year after year to communicate all that God gives him to the people God brings into his life.

Some would *not* think this is so great a privilege. I heard of one ministry wife who said, "Clergy ought to be celibate because no decent right-minded man ought to have the effrontery to ask any woman to take on such a lousy job. It is thoroughly unchristian!"

It may be hard—but it is not lousy. It may be exhausting—but it is not indecent. It may even be painful—but it is not unchristian. Your marriage is God's gift to you. And it is a good and perfect gift. Your man and your ministry are part of Almighty God's eternal plan to redeem this place we call earth.

Your *most important ministry* in all of life is to your husband. God gave you to him as a *helper*. This is not a weak word. It is used of the Holy Spirit. A helper gives aid from a position of strength or wisdom or gifts or experience. You get to live up close with one of the leaders in God's kingdom advancing work. You have the honor of comforting him, counseling him, helping him in his weaknesses, and seeing him live out at home what he preaches up front. You get to attend to the affairs of the kingdom with him—teaching, giving, showing hospitality, being there in the greatest joys and deepest sorrows of life as you help him shepherd the sheep God has given him. What a blessed privilege!

Ministry marriages bear unique strains. Here are two ways you can be a helper to your husband.

### ***Respect Your Husband's Work***

Show him *appreciation and loyalty*. Men in ministry are always under fire. Their sacred calling exposes them to unique temptations from which other men are exempt. For this reason, your husband needs to know you think he is really wonderful. Speak well of him to friends and family. Praise him in front of your kids. H. G. Hendricks tells how his wife was instrumental in setting a positive tone in their home when ministry demands were very heavy. On the way to the airport to drop her husband off for yet another weekend of ministry, Mrs. Hendricks would say, "Isn't it great we get to share Daddy?"

Is your husband late for dinner again while he is caring for the needs of his flock? Your kids can see you have one of two responses. “Poor Daddy. He must be hungry and tired, but someone needs Jesus, and Daddy gets to bring Jesus to them. Let’s pray for him right now.” Or—“Poor us! We have to eat dinner without Daddy again. Why can’t he make it home on time?” Be loyal to your man. Don’t broadcast your frustrations and disappointments. Let him feel safe with you.

*Accept him.* Men interpret advice as lack of approval. And he’ll get plenty of advice from others—co-workers, congregants, family. He needs to know you are on his side—that he’s not alone. Let others try to improve him. In your eyes he needs to be OK. He is most likely all too aware of his own shortcomings, anyway.

I am a fixer by nature. And besides that, people have tried to get to Ray through me, especially women. “Please tell Ray how much I . . .” And somehow, I would try—whether it was what side of his jacket he should put his name tag on, or how to pronounce a missionary’s name, I tried to correct him. Finally, he came to me, took me in his arms, and said, “I need to know there is one person in this world who isn’t trying to change me—who really likes me. Would you be willing to be that person for me?” Boy was I! I didn’t want anyone else stepping up to apply for that position!

### ***Teach Him How to Love You***

#### *Emotionally*

We all face struggles this side of heaven. And when we’re going through a hard time, our tendency is to withdraw. How often has this conversation gone on in your house?:

“Is something bothering you?”

“No!”

“Really?”

“Yes, I’m *just fine!*”

The reason we tend to withdraw *is not because* we don’t want comfort. We just don’t want the kind of comfort we’ve been offered in the past. Generally, men comfort with words. If they can reason out *why* something happened, then it’s OK.

If he can solve it logically, it won’t happen again.

Women often need gestures—hugs, flowers, help with the kids. You need to teach your husband how to comfort you. Think of the old romantic movies—she always has the right thing to say, he always knows what to do. Well, she has a script—and he has a director, telling him how to hold her. Be your husband’s director!

Have you ever been angry at your husband and couldn’t figure out how to tell him but just kept getting more and more angry as it became more apparent that he couldn’t see what was bothering you? You must take the time and effort to communicate with your husband. He is not a mind reader!

If you don’t, you’ll be stuck with at least two negatives: (1) He will probably never learn, and then you’ll turn to other sources for comfort—your mom, friends, food, escapist novels, films, etc. (2) Your sons will never see up close how a man can comfort his wife, and your daughters will never learn how to communicate their needs in palatable ways to the man of their dreams.

Help your man learn to meet your emotional needs—for your own benefit and for that of the next generation.

#### *Physically*

I believe your husband’s strongest safeguard against adultery is a fun and satisfying relationship with his wife. We as Christian leaders should have the happiest, most romantic and deeply satisfying marriages in all of society.

God’s Word is unashamedly pro-romance. Think of all the love stories in it: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Rachel, Ruth and Boaz, and others. Think of the biblical passages that are erotic (e.g., Song of Solomon, Prov 5:15-19). He made us male and female as part of his “very good” creation.

God celebrates love and sex in marriage. He values our sexuality and calls for us to enjoy this beautiful gift within the security of marital commitment. We must love our mates with all we have. Happily married women know that having a husband does not make a marriage any more than having a piano makes a musician! It is not just having

a husband, but loving him that makes you live in unity with him.

What will your husband become because he married *you*? Are you helping him to be a one-woman man? There are many forces out there that would want to divide you and your husband. A strong, romantic, happy marriage is a sure defense against most of the evil forces that want to see your man defeated (1 Cor 7:5).

The Bible talks much about sexual intimacy. God wants you to refine your romance. You are the only legal and God-blessed source of sexual fulfillment that your husband will ever have, if he follows the Lord carefully. Give him the joy and pleasure that he can only experience within the security of a godly marriage. Proverbs 5 tells your husband to be intoxicated or captivated by your love. Are you doing all you can to be as captivating as possible?

If the physical side of your marriage doesn't become all it can be, your marriage can still survive. Sex isn't everything. But your marriage will have a soft spot, a vulnerable side where Satan can attack. To have a great marriage will cost you something—anything of value is valuable because it costs something! Cultivate a deep intimacy with your husband that binds his heart to yours. This will take time, creativity, and initiative. But I promise you, it will be worth it!

Think of the blessings of marriage. You have been chosen by someone, and you have had the chance to choose someone for yourself. You enter into a relationship of trust and comfort and joy. You belong somewhere and with someone. You live out your own shared history. Marriage makes two people what they could never be alone. Refine your romance. It will be worth every effort.

Yet in the midst of these blessings we will face real disappointments: financial restraints, personal and even slanderous attacks, spiritual malaise, conflicts with extended family, less than thrilling times of intimacy, his inability to anticipate or even understand your needs.

Your marriage has to be an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person. That leads me into my final point—the third challenge for women in ministry.

## Relishing your Redemption

All behavior is rooted in what we believe. Either I believe that *Jesus is enough*, or I believe that *Jesus is not enough* and that I must somehow fill the void.

There is more to being a Christian than asking Jesus into my heart. Belief in his goodness and watch-care and love for me will have its full effect when I feel loved and cared for.

For instance, if I say I believe that God cares about me and is sovereign over my whole life in mercy and love, yet I am held captive by various fears, I don't really believe that God is good! My belief in his sovereign control is only an intellectual concept, not a heart-felt belief.

When I stop trusting God, I start forging my own way, and then I become very dangerous. After all, the devils believe in God (Jas 2:19). But they don't *love* God—and that's the difference. Our hearts need to be thrilled with God's redeeming love. It is this love that redeems our lives from the pit.

So when we're stung, or set back, or even disabled, because of gossip and rumor, we come to the God who redeems all of our lives—not just at the point of conversion—but all along the way, as we stumble toward heaven in our weaknesses. And we find in Jesus a sympathetic high priest who was brutally tortured and murdered because men brought false reports about him to the religious officials. At the cross Jesus absorbed those lies—and every lie or rumor concerning you—and in turn he was gentle and meek and gave back love as he entrusted himself to His Father. And he says, "Follow me—take up your cross and entrust yourself to my Father. It's going to be all right. You serve the God who remembers (Heb 6:10). Your labor for him is never in vain (1 Cor 15:58)."

And when your heart is tempted to be soured with the inevitable disappointments of living as one flesh with another human being, look ahead to your heavenly Husband, the lover of your soul, who loves you completely even as you are. He is your redeemer—he paid the greatest bride-price imaginable to capture your heart and bring you to himself.

Your femininity is most beautiful, most nurturing, graceful, other-centered, when you know

you are loved. Let God make you, through his tender and personal love, the beautiful woman he intends you to be.

The most helpful way we can support and help the men God brings into our lives—our husbands, sons, grandsons, pastors, teachers, and employers—is to find our happy fulfillment in Christ. If God's redeeming love is truly filling your heart, then God himself will be the ultimate human experience, not a perfect ministry, reputation, or marriage. Psalm 62:1 says, "My soul finds rest in God alone."

How does God's redeeming love fill our hearts in such a way that we can live outside our own needs, dying to self, and giving ourselves totally to his eternal purposes? One way—I believe the most important way—is to spend time daily with our Redeemer. If we are not feeding our souls with eternal food (cf. Ps 36:7–9), our souls will shrivel for lack of nourishment.

Think of all we feed our bodies and souls with. Think of all the time you spent last week on meal preparation, eating, reading the newspaper, surfing the Internet, exercising, watching TV. Compare that to the time you spent in nearness to God. It's not easy, is it? There is so much to do in life. But in order to support our husbands well, we need to be supported ourselves, with an internal and eternal support. We need daily refreshment and encouragement. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus in all of life's circumstances. We need to go deep into his Word in meditation and study and prayer. We need to feast and drink from him.

### ***God's Precious Love***

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light (Ps 36:7–9).

What things are *precious* to you these days? Is *God's love* precious to you? Maybe you feel far from God's love these days. I wonder what David was thinking when he chose that adjective—*pre-*

*cious*—to describe God's love? Why did David use that particular adjective? Well, think of how it is used throughout Scripture. What else is described as precious in the Bible? How can we understand the value of God's love through this little word?

God's love is *precious* like the cherished reunion between the Lord and His saints when one of them crosses that bridge between life here on earth and eternity: "*Precious* in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Ps 116:15). His love is *precious* like the value of an exceptional wife, the crowning jewel of a life-long romance: "An excellent wife, who can find? She is far more *precious* than jewels" (Prov 31:10). His love is *precious* like the costly ransom paid for your shortcomings before a holy God through the death of his only Son: "... knowing that you were ransomed ... not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the *precious* blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet 1:19).

### ***God's Steadfast Love***

God's love is steadfast. What does that mean? It means that God's precious love is constant and steady—it can be depended upon. It is unfailing. His love never falters. He sets his love upon us with clear, unchangeable intent.

We can count on God's love. Human love is very fragile—many of us know that from personal experience. Some of us have been deeply hurt by people we thought we could love and trust, but who in the end proved unfaithful. But *God's love* will never falter or waver.

"The *steadfast love* of the Lord endures forever" (Ps 100:5).

"The *steadfast love* of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lam 3:22; this is from Jeremiah, "the weeping prophet").

And God stands ready to bestow this generous love on us as we turn to him: "Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and *abounding in steadfast love*" (Joel 2:13).

What do you abound in? Complaints?



Fatigue? Fears? Homework? Laundry? “The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love” (Ps 147:11). Hoping in this strong steadfast love pleases God.

### ***God’s Safe Love***

“The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings” (Ps 36:7).

Life can be scary. We have all seen how quickly thousands of lives can be changed forever in the wake of a violent storm, a school shooting, or a seven billion dollar financial bailout. But there is a place where those who know God, through Christ, can find shelter and relief from anything that this world assaults them with, a place where God’s precious, steadfast love is abundant.

Where is that place? David describes it as “in the shadow of God’s wings.” To be under the shadow of someone’s wings means nearness. To be under a wing means you are near the heart. There is a sanctuary that God opens up to anyone who dares to draw near to him. There God offers you and me a love that will not let us go. He offers your soul eternal love, and *nothing* can ever wrench you out of his loving embrace.

In the New Testament, Paul puts it this way: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? . . . For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:35-39).

It’s as if Paul is saying, “Imagine the worst scenario possible. Do you think God’s love can remain credible even there?” What God wants us to see through his holy Word is that our lives are a love story. *Our sufferings do not define us; the precious, steadfast love of God defines us. Your redemption is the most beautiful love story ever told. Relish it.*

We are engaged to Christ now. Our earthly death will be our wedding day. He is courting us now, winning our hearts through His precious steadfast love.

God has never promised us a life free from suf-

fering. My husband, Ray, puts it this way: “Look for his love where he himself has promised it. Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And what is his love? To make us more like Christ, and to prepare us to live forever with Christ. That is the love of God, from which nothing can ever separate us.”

### **Conclusion**

We have been looking at some of the challenges that we face as women in ministry. We have been talking about heart issues—our reputations, our romances, our redemption. God wants us to look even more deeply into our hearts. God made the human heart. He created your heart for worship. Worship is more than going to church or singing hymns or praying. To worship means to give your heart away to something.

He is calling you and me in love to give our hearts away to Him. His love is something He delights to bestow upon us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. You see, we often come to God thinking we’re making a covenant with Him. No, your salvation is much larger than that. Within the Triune Godhead, God made a decision with Christ about you, about me. Christ effected it on the cross, and the Holy Spirit sealed it with His indwelling Presence.

Choose to keep your heart open to Christ. Feast on the abundance of His house and drink from the river of His delights. He knows you best and loves you most. A woman is most beautiful when she knows she is loved. Let the precious, steadfast, safe love of God flood your life with a deep beauty and a new spiritual radiance.

# Jesus and the Feminists: Case Studies in Feminist Hermeneutics<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction: Feminist Approaches to Scripture

There are three general groups of feminists that interact with the Bible in one way or another: (1) radical feminists; (2) reformist feminists; and (3) biblical or evangelical feminists/egalitarians. *Radical feminists* reject Scripture and Christianity as a whole, owing to what they perceive to be the Bible's irredeemably patriarchal nature. Their approach is such that they acknowledge what Scripture teaches but proceed to create a theology in conscious opposition to it. Some of these feminists call themselves "post-Christian."

The same is true to a lesser extent with *reformist feminists*, 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. A reformist feminist typically starts out with the "enlightened notion" that all men—and women—are equal in value and role and then critique and supplement Scripture as they see fit. The authority of Scripture is rejected where it does not conform to their feminist outlook. Additional writings that reflect more closely their own beliefs are included in their canon as well. Some of these reformist feminists are very radical in the views that they espouse. Also, it is not uncommon for feminists to move from a more conservative to a more radical stance over time.

*Evangelical or biblical feminism*, a movement also called "egalitarianism" due to its emphasis on the full equality of men and women, professes com-

mitment to scriptural inspiration and authority. This movement represents an effort within evangelicalism to revisit the traditional interpretation of gender passages in the Bible, including Jesus' perspective on women, in order to align it with a notion of gender equality. Within an inerrantist framework, egalitarians consider themselves to be both evangelical/biblical and feminist. While radical and reformist feminists rally around the notion of *liberation from oppression*, evangelical feminists adopt *equality* as their central tenet.

The teaching of Gal 3:28 that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" serves as the key biblical text by which all other teachings of Scripture on gender issues are measured. Egalitarians have a higher view of Scripture than 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 (in effect practicing a deductive method), 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.

In this article, I will present case studies of radical and reformist feminists and in conclusion explore implications for egalitarianism. The radical feminist case study considers Daphne Hampson, and the reformist feminist case study considers Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.

## Radical Feminism Case Study:

### Daphne Hampson

#### *Biography*

Daphne Hampson is a prominent radical feminist in Britain. Hampson started her career as a historian in Oxford, England. She completed a Harvard doctorate in systematic theology and in 1977 assumed a post as Lecturer in systematic theology at the University of Saint Andrews, Scotland. Hampson took a leading part in the campaign to allow women to be ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Church. She now considers herself a “post-Christian feminist” (see, for example, her work *After Christianity*, published in 1996) and holds that Christianity and feminism are incompatible and that Christianity is a mere myth.<sup>2</sup> Convinced that feminism represents the death-knell of Christianity as a viable religious option,<sup>3</sup> Hampson is seeking for new ways to conceptualize God that are in continuity with the Western tradition.

#### *In Search for Alternate Paradigms*

In her search for alternate paradigms, Hampson critiques the work of other, less radical, reformist feminists, and she writes that the problem with their approaches is that they still seek to place themselves within “the trajectory of biblical religion.”<sup>4</sup> Once one accepts some form of Scripture’s authority, Hampson contends, one assumes that Christianity is in some sense true. If a basically critical stance toward Scripture is adopted, such an assumption of scriptural authority is no longer warranted. As a result, Hampson adopts what she calls a “post-Christian position.”<sup>5</sup>

In her search for suitable paradigms, Hampson posits the “paradigm of mutual empowerment” as a basis for constructing her religion.<sup>6</sup> “Can this paradigm be found in the Judeo-Christian tradition?” Hampson asks. At the very outset, she rejects the Trinity as a possible candidate, since it contains an element of hierarchy and dependence, with the Son submitting to and depending on the Father. Jesus’ life, too, according to Hampson, did not model a paradigm of mutual empowerment. Jesus was *not* a feminist, and there is “no evidence that the equality of women was even an issue in the society in

which he lived.”<sup>7</sup> Jesus did not challenge the secondary role women played in Jewish religion, and he accepted the prevailing male and female roles in his society. He also referred to God as his Father.

To be sure, perhaps against the mores of his day, he permitted a woman to sit and learn at his feet, but we “have no picture of Jesus sitting at a woman’s feet, learning from her.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus (and Paul) may have been personally kind to women, even ahead of their time, but this does not make them feminists. For this reason God, as traditionally conceived, and Jesus, seen as God or as symbolic of God, are unusable as sources for the feminist paradigm of mutual empowerment.

#### *Feminism vs. Christianity*

According to Hampson, women “have no use for a God who condescends to be with them in their weakness. Paternalism fits ill with feminism.”<sup>9</sup> She claims that women want to be whole, self-directed, free, and interdependent with others. They want a God who does not override their will and who is non-dominative.<sup>10</sup> Hampson calls for “a model of the self as being related in its very being to God,” whereby God does not stand over against women as one “who could potentially dominate us, or who could suggest an action which to carry out would be for us to act heteronomously.”<sup>11</sup> She expresses the need for a utopian world in which power is not exercised, in which the few do not coerce the many, or one sex does not dominate the other—a world in which service and self-giving which are unproductive for the one who serves and gives is reduced to a minimum.<sup>12</sup> Feminism, she says, is the “last great hope” for our world.

Hampson presents a stirring vision but one that, as Hampson herself states, is at variance with the biblical message regarding the nature of God, Jesus, and many other facets of scriptural teaching. In fact, the only reason Hampson still refers to Christianity is to position her vision of feminism against it. In essence, feminism is whatever Christianity is *not*.

Feminism is self-actualizing rather than self-giving. It is assertive of its independence and autonomy rather than service-oriented, since service

gives up self while feminism is all about reclaiming power over self. Feminism is strong rather than weak and self-sufficient rather than dependent.

Remarkably, this radical egalitarianism extends even to God, the Creator. In order for Hampson's vision of feminism to be realized, God must be one of us. He must be like us, for any form of power is excluded.<sup>13</sup> There is also no need for the cross, for Hampson denies any need for women to come to God in dependence, weakness, or need. Everything that the cross of Jesus Christ represents—service, self-sacrifice, loving self-denial—is excluded from Hampson's feminist vision.

### *Christianity as Myth*

Further insight into Hampson's thought is provided by an interview in which Hampson says that she is not a Christian because she believes Christianity is a mere myth, and she cannot "conform to the kind of view of 'woman' that there is within this myth."<sup>14</sup> According to Hampson, feminism has brought about a revolution in the way in which women are conceived, and there must be no return to a society in which women are assigned a place to which they must conform.<sup>15</sup>

After working for the ordination of women in the Anglican Church, Hampson took a feminist "leap into maturity" in the conviction that one can be a religious and spiritual person without believing in Christian doctrine.<sup>16</sup> In her interview, Hampson says that in her late teens she discovered that some people think Jesus is God. She was "amazed and horrified," because she found this completely unbelievable.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, she was told that Jesus had died for her sins. She could not accept this either. At the most, Jesus "was a very fine human being who loved God"—no more.<sup>18</sup> As for the Bible, Hampson regards it as "just part of human literature in which people had recorded their experience and awareness of God." There is no way in which she would consider the Bible inspired in a way that other literature is not.<sup>19</sup>

Hampson believes that "we need to be deeply in tune with who we most truly are."<sup>20</sup> We must come home to ourselves so as to find ourselves and realize who we are meant to be. Hampson defines

the problem with Christianity as its being a religion of revelation with a transcendent God who is other than humankind, and, by definition, it holds that there has been a revelation in a past period of human history.<sup>21</sup> This kind of heteronomy (subjection to the rule of another) is impossible for Hampson: "I have got to see myself, in my relation to others, as at the centre of my world ... a law unto myself ... and not be a slave to anything which is outside myself."<sup>22</sup>

### *Hampson's Rejection of Christianity*

"Christianity is a Father-Son religion [and as such] has no place for independent, adult women who are self-directing people."<sup>23</sup> Why would a woman want to see herself as "in Christ"? "Why should she relate to God through someone else?"<sup>24</sup> For her, therefore, Christianity is most profoundly at odds with the central tenets of feminism, and being a "Christian feminist" is an improper conception of one's identity. Hampson's view of God, Jesus, and the Bible places her outside the church and outside Christianity. Outside the Christian faith is a place she desires for herself, and she sees it as the only place any truly radical feminist woman can legitimately occupy.

### *Evaluation*

Like other radical feminists, Hampson's hermeneutic is based on a rejection of Scripture as inextricably patriarchal and of Christianity as untrue. From this rejection follows Hampson's quest for alternate approaches to theology that are suitable for feminists seeking to reshape a world more in keeping with their ideals.

In contrast to most reformist feminists and virtually all evangelical feminists, Hampson acknowledges that Jesus was *not* a feminist. Rather than engage in a revisionist reading of the biblical evidence, she is able to discern that the biblical portrayal of Jesus, while showing him as reaching out to women, does not have him challenge the prevailing male and female roles in society at the time of Jesus. In this she is to be commended for her intellectual clarity.

Hampson indicates that she has no place



for Jesus Christ in her theological system. First, she does not believe that he was divine. Second, in upholding the ideal of people coming to terms with their true inner selves she denies that humans are sinful and thus in need of salvation. Third, she questions why anyone would want to be “in Christ” and thus relate to God through someone else. Fourth, this removes the notion of the church as the company of those “in Christ,” as Hampson propagates herself “a law unto herself.” This shows that ultimately biblical Christianity and feminism cannot co-exist. In stark opposition to reformist and evangelical feminist approaches to Scripture, Hampson accurately discerns that being a “Christian feminist” is a contradiction in terms.

Yet every one of Hampson’s beliefs regarding Jesus is itself open to question. Many have pointed to Jesus’ performance of numerous miracles; the fulfillment of countless scriptural prophecies in Jesus’ life and ministry; the fact that the rapid rise of early Christianity is best explained by the fact that Jesus actually rose from the dead; and the presence of a plethora of eyewitnesses who could have countered the apostles’ account of events surrounding Jesus in their early preaching. None of this removes the need for faith in the biblical testimony, but Christians do have a proper basis for belief in the scriptural record, and radical feminists such as Hampson ignore Jesus to their eternal peril.

While someone who adheres to historic biblical Christianity will obviously not agree with Hampson’s feminist vision and her view of Christianity as myth, she is to be commended for the consistency with which she holds and develops her approach and for her clear understanding of Christian doctrine and tenets. If Christianity were indeed a myth, there is no reason why anyone should embrace the view of women within that myth. Despite this, Hampson continues to engage Christianity in her work.

Hampson’s exceptional clarity of thought also appropriately discerns that Christianity and Scripture do contain a clear emphasis on male authority. Her condemnation of any approaches that seek to diminish the androcentric bias of Scripture by uncovering feminine images for God or female role

models in Scripture is also consistent from within her frame of reference. Her writings also helpfully expose the weakness of other positions, such as evangelical feminism and aspects of reformist feminism, that strenuously work to find the feminist viewpoint validated in Scripture.

## **Reformist Feminism Case Study:**

### **Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza**

#### ***Introduction***

Who do reformist feminists say that Jesus is? The major difference between radical and reformist feminist scholars is that the former reject the Bible and the Judeo-Christian tradition wholesale, whereas the latter opt to stay within the Christian tradition and seek to *reform* it from within. Such reformist efforts include the use of gender-inclusive language, the reinterpretation of biblical texts, and historical criticism. Reformist feminists do *not* consider Scripture to be inerrant or authoritative, though they *do* use it in their theological formulation and reflection.

#### ***Biography***

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza can rightly be considered the matriarch of North American feminism. She was born in Romania in 1938 and fled with her family to what would become West Germany during World War II. Fiorenza, who identifies herself as a Roman Catholic, earned her master of divinity degree from the University of Würzburg and her doctorate from the University of Münster, both in Germany. Her thesis was published in 1964 as her first book, titled *The Forgotten Partner: Foundations, Facts and Possibilities of the Professional Ministry of Women in the Church*. Originally her doctoral thesis bore the title “Priest for God: A Study of the Motif of the Kingdom and Priesthood in the Apocalypse.”

Fiorenza has served for many years as the Krister Stendahl Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School. Before assuming her position at Harvard, she taught as professor of New Testament Studies at the University of Notre Dame and the Episcopal Divinity School. Fiorenza was the first woman elected to the post of president of the Soci-

ety of Biblical Literature and has served on the editorial boards of many biblical journals and societies. Fiorenza is the cofounder (with Judith Plaskow) and editor of the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* and a coeditor of *Concilium*, an international theological review in the Roman Catholic tradition. She has served with the Women's Ordination Conference, Sisters against Sexism, Feminist Theological Institute, Women Scholars in Religion, Women in Theology, and Women Moving Church.

### *In Memory of Her*

While there were precursors in the 1970s, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's historical reconstruction of early Christian origins, particularly as it relates to Jesus' and the early church's treatment of women, has been by far the most influential in the past several decades. In her major work *In Memory of Her* (1983), Fiorenza proposes a four-fold hermeneutic:

- (1) a hermeneutic of suspicion toward traditional interpretations of biblical texts owing to patriarchal bias and assumptions;
- (2) a hermeneutic of remembrance that uncovers women's agency in foundational Christian tradition;
- (3) a hermeneutic of proclamation that relates this reconstruction to the Christian community; and
- (4) a hermeneutic of imagination that expresses feminism in ritual, prayer, hymns, banners, and art.<sup>25</sup>

In the book Fiorenza uses a form of the historical-critical method to reconstruct early Christian origins, particularly with regard to Jesus' treatment of women and the status of women in the early church. In Fiorenza's own words, her primary objective in *In Memory of Her* is "to reconstruct early Christian history as women's history in order not only to *restore* women's stories to early Christian history but also to *reclaim* this history as the history of women and men."<sup>26</sup> Applying historical and sociological criticism to the Gospels, Fiorenza contends that the Gospels show Jesus standing in judgment over the kind of marginalization of

women practiced today. Thus, female subordination is not part of the original gospel but a result of Christianity's accommodation to Greco-Roman culture.

Taking her cue from Elizabeth Cady Stanton and *The Woman's Bible* (1895, 1898), Fiorenza affirms that biblical interpretation is a political act, and she espouses a liberation theology model of biblical interpretation.<sup>27</sup> For Fiorenza, "a feminist reconstitution of the world requires a feminist hermeneutic that shares in the critical methods and impulses of historical scholarship on the one hand and in the theological goals of liberation theologies on the other hand."<sup>28</sup>

Fiorenza's concludes, "The revelatory canon for theological evaluation of biblical androcentric traditions and their subsequent interpretations cannot be derived from the Bible itself but can only be formulated in and through women's struggle for liberation from all patriarchal oppression."<sup>29</sup> In other words, "only those traditions and texts that critically break through patriarchal culture ... have the theological authority of revelation."<sup>30</sup> Significantly, Fiorenza finds "such revelation ... in the life and ministry of Jesus as well as in the *discipleship community of equals* called forth by him."<sup>31</sup>

Further on in her work *In Memory of Her*, Fiorenza attempts to reconstruct women's history as "the history of the discipleship of equals." Fiorenza understands the "Jesus movement" as a renewal movement within Judaism that presented an alternative to the dominant patriarchal restrictions in that culture.<sup>32</sup> According to Fiorenza, Jesus' vision of the kingdom includes the praxis of inclusive wholeness.<sup>33</sup> Jesus' healings, his table fellowship with sinners, and his accepting attitude toward all are cited as proofs of this new approach on his part.

After quoting Luke 7:35, "*wisdom* is justified by all her children," Fiorenza makes the claim that divine Sophia served as Israel's God and that "the Palestinian Jesus movement understood the mission of Jesus as that of the prophet and child of Sophia."<sup>34</sup> Sophia, the female deity, was also the driving force behind Jesus' pursuit of a "discipleship of equals." She concludes,

As a feminist vision, the *basileia* [kingdom] vision of Jesus calls all women without exception to wholeness and selfhood, as well as to solidarity with those women who are the impoverished, the maimed, and outcasts of our society and church. It knows of the deadly violence such a vision and commitment will encounter. It enables us not to despair or to relinquish the struggle in the face of such violence. It empowers us to walk upright, freed from the double oppression of societal and religious sexism and prejudice. The *woman-identified man, Jesus, called forth a discipleship of equals* that still needs to be discovered and realized by women and men today.<sup>35</sup>

### ***Critiques of Fiorenza***

Fiorenza's reconstruction of early Christianity has held virtually paradigmatic status among feminist biblical scholarship for the better part of two decades. In recent years, however, increasingly voices made themselves heard, even in *feminist* circles, that began to question the *historical* merits of Fiorenza's proposal. Representative critics include Kathleen Corley and John H. Elliott. What is particularly significant is that these critiques are coming from within the feminist movement rather than merely from non-feminists. It is not only non-egalitarians who are questioning the notion that Jesus was an egalitarian but feminists themselves who are committed to responsible historical research have come to the realization that the view of a "feminist Jesus" is historically untenable.

#### ***Kathleen Corley***

Kathleen Corley, who holds a master of arts and a doctor of philosophy in religion from Claremont Graduate School, mounts a major challenge to Fiorenza's paradigm of Jesus as a first-century Jewish feminist in her book *Women and the Historical Jesus* (2002). Corley, who serves as Oshkosh Northwestern Distinguished Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, where she has taught since 1992, forcefully contends that Fiorenza unduly imposes her feminism onto the biblical and historical record, and other feminists agree.

Thus at the very outset of her book *Women and the Historical Jesus: Feminist Myths of Christian Origins* (2002), Corley, in a reference to Fiorenza's landmark work *In Memory of Her*, calls the notion that Jesus established a discipleship of equals a "feminist myth of Christian origins."<sup>36</sup> Summarizing her own conclusions, Corley writes,

While this study affirms the role of women in Jesus' own community and in subsequent Jesus movements, it challenges both the assumption that Jesus himself fought ancient patriarchal limitations on women and the hypothesis that the presence of women among his disciples was unique within Hellenistic Judaism. Rather, an analysis of Jesus' teaching suggests that while Jesus censured the class and status distinctions of his culture, that critique did not extend to unequal gender distinctions. The notion that Jesus established an anti-patriarchal movement or a "discipleship of equals" is a myth posited to buttress modern Christian social engineering.<sup>37</sup>

It is significant that Corley—a member of a scholarly group of critical scholars called the Jesus Seminar—reaches her conclusions on the basis of *historical research*, the very method that led Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to the diametrically opposite conclusion that Jesus was, in fact, pursuing an egalitarian agenda. According to Corley, while Jesus was concerned for Jewish monotheism and expressed an interest in class and rank, "he did not address the concern most central to modern women—inequality between the sexes."<sup>38</sup> Rather, as Corley notes, Jesus reaffirmed marriage, "the major hierarchical social relationship between a man and a woman that was considered the bedrock of the state in antiquity" (Mark 10:1–12 pars.).<sup>39</sup>

Corley observes that the reigning consensus among the members of the Jesus Seminar, many of whom were influenced by the scholarship of Schüssler Fiorenza, affirms that "Jesus preached a kind of social egalitarianism that pitted him against the social and religious hierarchies of his day."<sup>40</sup> Corley cites a litany of scholars who refer to Jesus as



a feminist, labeling his acceptance of women as revolutionary, radical, unique, reformational, or unprecedented in the ancient world, including Palestine.<sup>41</sup>

However, while the vision of an egalitarian “society of Jesus” that eventually gave way to a patriarchal backlash by the second- and third-century institutional church may provide an ideal rallying point as a “foundational myth for Christian feminism,” Corley argues that this reconstruction is historically untenable and unsupported by the available sources, including the Gospels.

In the conclusion to *Women and the Historical Jesus*, Corley helpfully summarizes her major findings. First, she writes, “The group around Jesus cannot be characterized as a ‘discipleship of equals,’ since probably only a few women were members of the predominantly male group; ... the limited participation of women does not suggest a group focused on equality or equal representation.”<sup>42</sup> Second, Jesus’ concern was more broadly for the poor and the marginalized in society than for women’s rights specifically: “The women seem to be around Jesus more as a matter of course than as a result of a gender-equal vision of the Kingdom of God.” Any such concerns came to the fore only subsequent to Jesus’ ministry.<sup>43</sup> Third, women around Jesus continued to be involved in traditionally female roles such as mourning the dead and participating in funerary rites and gravesite rituals.<sup>44</sup>

Overall, Corley finds a certain amount of common ground with Fiorenza while remaining largely critical of her overall paradigm. In her work *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, Fiorenza has responded to an earlier essay by Corley. However, Fiorenza did not advance any significant new evidence in support of her historical reconstruction of Jesus’ stance toward women in *In Memory of Her*. For this reason Corley’s main critique continues to be valid, and other voices have added further critiques that undermine the validity of Fiorenza’s paradigm of the “egalitarian Jesus.”

#### John H. Elliott

John Elliott is another who critiques the notion that Jesus instituted an egalitarian community. Elliott, professor emeritus of theology and

religious studies at the University of San Francisco, contends that Fiorenza’s theory is implausible both socially and politically in light of the available textual and historical evidence. According to Elliott, the notion of the egalitarian Jesus does not square with the actual historical and social nature of the nascent Jesus movement and represents an instance of the “idealist fallacy,” that is, the improper practice of confusing one’s own preferred ideology with actual reality. Elliott summarizes his concerns as follows.

(1) Those who find egalitarianism in the New Testament interpret texts anachronistically by imposing a post-Enlightenment concept onto the first-century world. The concept of equality is of modern origin and alien to the thought world and social reality of the ancient world:

The notion that all persons are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights is a construct of the modern Enlightenment and thoroughly alien to the thinking of the ancient world. There the prevailing notion was rather that humans were by nature born unequal and this unalterable inequality was evident physically, socially, and ethnically.<sup>45</sup>

(2) “Equality” terminology (*iso-*) is never used in the New Testament to convey the notion of gender or other equality but rather that of equity or sameness.<sup>46</sup>

(3) The biblical texts cited in support of Jesus’ establishment of an egalitarian society are better interpreted on the presumption of inequality of social status. Jesus’ teaching regarding the reversal of status presumes the existence of status in the first place (e.g., Mark 9:35–37 par.; see Mark 10:13–15 par.). This includes differences in status between disciple and teacher (Luke 6:40; Matt 10:24–25; John 13:16; 15:20); parents and children (Mark 7:11–13; 10:19 pars.); and husbands and wives (Matt 5:31–32; 19:9).

(4) No concrete historical or social evidence exists that Jesus instituted a community of equals. There is no evidence in the writings of Josephus, Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, or any other extrabiblical author.



(5) The primary New Testament text cited in support of egalitarianism, Gal 3:28, pertains to the unity of believers in Christ, not their equality, affirming inclusivity with regard to ethnic, social, and gender boundaries rather than leveling all status distinctions.

(6) The equation between patriarchy and dominance customarily made by feminists does not hold.

(7) The egalitarian hypothesis is not borne out by the available historical evidence but rather constitutes an instance of the “idealist fallacy.”

(8) Insufficient thought is given to the practical implementation of an egalitarian vision into concrete social reality. From a sociological point of view, Jesus’ establishment of an egalitarian community would have required dramatic changes in the social structures of his day.

(9) The thesis has been rejected by feminist scholars such as Mary Rose D’Angelo, Amy-Jill Levine, and Kathleen Corley owing to its lack of historical support.

(10) The notion of Jesus’ establishment of a community of equals fails to account for Jesus’ reaffirmation of the family as the primary social structure and as instituted by God.

Elliott concludes the first part of his study:

By imputing to the biblical authors a modern concept of equality that is not found in the Bible and the ancient world and by allowing this imputed concept to determine their interpretation of the New Testament, they have produced an interpretation that distorts and obscures the actual content and thrust of these texts. Such an interpretative procedure appears [to be] more eisegesis than exegesis and deserves to [be] rejected as a[n] unhappy example [of] interpretive method. An anachronistic imputation of modern notions to the biblical authors should be challenged and resisted in the name of historical honesty wherever and however it occurs. To be sure, let us expend every ounce of energy it takes to reform the ills of society and church. But let us do so with historical honesty,

respecting the past as past and not trying to recreate it with modern constructs or re-write it with new ideological pens.<sup>47</sup>

In a sequel, Elliott investigates Fiorenza’s theory with regard to circumstances subsequent to Jesus’ death. According to Elliott, “The egalitarian theory fares no better in clarifying the structure of the Jesus movement after Jesus’ death than it does in explaining the nature of the community established by Jesus.”<sup>48</sup> Not only is the concept of equality or egalitarianism historically incompatible with first-century conditions, but there is no evidence of egalitarianism in the New Testament or any other ancient source. Elliott concludes,

On a personal note, I must confess that I have not enjoyed mounting this critique. With every fibre of my egalitarian being I wish it were demonstrable that the Jesus movement had been egalitarian, at least at some point in its early history. This surely would make it easier for today’s advocates of equality, among whom I count myself, to appeal to our past as a source of inspiration and moral guidance for the present. But, as the historical and ideological critic in all of us insists, wishing and politically correct ideology cannot not [*sic*] make it so. Ultimately, this well-intentioned theory is an unhappy example of anachronism and idealist thinking that must be challenged not just because it is indemonstrable or an example of flawed interpretation but also because it is so seductive. The notion that the Jesus movement ever formed a “community of equals” founded by Jesus is a phantasm, a *fata morgana*, a wish still awaiting incarnation. If the church were ever to put an egalitarian vision into practice, it would be a first-time event and an accomplishment that eluded even Jesus and his first followers.<sup>49</sup>

### Conclusion

In light of these concerns registered by feminists on historical and other grounds, Fiorenza’s historical reconstruction of the Jesus movement

and of early Christianity would seem to require significant revision. Over the past few decades, Fiorenza's model has served as a powerful "myth of Christian origins" for the feminist movement. However, the above points of critique call for developing an alternative broad understanding of Jesus' approach to women and of the early church's practice concerning women, particularly with regard to their participation in roles of leadership.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have given a representative overview of radical and reformist feminist approaches to Jesus' view of women by way of selected case studies. We have seen that radical feminists, such as Daphne Hampson, typically regard Jesus as unacceptably patriarchal. They view Christianity as a whole as a Father-Son religion that cannot be reconciled with feminism, and, as a result, have little or no use for the Bible in formulating and implementing their feminist vision.

Reformist feminists, too, critique Scripture for what they perceive as its "patriarchal bias," but many, such as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, hold that Jesus' approach to women can serve as a usable paradigm for feminists. As we have seen, however, many feminists now are critical of Fiorenza's contention that Jesus established an egalitarian "discipleship of equals." I conclude with a few observations concerning the relevance of this study.

(1) Radical and reformist feminists generally do not agree on who Jesus was. Was he patriarchal, as radical feminists contend, or was he a feminist, as reformists such as Fiorenza believe? Both cannot be right. This means that while radical and reformist feminists share a feminist vision, they do not agree on who Jesus is.

(2) As we have seen, even among reformist feminists Fiorenza's paradigm has begun to crumble. Reformist feminists no longer rally behind the notion that Jesus was a feminist, and the erosion of Fiorenza's paradigm has led to confusion in reformist circles. If anything, there is an emerging consensus that the historical evidence does *not* bear out the notion that Jesus was a feminist, even though he was more open to women than other

Jewish rabbis of his day. Feminists today who want to implement their vision cannot legitimately ground their paradigm in Jesus.

(3) Many of the critiques lodged by feminists against Fiorenza's paradigm also pertain to the egalitarian view of Jesus. Egalitarians say that Jesus was an egalitarian or feminist. As inerrantists, they are committed to the notion that whatever the Bible says regarding Jesus, this the church today ought to practice. However, fewer and fewer reformist feminists embrace the idea of an egalitarian Jesus on the basis of the available historical evidence and other factors.

Yet while reformists are free to dispose of the notion of an egalitarian Jesus because they are not committed to biblical inerrancy, egalitarians are not at liberty to dismiss the tenet that Jesus' practice and teaching were egalitarian. Thus egalitarians are found to continue upholding a paradigm—the egalitarian Jesus—that is increasingly and legitimately being discredited and discarded even by other feminists.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This article includes some representative case studies from my new book *Jesus and the Feminists: Who Do They Say That He Is?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008). It is printed here with permission.

This is not a summary of the entire book, and the case studies also are not a substitute for reading the book where I discuss and critique many other feminist authors with regard to their view of Jesus' approach to women.

<sup>2</sup>BISFT Interview with Dr. Daphne Hampson, "Feminist Theology 17 (1998): 39.

<sup>3</sup>Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 1.

<sup>4</sup>"Interview," 35, 37.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 41; Daphne Hampson, *After Christianity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Daphne Hampson, "On Power and Gender," *Modern Theology* 4, no. 3 (1988): 234–50.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 248–49.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>"Interview," 39.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>20</sup>For the role of religious consciousness in the work of Friedrich

Schleiermacher (1768–1834) see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, Volume One: *From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 208–20.

<sup>21</sup>“Interview,” 51.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 54.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 55.

<sup>25</sup>Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Emerging Issues in Feminist Biblical Interpretation,” in *Christian Feminism: Visions of a New Humanity* (ed. J. L. Weidman; San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 47–84; see idem, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad/Herder & Herder, 1994), xxiii, 26–36; V. C. Phillips, “Feminist Interpretation,” in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation* (ed. J. H. Hayes. Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 393–94; Mary A. Kassian, *The Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 131–38. For an application of Fiorenza’s hermeneutic to a specific text of Scripture, Luke 10:38–42, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “A Feminist Critical Interpretation for Liberation: Martha and Mary: Lk. 10:39–42,” *Religion & Intellectual Life* 3, no. 2 (1986): 21–36.

<sup>26</sup>Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xiv (emphasis added).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 7–21.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 32.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 33.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 34 (emphasis added).

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 107.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 119, citing Luke 17:21; and 122, citing Luke 1:52–53.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 135. She develops this in book-length form in *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet. Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1994); see below.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 153–54 (emphasis added). See also her later book *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

<sup>36</sup>See already Kathleen Corley, “The Egalitarian Jesus: A Christian Myth of Origins,” *Forum New Series* 1–2 (1988): 291–325 and the discussion in the previous chapter.

<sup>37</sup>Kathleen Corley, *Women and the Historical Jesus: Feminist Myths of Christian Origins* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2002), 1.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 10; see 148, notes 13–18.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 143.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 144.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 144–45.

<sup>45</sup>John H. Elliott, “Jesus Was Not an Egalitarian. A Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealist Theory,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 32, no. 3 (2002): 77.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 78, 84, citing the instances of *isos* in Matt 20:12; Mark 14:46, 59; Luke 6:34; John 5:18; Acts 11:17; Phil 2:6; Rev 21:16; of *isotēs* in 1 Cor 8:13–14; Col 4:1; of *isotimos* in 2 Pet 1:1; and of *isopsychos* in Phil 2:20.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 90.

<sup>48</sup>John H. Elliott, “The Jesus Movement Was Not Egalitarian but Family-Oriented,” *Biblical Interpretation* 11, no. 2 (2003): 204.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 205–6.

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# Different Rules for Different Cultures? A Response to James R. Payton Jr.

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In the *Priscilla Papers*, published by the evangelical feminist group Christians for Biblical Equality, James R. Payton Jr., upbraids me, as “a seminary-trained Ph.D.” who ought to know better, for trying, in an article that appeared in a denominational magazine, to interpret 1 Cor 14:33b–35 at face value within its scriptural context. It was “startling” to Payton that “nothing in the entire article indicated any awareness of the potential importance of the cultural situation for understanding the New Testament passage examined.” In fact, my article was “the most striking example” Payton had ever seen “of this lack of attention to historical context in treating the question of women’s roles in the church.”<sup>1</sup>

My purpose here is not to defend my exegesis of that passage, as disconcerting as my interpretation may be to egalitarians, but rather to consider the relevance of “the cultural situation” and to examine how Payton uses it to explain the apostolic rules about women speaking at Corinth and in other cities. The passage reads in the ESV:

As in all the churches of the saints,  
the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

## **Hermeneutical Considerations**

There are indeed sometimes special circum-

stances in the situations addressed by Scripture that determine the instructions that are given. Those instructions would not apply in situations where those circumstances do not obtain. The chief example of this, of course, is the commands given specifically to the people of Israel under the Mosaic covenant. We do not literally apply to the church today the Lord’s condemnation of his people “who eat pig’s flesh” (Isa 65:4), because that passage invokes the dietary laws of the Mosaic economy, which have passed away. This limitation of the passage’s applicability comes from an understanding of its place in redemptive history, as revealed in Scripture as a whole.

In the case of the New Testament, there are some passages that presuppose the Mosaic economy (especially in the Gospels), but generally the New Testament presupposes the new covenant economy, which will continue until the return of Christ. Thus, the teachings of Christ and the apostles must be presumed to have universal applicability throughout the church until the end of the age. Nonetheless, we must be alert to the possibility that an instruction even in the apostolic writings may be determined by a particular circumstance in a specific situation, and thus would not apply today in the absence of that circumstance (cf. 1 Cor 7:26).

But that circumstance would have to be evident in the immediate context, or in a related passage, because Scripture as a whole teaches us that the apostolic context is our context. For example, it is sometimes said that women were uneducated in Paul’s day, and for that reason were required to



keep quiet in church (1 Cor 14:34) and not teach men (1 Tim 2:12). Now if either passage (or any related passage of Scripture) mentioned educational attainment as the determining factor in such situations, then it would be appropriate to limit the scope of these passages to situations where women are uneducated. However, since that supposed factor is nowhere mentioned in the passage itself or anywhere else in Scripture, it is at best an unreliable guide to interpretation. The teaching of every passage of Scripture should be accepted on its own terms, unless a limitation of its scope is indicated either by its redemptive-historical context or by the circumstances of the immediate (or a similar) context. But in either case the limiting factor comes from Scripture itself. To bring in an extrabiblical consideration, such as presumed cultural mores, and to use it to limit the applicability of a text, can very easily be turned into a denial of Scripture's authority.<sup>2</sup>

When we turn to 1 Cor 14:33b–35, we find that Paul's injunction is not limited to the circumstances at Corinth or to a specific cultural situation; rather, he sets forth a rule that applies "in all the churches" (cf. 7:17), in whatever cultural setting. The silence of women (learning in submission) is said to be consonant with what "the Law" (the Old Testament) teaches—not what may be appropriate in a certain cultural setting. The only possible reference to societal values is the concluding reference to what is "shameful," but even if this meant "what is shameful in Corinthian society," which we strongly doubt, it would only be an additional consideration, which, if removed, would still leave the other two.<sup>3</sup> These considerations make the universal applicability of this passage *explicit*. Without them, its universal applicability would be *implicit* as apostolic teaching.

### Payton's Argument from History and Culture

But what is the "historical context" of 1 Cor 14:33b–35 that Payton thinks is so important for the proper interpretation of the passage? He explains that two cultures were operative in the Roman Empire: the Hellenistic culture that dominated in the East, especially in the Greek cities (like

Corinth), and the Roman culture that dominated in the West. In the first century, when the New Testament was written, Roman culture penetrated the East only in the Roman colonies, where "Roman practices prevailed." "In Roman culture," he explains, women "had almost the same rights as men" and "could be seen and could speak in public without damaging their reputation." But in Hellenistic culture, as in Corinth, "women had almost no personal legal rights," and "it was considered unseemly for a woman to speak with or interact with a man or men other than her husband." The only women who "spoke openly with men in public," he asserts, were the *hetairai*, who "offered intellectual intercourse before the other kind." Thus, "women could not engage in open discussions with men in public or else they would soil their reputations."<sup>4</sup>

The reason, then, why Paul told women in Corinth that it would be "shameful" for them to speak in church was that "in this Hellenistic cultural setting, for a woman to speak publicly was tantamount to declaring herself available for a variety of sexual activities." The same was true in Ephesus, to which 1 Timothy was written. But in Rome, Payton argues, women like Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, and Junia (Rom 16:1, 3, 6, 7) no doubt spoke to men in church in the manner forbidden in Corinth. Similarly in Philippi, which was a Roman colony in the East, women such as Euodia and Syntyche were Paul's collaborators (Phil 4:2–3) and no doubt spoke publicly in church. Thus, Payton concludes, "the much-discussed apostolic prohibitions against women taking a place fully equal to that of men in the church are all found in letters written to churches in the Hellenistic cultural sphere." Only "*in that cultural setting*," where such speaking would be grossly misunderstood, did such restrictions apply—and thus they do not apply today.<sup>5</sup>

For the reasons that we have outlined, Payton's appeal to the supposed cultural context at Corinth and elsewhere is contrary to a sound understanding of the authority of Scripture in the church. He introduces a controlling exegetical factor, the cultural setting, that is nowhere indicated in the text or in related texts as relevant. Moreover, the controlling exegetical factor contradicts the biblical

patriarchy that Paul clearly advocates elsewhere as rooted in God's good creation (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11; 1 Tim 2:13). Payton also forgets that the church was a new society, beginning to establish a new culture that was in many respects different from the surrounding culture and often clashed with it. The apostles set forth rules that were appropriate for God's people in the new covenant age, often in opposition to the values of the surrounding culture. Thus, in the absence of any evidence in Scripture that 1 Cor 14:33b–35 was intended to be specific to a particular cultural setting, it is wrong to argue that it was.

### Payton's Historical Error

We could stop here, having established on hermeneutical grounds that Payton's argument is lacking. But what do we make of his explanation of the cultural situations in the various churches? Well, his entire argument deserves criticism, for his descriptions of Hellenistic and Roman culture are oversimplified and his inferences drawn from Paul's epistles to the Romans and the Philippians are less than convincing. But, for the sake of argument, we will grant that all he says about Hellenistic and Roman culture is valid, even though we disagree that "there is no scholarly question whatsoever" about it.<sup>6</sup>

Instead, we will simply point out that a historical error lies at the heart of his argument. Contrary to what he says about Corinth, it was not a Hellenistic city in the first century A.D., but rather a *Roman colony*. Thus, his entire analysis of the New Testament teaching regarding the place of women in the church, which is based on the assumption that Corinth was a Hellenistic city, collapses like a house of cards. It is startling to me that a professor of history, who confidently informs the reader how "familiar" he has become with "the historical contexts of the first-century churches,"<sup>7</sup> would be so unfamiliar with the basic historical context of the key city of Corinth, but such is apparently the case.

There was once a Hellenistic city of Corinth, but it was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C., and its surviving inhabitants were sold into slavery. The site remained derelict (and nearly deserted) until it

began to be rebuilt as a Roman colony in 44 B.C. and was repopulated with Romans. It remained a predominantly Roman city during the first century A.D.<sup>8</sup> Latin remained the official language of Corinth in Paul's day; of the 104 inscriptions antedating the reign of Hadrian that had been uncovered by 1966, 101 are in Latin and only three are in Greek.<sup>9</sup> The absence of a cult of Roma in Corinth (prior to Hadrian), by which non-Roman populaces acknowledged Roman supremacy, indicates that the Corinthians regarded themselves as Roman.<sup>10</sup> An earthquake devastated the city in about A.D. 77, after which it was again rebuilt by the Romans. During the reign of Hadrian (117–138), an official effort was begun to rehellenize Corinth, and Greek became the official language of the city by the time that Pausanias visited it in about A.D. 165 and wrote of it in his *Description of Greece*.

But when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in the middle of the first century, as Horrell and Adams state, "Corinth reflected, to a very significant degree, Roman patterns both in its physical appearance and its political and cultural makeup, even if Greek language and culture remained important at the popular level."<sup>11</sup> "It would be exaggerated to claim that there were no Greeks in the city that Paul knew or that their language was unknown to the inhabitants," observes Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (after all, Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in Greek), but "the structure and administration of Corinth was Roman."<sup>12</sup> Anthony C. Thistleton notes the growing cosmopolitan character of Corinth, with Greeks, Macedonians, Jews, and Syrians joining the Roman population, yet he also notes "the prominence of Roman, rather than Greek, patterns of culture in the most respected mores of the city," which he considers "important for an understanding of a number of specific details of our epistle."<sup>13</sup> David E. Garland similarly remarks that 1 Corinthians "should be read against the background of Corinth as a city imbued with Roman cultural values."<sup>14</sup> David W. J. Gill concludes, "It is right for both classical archaeologists and New Testament scholars to stress the Roman nature of the city which was visited by Paul in the first century A.D."<sup>15</sup>

So the cultural setting of Corinth in the middle of the first century was predominantly Roman, just like that of Rome and Philippi. There was a sizable Greek element in Corinth, to be sure, but so was there in Rome and in Philippi (to which Paul also wrote letters in Greek). Thus, Payton's effort to limit the applicability of 1 Cor 14:33b–35 by setting “Hellenistic” Corinth and Ephesus over against “Roman” Philippi and Rome (and the modern world) is refuted by the historical evidence upon which he relies.

### Concluding Observations

The precise historical and cultural context in which Scripture was written is difficult to determine, apart from clues provided by the biblical text itself. Furthermore, biblical scholars too often exaggerate the significance of extrabiblical information in their interpretation of Scripture. Especially objectionable is any attempt to use the supposed historical background to overturn the clear meaning of the text and undermine the teaching of related passages. Yes, extrabiblical sources do shed light on the meaning of obscure words and provide useful information about people, events, customs, and other matters mentioned in the text. But only Scripture itself, understood as the unfolding revelation of God for our salvation, provides the definitive interpretive context for any passage in it, not the presumed cultural context of its writers or original readers.

Payton's description of the cultural context at Corinth falls short on historical grounds, but my criticism of him is not so much that his research was faulty, as it is that his methodology is inconsistent with the divine authority of Scripture. He attempts to use extrabiblical information to nullify the creational hierarchy that Paul clearly affirms both in 1 Cor 14:33b–35 and elsewhere. Not surprisingly, Payton reaches erroneous conclusions about the role of women in the apostolic church.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>James R. Payton, Jr., “A Tale of Two Cultures: Understanding the Historical and Cultural Context of the NT Epistles,” *Priscilla Papers* 16, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 16, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>For example, the biblical prohibitions of fornication and adultery

could be overturned on the grounds that there were no effective means of birth control in antiquity; in our sophisticated and technologically advanced day, one could argue, the simplistic biblical rules need no longer apply to consenting adults enjoying each other's company responsibly in private. Using such a hermeneutic, the Scriptures are easily conformed to one's own standards.

<sup>3</sup>There is good reason to think that v. 35 refers to an objective, general Christian shame, for its indicated frame of reference, “in church,” is universal, recalling “in all the churches” (v. 33b). When Paul says in Eph 5:12 that “it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret,” are we to retort, “Not in our open American culture!”? The point is that a mature Christian of godly sensibilities would properly find the speaking of Eph 5:12 shameful, and also the speaking of 1 Cor 14:35.

<sup>4</sup>Payton, “A Tale of Two Cultures,” 13–15.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 15–16.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>8</sup>On the history and culture of first-century Corinth, see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983), 3–7; David W. J. Gill, “Corinth: a Roman Colony in Achaea,” *Biblische Zeitschrift*, n.s. 37 (1993): 259–64; Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1–17; David G. Horrell and Edward Adams, “The Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth: A Critical Survey,” in *Christianity at Corinth: The Quest for the Pauline Church* (ed. Edward Adams and David G. Horrell; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 1–43, esp. 2–8.

<sup>9</sup>By 2000, the number of Greek texts had increased to six; they were in Greek because of their connection with Isthmia (especially the Panhellenic Isthmian Games), about ten miles away. See Horrell and Adams, “The Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth,” 7.

<sup>10</sup>Gill, “Corinth,” 263, following C. K. Williams II, “The Refounding of Corinth: Some Roman Religious Attitudes,” in *Roman Architecture in the Greek World* (ed. Sarah Macready and F. H. Thompson; London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 1987), 31.

<sup>11</sup>Horrell and Adams, “The Scholarly Quest for Paul's Church at Corinth,” 6.

<sup>12</sup>Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth*, 5–7.

<sup>13</sup>Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 4–5.

<sup>14</sup>David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 3.

<sup>15</sup>Gill, “Corinth,” 264.

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# The Metaphysics of Subordination: A Response to Rebecca Merrill Groothuis

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The debate over gender roles in the family and the church has never been more intense than it is at present. Much of the debate, of course, focuses on biblical exegesis. Complementarians argue that the Bible teaches that women are to be subordinate to men at home and at church and that women are not permitted to teach Christian doctrine to men. Egalitarians, in contrast, insist that the Bible does not teach the subordination of women but in fact teaches the full equality of men and women and permits women to occupy the full range of leadership and ministry positions that are also available to men.

Occasionally, however, the gender role debate bleeds over into discussions of metaphysics. One of the traditional arguments of complementarians, used to stave off criticisms that their view makes women inferior to men, is that women are equal to men *as persons*, but they have been given by God *a different role* in creation than men. Men have been given the role to lead in both family and church, while women have been given the role to follow the leadership of men and come alongside men as their “helpmeets.” Thomas Schreiner, for example, asserts,

We have already seen that men and women equally are made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26–27). But I would also contend that there are six indications in Genesis 1–3 of a role differentiation between men and women. By role differentiation I mean that Adam has the responsibility of leadership and Eve has the responsibility to follow his leadership. Before explaining these six points I must make

a crucial comment: *Equality of personhood does not rule out differences in role.*<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, Raymond C. Ortlund states that “the Bible does teach the equal personhood and value and dignity of all the human race—men, women, and children—and that must be the only equality that matters to God,” but nonetheless, “God did not create man and woman in an undifferentiated way, and their mere maleness and femaleness identify their respective roles.”<sup>2</sup>

So we have here from both Schreiner and Ortlund (who echo the thoughts of other complementarians) the claim that the Bible teaches that women are equal to men in value and dignity (since they both share the *imago dei*), though they share different roles in the economy of creation, a role difference that requires the subordination of women to men. What I wish to point out here, though, is that the “equal value/subordinate role” distinction, whether taught by Scripture or not, is a point of *metaphysics*. So, for example, when Schreiner says, “Equality of personhood does not rule out differences in role,” he is making a metaphysical claim (albeit one that he believes is supported by Scripture). That is, he is making a claim about the nature of reality, a claim, in particular, about whether the property of *being equal in value and dignity to X* can be had by an individual who also has the property *having a subordinate role to X*.

It is this metaphysical claim that provides the foil for a recent article by Rebecca Merrill Groothuis.<sup>3</sup> She argues that the metaphysical distinction



made by complementarians between equality in being/value and subordination of role is logically incoherent. She asks,

But what if it is not logically possible for the same person to be at once spiritually and ontologically equal and permanently, comprehensively and necessarily subordinate? What if this sort of subordination cannot truthfully be described as merely a “role” or “function” that has no bearing on one’s inherent being or essence?

I believe we can choose between the two biblical interpretations [complementarianism and egalitarianism] by assessing each one in light of two fundamental premises. The first premise is theological: according to Scripture, women and men are equal spiritually and ontologically—a point that is uncontested in the gender debate. The second premise is logical: the foundational and indisputable law of noncontradiction, which states that A and non-A cannot both be true at the same time in the same respect.<sup>4</sup>

From the statement of these two premises, she goes on to say, “I will argue that given its nature and rationale, woman’s unequal ‘role’ entails woman’s unequal being.”<sup>5</sup> If successful, Groothuis’s argument would indeed render the complementarian’s “equal value/subordinate role” distinction contradictory and incoherent. What I intend to do in this paper is to show that her argument is not successful. The distinction between a woman’s being subordinate in role but equal in value is not contradictory but coherent.<sup>6</sup>

### **Groothuis’s Argument against the Equal Value/Subordinate Role Distinction**

In the context of presenting her case, Groothuis first outlines what she takes to be the central argument of complementarians regarding the equal value/subordinate role distinction. As she presents it, the argument goes like this:<sup>7</sup>

(1) Different function does not necessarily entail personal inferiority or superiority.

(2) Woman’s subordination and man’s authority involve different functions.

(3) Therefore the subordination of woman to man’s authority has nothing to do with female inferiority or male superiority; these are male-female role differences, pure and simple.

Neither Groothuis nor any other egalitarian disputes premise (2). It goes without saying that men and women, if women are indeed subordinate, have different roles or functions—the man leads and the woman submits. Perhaps surprisingly to some readers, though, Groothuis also admits the truth of premise (1). To her credit, Groothuis recognizes that there are many clear and uncontroversial examples of functional subordination of one person to another that do not entail any inferiority of value or dignity of the one who is subordinate. Such examples would include the subordination of young children to their parents, the subordination of a worker to her otherwise equal co-worker while serving together on a committee, and the subordination of the Son of God to the Father during his incarnate ministry on earth. So, Groothuis grants that both premises of this complementarian argument are true.

What then is the problem? According to Groothuis, the argument is invalid. The conclusion does not follow from the premises. From the facts that woman’s subordination involves different roles than man and that there are legitimate examples of subordination that don’t entail inferiority of value, it does not follow that *woman’s subordination to man* doesn’t entail inferiority of value. We can recognize that *some* cases of subordination are free of implications regarding the relative values of the parties involved, while also recognizing that *other* kinds of subordination do have such implications.

The unproblematic kind of subordination Groothuis calls *functional subordination*, and the problematic kind she calls “permanent, comprehensive, and ontologically grounded” subordination. I will call this latter kind *essential subordination*. Apparently, what makes functional subordination unproblematic is that it is *not* permanent, comprehensive, and ontologically grounded. As Groothuis

puts it, functional subordination “is typically determined either according to an individual’s abilities (or lack thereof) or for the sake of expediency in accomplishing a specific task; therefore such subordination is limited in scope or duration.”<sup>8</sup> It is also often not grounded in the nature of the subordinate one. So, a child’s subordination to his parents is merely functional because it is temporary and due to the child’s immaturity. The subordination of the worker to her co-worker is also temporary and is not grounded in the ontological nature of the worker, but simply serves the end of expediency. We may add that it would be likewise with the subordination of a soldier to his commanding officer. Also, with the subordination of most Israelites to the spiritual leadership of the Levites in the old covenant because, although this subordination was ontologically grounded in the levitical lineage, it served the expedient of certain (temporary) redemptive purposes of God and was not comprehensive in scope (i.e., Israelites were not under the authority of the Levites in every area of life).

As should be clear from the above, Groothuis considers the three properties of “permanence,” “comprehensiveness,” and “ontological grounding” together to constitute the necessary and sufficient conditions for essential subordination. That is, for an instance of subordination to count as essential subordination, it must exemplify all three of these properties. If any one of these properties is lacking in an instance of subordination, then that instance qualifies as functional, not essential, subordination. She confirms this point when she writes, “Subordination is necessarily personal [i.e., essential] and not merely functional when ... its scope is comprehensive, its duration is permanent, and the criterion for its determination is one’s unalterable ontology.”<sup>9</sup> So, the three properties in question are the necessary and sufficient conditions for essential subordination.

With all this in mind, Groothuis insists that the conclusion of the complementarian argument for the equal value/subordinate role distinction does not follow from its premises. Though she does not put it this way, her point is that for the conclusion to follow, the complementarian needs

something like the following disambiguations of premises (1) and (2):

- (1’) Functional subordination does not necessarily entail personal inferiority or superiority.
- (2’) Woman’s subordination and man’s authority involves only the functional subordination of women.

These modifications would give the complementarians a valid argument. However, Groothuis would argue that while (1’) is true, (2’) is false. Indeed, it is the burden of her article to demonstrate the falsehood of (2’), and, in her own terms, to defend the following argument:<sup>10</sup>

- (4) If the permanent, comprehensive, and ontologically grounded subordination of women is justified, then women are inferior persons.
- (5) Women are not inferior persons.
- (6) Therefore women’s subordination is not justified.

In what follows, I will lay out in more detail how Groothuis defends this argument. Moreover, in response, I will show two things: (i) that on Groothuis’s definitions of functional and essential subordination, she fails to demonstrate that woman’s subordination is anything more than functional; and (ii) that even if woman’s subordination were essential, and not merely functional, it would not entail that women are inferior to men in value or dignity.

### Is Women’s Subordination Essential?

The first thing to note about Groothuis’s egalitarian argument against the equal value/subordinate role distinction is that her first premise—(4) above—presupposes the falsehood of (2’), the claim that women’s subordination constitutes merely functional subordination. In other words, it is crucial to her own argument that one grant that woman’s subordination is permanent, comprehensive, and ontologically grounded. I *will* grant (and I think most other complementarians will grant) that woman’s subordination is ontological,

being grounded in women's femaleness. As Ort-lund writes, "A woman, *just by virtue of her womanhood*, is called to help [i.e., be subordinate to men] for God."<sup>11</sup> Yet I will *not* grant, and I think that no complementarian need grant, that women's subordination is either permanent or comprehensive. If I'm right about this, then woman's subordination, by Groothuis's own criteria, is merely functional and thus unproblematic morally and ontologically.

I will first address the alleged permanence of woman's subordination. Groothuis reminds the reader in numerous places that according to the complementarian view a woman's subordination to men is "permanent"; it is "perpetual"; it is "life-long"; it extends "throughout the life of a woman." The question, of course, arises as to the referent Groothuis intends for the term "life" in these remarks. What life is she talking about in which a woman's subordination is "permanent" and "life-long"? It is evident that she intends the present, mortal life. At one point she writes, "No condition or context *in this life* nullifies her subordination to male authority."<sup>12</sup> Groothuis appears to acknowledge here that most complementarians do not (or need not) extend the subordination of women to the next life. Because men and women will no longer be "given in marriage" in the age to come (cf. Matt 22:29–30), and because the whole church (men and women) will be the consummate bride of Christ, the subordination of women to men will presumably come to an end. Yet, Groothuis insists that women's subordination is permanent, perpetual, and lifelong. And it is this alleged permanence that, in part, makes women's subordination of the problematic essential variety.

But the question must be asked: why does woman's subordination *in this life* warrant the designation "permanent"? Of course, the complementarian view is that woman's subordination lasts throughout *this* life, but that hardly qualifies her subordination for the adjective "permanent." The Scriptures are clear that our lives in this world and in this age are but a drop in the bucket compared to the never-ending life we will enjoy in the eschaton. A person's "life" cannot be reduced to the infinitesimally small slice of existence that we have here and

now. A woman's 70, 80, or 90 years on this earth are but an almost imperceptible moment in the inexhaustible span of her eternal life. Yet Groothuis labels the subordination of woman in this "moment" as permanent and treats it as an unbearably weighty burden that undermines her dignity and value as a person created in the image of God. Even if it were a burden to be borne, why not say with Paul that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18; cf. 2 Cor 4:17)? In any case, the primary point to be made is that woman's subordination need not be viewed as permanent. It is only temporary, lasting through the course of this short life, but ending in the next.

It needs to be mentioned in this connection that Groothuis nowhere provides us any reason to limit our consideration of whether or not a woman's subordination is permanent to the limited parameters of this life. She gives no reason to ignore the afterlife in our definition of a woman's "life," and thus no clear reason to think that a woman's subordination is permanent in any significant sense. This being so, woman's subordination lacks a necessary condition for being essential subordination. Hence, on Groothuis's own criteria, woman's subordination must be seen as merely functional.

A possible objection to my response at this point would be to pose the question of *how* a woman's subordination could be merely temporary if it is, as I've admitted, ontologically grounded in her femaleness. Granted that the complementarian can allow that women's subordination will not continue in the afterlife, it might be wondered if this difference is coherent. What makes it possible, in other words, that an ontologically grounded subordination could come to an end in the age to come? Though she probably did not precisely have this objection in mind, one of Groothuis's comments could be taken as suggesting it. She writes,

[W]oman's subordinate "role" is determined exclusively and necessarily by her personal nature; that is, *solely* on account of her *being* female she *must* be subordinate. Therefore woman's "role" designates not merely what she does (or doesn't do)



but what she is. She is female; she is subordinate.<sup>13</sup>

From this one might conclude that a woman's subordination must be truly permanent extending even into the afterlife. Such a conclusion would not follow, however. To see why, imagine a creature on an alien world that can live both on land and in the water. That is, the creature is amphibious. And suppose that it is by means of two completely different and independent faculties that the creature is enabled to breathe in the two respective environments. When living in the water he uses those faculties that enable breathing under water, while his other breathing faculty lies dormant. Likewise, when he lives on the land, he uses the faculty that permits him to breathe on land while his water-breathing faculty lies dormant. So, this creature has a faculty that fits him for a certain activity or function on land (or water), but when living in the other environment his other faculty is not used though it still exists. Similarly, why can't women, in virtue of their being or nature, have qualities that fit them for subordination in the present, earthly environment, but which are unnecessary and lie dormant in the afterlife because the conditions of life at that time are different? I see no reason why this could not be the case. Therefore, there does not seem to be any incoherence in supposing that a woman's ontologically grounded subordination is limited to this life.

I now argue that woman's subordination is not comprehensive, thus lacking another necessary condition for essential subordination. Groothuis is adamant that woman's subordination "is comprehensive (encompassing all that a woman does)," that "[n]o condition or context in this life nullifies her subordination to male authority,"<sup>14</sup> that "[t]here is no area of a married woman's life that is not ultimately under the absolute rule of her husband,"<sup>15</sup> and "there is no area in which a woman has any authority, privilege, or opportunity that a man is denied. The male is consistently advantaged with respect to the female, and the female is consistently disadvantaged with respect to the male."<sup>16</sup>

The first question to be asked is just what

exactly does Groothuis mean when she says that a woman's subordination is "comprehensive." She is anything but clear on this point. Indeed, it appears that there are several different assertions here, none of which seems entirely free of ambiguity.

Of course, in her earlier work on this topic, some of Groothuis's expressions concerning the comprehensiveness of female subordination seem to indicate that her concern is with married women and not those who are single.<sup>17</sup> If so, the first thing to say in response is that this would make any claim to the comprehensive nature of woman's subordination all the more suspicious. For even supposing that a married woman's subordination to her husband "encompassed all she does" or that there was "no condition or context in this life [that] nullifies her subordination to male authority," why should we take these facts as indicating the "comprehensive" nature of *woman's* subordination (generically considered), or even the comprehensive subordination of any particular woman—given that there would be many single women who were not subordinate to a husband at all, and given that many of these married women were not subordinate to a husband prior to their marriages and won't be subordinate to men later when they become widows? In what sense would it be true of a married woman that there would be "no condition or context in this life [that] nullifies her subordination to male authority"? Apparently, it would be *while she is married*. But, in that case, we could think of innumerable conditions and contexts *in this life* before and after marriage in which a woman would not be subordinate to a man. We need some reason why subordination to her husband while married constitutes comprehensive subordination. In other words, to count as comprehensive subordination, does the subordination have to encompass all that a woman does throughout the entire span of her life on earth, or all that she does just while she is married? If it is the latter, the complementarian may ask why *that* kind of comprehensiveness makes her subordination essential and not merely functional.

At this point, Groothuis may ask, as she does in her article, what reason God would have in relegating married women to subordination at all?



Consider the Levites. They had a special status in Israel as the spiritual leaders of the community. No person from another tribe could occupy that position of privilege. Yet, according to Groothuis, their leadership status “was *not* permanent or inherent in the creational design but served a specific and limited function until the new covenant in Christ.” Unlike the Levites, however, “there is no discernable reason why God would have chosen men for permanently superior spiritual status. The only possible *logical* rationale would be that all men are spiritually superior to all women.”<sup>18</sup> But given that woman’s subordination is *not* permanent (as we saw above) or any more comprehensive than that of the Levites (see below, incl. footnote 20), it seems to me that Groothuis is ignoring the obvious. Why couldn’t the complementarian appeal to Eph 5:21–33 and say that during the limited context of this life God has ordained that the relation between husband and wife symbolize the relation between Christ and his church, relationships that in both cases involves subordination of the bride to the husband?<sup>19</sup> This seems clearly to me to provide a coherent and logical rationale for woman’s subordination.

Secondly, if by “comprehensive” Groothuis means *absolute*, then the complementarian would not grant that even a married woman’s subordination is comprehensive in any relevant sense. Mainstream complementarians understand a husband’s authority as a *relative* authority that is itself subordinate to God’s authority. Thus, complementarians would not grant the notion that a wife should exist under “the absolute rule of her husband.” Suppose that a woman’s husband were an unbeliever and he forbade her to go to church or to pray at home, or commanded her to have an abortion. I dare say that most, if not all, complementarians would say that “she must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). A husband’s authority is not absolute and a wife, like every human being, answers ultimately to a higher authority.<sup>20</sup>

But what about Groothuis’s assertions that “[t]here is no area in which a woman has any authority, privilege, or opportunity that a man is denied. The male is consistently advantaged with

respect to the female, and the female is consistently disadvantaged with respect to the male.” Well, she is simply mistaken. There are numerous societal positions in which men are “disadvantaged” relative to women. No man has ever been or will ever be crowned Miss America. Women are consistently advantaged (and men disadvantaged) with regard to occupying the position of Queen Mother in a kingdom. And how about the head of the National Organization for Women or the Southern Baptist’s Women’s Missionary Union? These are positions reserved for women, (i.e., not open to men), and they are positions of authority, privilege, and opportunity.<sup>21</sup>

If Groothuis were somehow able to discount these examples, however, it would not matter. Even if it were the case that there were no positions open to women and not men, the fact that there are positions open to men and not women would not mean that woman’s subordination to man is comprehensive. All of the ways in which a woman is not subject to her husband’s authority outlined above would still be the case. So, is woman’s subordination comprehensive in any way relevant to Groothuis’s thesis? It would seem not.

We have seen, then, that woman’s subordination is neither permanent nor comprehensive. By Groothuis’s own criteria, these facts disqualify it from being a case of essential subordination. The complementarian may consistently maintain that woman’s subordination is merely functional and that it is, therefore, morally unproblematic. Though I believe that this conclusion is enough to undermine Groothuis’s main thesis, I will show that even if woman’s subordination were essential, it would not mean that woman is inferior in value to man.

### **Does Essential Subordination Entail Inferiority?**

So far in this paper I have argued that proposition (2’)—Woman’s subordination and man’s authority involves merely the functional subordination of women—is true. Now recall that the major premise of Groothuis’s argument against the equal value/subordinate role distinction asserted that

(4) If the permanent, comprehensive,

and ontologically grounded subordination of women is justified, then women are inferior persons.

Showing the truth of (2') renders the antecedent of (4) entirely moot because, even if (4) is true, it would not be the case that woman's subordination is permanent, comprehensive, and ontologically grounded. Nevertheless, it is still an important metaphysical question as to whether or not (4) is true. I think it is not. Let us note that (4), if true, entails

(7) Essential subordination necessarily entails the inferiority in value and dignity of the one who is subordinate.

Groothuis clearly embraces (7). She contends that if woman's subordination is essential—i.e., if it is permanent, comprehensive, and ontologically grounded—then it necessarily entails that women are inferior in value and dignity to men. She writes that “the nature of women's inequality in ‘function’ implies, by logical necessity, women's inequality in being.”<sup>22</sup> She also says, “Because the subordination that is demanded by women's unalterable (female) being is of comprehensive scope and permanent duration ... it implies an extensive and significant personal inferiority.”<sup>23</sup>

What is most striking about Groothuis's assertions here is that she offers little by way of argument in their support. The most she does by way of explicit argument for (7) is found when she writes, “So while woman is said to be equal in her essential being, she is deemed subordinate precisely because of her essential being [i.e., her femaleness]. Yet the notion that woman is equal *in* her being yet unequal *by virtue of* her being is incoherent.”<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere, she says virtually the same thing but with a bit more detail:

Regardless of how hierarchalists try to explain the situation, the idea that women are equal *in* their being, yet unequal *by virtue of* their being, is contradictory and ultimately nonsensical. If you cannot help but be what you are, and if inferiority in function follows inexorably

from what you are, then you are inferior in your essential being.<sup>25</sup>

The apparent incoherence that Groothuis claims here, however, is derived from the way she insists on characterizing the view of her opposition. She frequently refers to the equal value/subordinate role distinction with phrases like “equal in being, unequal in role,” “equal being, unequal function,” “inferiority in function . . . equality in being,” and so on. Implicit in these characterizations is the notion that the woman's subordinate *function* is inferior to that of the man's. That is, it is assumed that the woman's subordinate role is an unequal and inferior role—where “inferior” means “having less value and dignity.”

Now it may be the case that some complementarians have characterized their position the way Groothuis does, but if so, it is unfortunate and misleading. I dare say that complementarians generally would not want to say that the role and function that woman has in the family and at church is the least bit inferior in value and dignity to that of the man.<sup>26</sup> With this in mind, and to demonstrate the flaw in Groothuis's argument, we need to make clear the ambiguity in her chosen way of characterizing the complementarian view. What might it mean to say that women have “unequal roles” or “inferior functions”? Here are the possibilities:

(8) “Woman has an unequal/inferior role to that of man” = “Woman has a less valuable role than man.”

(9) “Woman has an unequal/inferior role to that of man” = “Woman has a subordinate position of authority to that of man.”

The complementarian could accept (9) and would roundly reject (8). Yet it is (8) that Groothuis needs to make her case. And if we clear up the ambiguity in the language of Groothuis's argument, the incoherence that she alleges for the complementarian view is no longer obvious. For when she characterizes her opposition as holding that “woman is equal in her being yet unequal by virtue of her being,” all the complementarian need mean by this is that “woman is equal in her being yet subordinate in

authority by virtue of her being”—and this does not seem at all incoherent.

Of course, in response, she would likely want to claim that there is a logical connection between (8) and (9) such that the latter entails the former. This seems evident when she says, as quoted above, that woman “is deemed **subordinate** precisely because of her essential being. Yet the notion that woman is equal *in* her being yet **unequal** *by virtue of* her being is incoherent.” Note the immediate move from “subordinate” to “unequal” here—where by “unequal” she almost certainly has in mind something like the definition in (8). But what justifies this move? Why would (9) imply (8)? As far as I can tell, Groothuis gives us no reason to think it would. She simply assumes it.

In order to justify an inference from (9) to (8) and hold that even woman’s essential subordination to man entails her inferior *value* (and not just inferior rank), Groothuis would need to hold the following principle which I will call the *Less Valuable Function Principle* (LVFP):

(LVFP) Necessarily, for any two functions  $F_1$  and  $F_2$ , if any person having  $F_1$  is, in virtue of having  $F_1$ , essentially subordinate to a person having  $F_2$ , then  $F_1$  is a less valuable function than  $F_2$ .

The basic idea here is that it is concomitant to the egalitarian’s rejection of the equal value/subordinate function distinction that they believe that people who are essentially subordinate necessarily occupy roles that have less value and dignity than the roles occupied by those to whom they are subordinate. When it comes to woman’s subordination to men, this means that the egalitarian must be committed to the view that the subordinate status of woman means that the roles they play in family and church are inferior in value to the roles played by men. In other words, they must hold that what a woman *does* in fulfilling her subordinate role is less valuable than what the man does in fulfilling his leadership role. It seems that Groothuis does in fact hold this view as indicated by statements such as, “Patriarchalists consign women to a permanently inferior status in a hierarchy of spiritual authority,

calling, responsibility, and privilege”<sup>27</sup>—likewise when she refers to woman’s subordination as a “deficiency” and being “disadvantaged,”<sup>28</sup> and belonging to a kind of “caste system.”<sup>29</sup>

The problem is that there is no clear reason to believe any of this. That is, there is no reason to think that a woman’s function as man’s subordinate is less valuable or important than man’s function as leader. More generally, there is no reason to think that LVFP is true, and at least some reason to think it is false. To make the point more forcefully, consider a couple of analogies.

First, consider an army engaged in war. To win the war, the army has certain goals and objectives that it must achieve. And to achieve these goals, the army needs to be structured in the most efficient way possible in order to get the right kind and amount of combat power to the right place at the right time. This inevitably means that different soldiers will perform different functions. And these different functions will undoubtedly mean that some soldiers will hold higher rank than others. There will be officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates. And those with the lower rank will be subordinate to those with higher rank. Nonetheless, each and every soldier, regardless of rank, has a job to perform that is crucial to the accomplishment of the mission. Let us even say that no component of the army and no individual soldier, regardless of rank, can hope to achieve the army’s objectives without all the others performing their functions as well. The soldiers in the army are interdependent. In such a scenario, what grounds would there be for saying that the function of the privates is less valuable than the function of the officers? Indeed, the officers could accomplish little or nothing without the contribution of the function performed by the privates. The function of the latter is certainly not inferior to the function of the former, even though the latter is subordinate to the former.

And lest Groothuis complain that the previous analogy involves merely functional subordination (which seems irrelevant in this instance), consider the following analogy. My favorite science fiction novel is a book entitled, *The Mote in God’s Eye* by Jerry Pournelle and Larry Niven. The novel’s

storyline involves the human discovery of a very interesting alien race. The alien race—the “Moties” they’re called—is broken down into several classes or castes, each with a vital function necessary to the well-being of the entire race. There are the leaders or “kings” who rule but are reclusive and socially ineloquent. They are served by a class of communicators who speak for and negotiate on behalf of the leaders. There is the warrior class who are dedicated exclusively to the martial arts. And there are the engineers who design and build things and who are assisted by other classes who perform manual labor. Each member in the Motie society belongs to its respective caste because it is ontologically and genetically fitted for the function it serves. In this alien society, regardless of what subjective attitudes the individual aliens may have, it could not be said that any caste or function was more valuable than another. Without the unique contribution of each and every caste, the Motie society would absolutely break down. And yet there were clear lines of authority and subordination that were ontologically grounded, permanent, and (presumably) comprehensive.

So, it seems to me that we have sufficient reason to reject LVFP. There is no good reason to think that essential subordinate function entails less valuable function. This, in turn, means that there is no good reason to think that there is a logical connection between propositions (8) and (9), and hence no clear justification for (7), the claim that essential subordination necessarily entails the inferiority in value and dignity of the one who is subordinate. All this to say that premise (4) of Groothuis’ argument against the equal value/subordinate role distinction is most likely false.

## Conclusion

I have argued that Groothuis fails to show that woman’s subordination to man is essential and not merely functional. It is necessary and sufficient for essential subordination that it be permanent, comprehensive, and ontologically grounded. While I agree that woman’s subordination is ontologically grounded, it does not appear that it is either permanent or comprehensive. Moreover, even if wom-

an’s subordination were essential, I have offered reasons to think that this would not entail that women were inferior in value to men. Groothuis’ argument for the contrary thesis presupposes that subordinate functions entail less valuable functions, but this does not appear to be the case as I showed by way of analogy.

In light of this, I cannot help but think that egalitarians, including Rebecca Groothuis, have adopted the LVF principle—thinking that leadership, authority, and political power are intrinsically more important than functions associated with being a follower or being without political power—moved by the fact that, in our fallen world, those in positions of authority tend to think that they *are* better and more important than those they lead and even, in some cases, oppress and exploit those they lead. Being in a position of authority does increase one’s potential to serve one’s own self-interest and that has to be why all of us, men and women alike, are prone to crave power and authority. But none of these sad facts implies that being in a position of authority really is, metaphysically speaking, more objectively valuable than being in a position of subordination. Perhaps we can say, then, that egalitarians, like feminists, have come to think that being subordinate is equivalent to being inferior because they have fallen victim to the same malady as James and John who asked Jesus to let them sit on his right and left hands in the Kingdom (Mark 10:35-40). If so, then they need to learn anew, along with the rest of us, the message of Jesus: “Whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all” (v. 44).<sup>30</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* (ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 200 (emphasis in original).

<sup>2</sup>Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 100, 102.

<sup>3</sup>Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role”: Exploring the Logic of Woman’s Subordination,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy* (ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis; Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005), 301–33.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>There are a few things that Groothuis says in the course of her



article that are somewhat peripheral to her argument, but which deserve some mention and response. First, at one point, Groothuis takes complementarians to task for their alleged prohibition of women from performing what she calls “distinctively human activities.” Among those capacities that are unique to human beings and which demarcate us from animals is the capacity for “higher intellectual functions such as rationality, ethical reasoning and the ability to analyze abstract concepts” (ibid., 307–8). Groothuis rightly points out that both men and women share these higher intellectual functions. “Yet,” she says, “the doctrine of male rule presupposes that woman is uniquely designed by God *not* to perform certain distinctively human activities.” She continues,

By contrast, there are no uniquely human behaviors from which male humans must abstain in order to be true to their masculine being. No, masculinity is defined precisely in terms of certain distinctively human activities that only men are deemed fit to do—namely, the spiritual discernment and high-level cognitive/rational behaviors involved in making decisions and directing and taking final responsibility for one or more other human beings (308).

These claims can only be seen by complementarians as a straw man. There is nothing in the complementarian position (and I know of no contemporary complementarians) that requires women to abstain from these higher-level cognitive functions. For example, complementarians in fact *expect* women to make decisions. Even in homes where the husband is the leader as complementarians say he should be, women can and do make many small and large decisions—e.g., what to cook for dinner, what math or science problems to pose for homeschooled children, whether the neighbor boy who mowed the grass did a good-enough job to deserve his wage, how best to approach her husband about a complaint she has, and so on. Moreover, in single-parent homes women may certainly direct and take final responsibility for one or more other human beings, namely, the children.

The problem here is that Groothuis fails to distinguish between the *exercise* of a “distinctively human activity” and the *venue* or *context* of its exercise. Though complementarianism does require women to abstain from or limit the use of certain abilities in some contexts, it does not require that they abstain from their use completely and always.

Second, she insists that “nowhere does Scripture use the term *role* or any synonym for it with reference to the responsibilities of believers toward God or one another.” Rather, “God’s concern for each of us is to *be* a righteous person and to use whatever gifts of the Spirit we have been given for the good of the church and the glory of God” (319). Here she defines the word “role” as “a part that is played or a particular function or office that is assumed for a specific purpose or period of time” (318). She also disavows any connection between a person’s assuming a role and who or what a person is by nature.

I think that Groothuis is mistaken on this point and obviously so. In Gen 2:18, for example, God created Eve to be a “helpmeet” or “partner” to Adam. Whether or not the concept of a “helpmeet” involves female subordination, it is very difficult to avoid the impression that being a helpmeet/partner is a role even by Groothuis’s own definition—though admittedly this role would be tied to human nature as such. And what, pray tell, is it to be a pastor or a deacon in a church but to assume a function or office for a specific purpose or period of time? And what is it to be a church member under the authority and leadership of a pastor (whether that pastor is male or female) but to assume a role, namely, that of a faithful

and submissive church member? And what about the apostles’ instructions to masters and servants in the New Testament (cf. Eph 6:5–9; Col 3:22–23; 1 Pet 2:18–20)? It seems that being a master or a slave involves playing a role. As does being a wife or a husband or a parent or a king or a citizen. The Scripture seems filled with examples and imperatives regarding role-playing. And it is often the faithful playing of these roles that actually constitutes being a righteous person who uses his gifts for the good of the church and the glory of God.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 315.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 316.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 325.

<sup>10</sup>This argument is found in Ibid., 317. I have renumbered her propositions in order to avoid confusion with the earlier complementarian argument.

<sup>11</sup>Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship,” 102 (emphasis added).

<sup>12</sup>Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 317 (emphasis added).

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 320 (emphasis in original).

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 316, 317.

<sup>15</sup>Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 45.

<sup>16</sup>Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 327.

<sup>17</sup>See the language referenced in relation to note 15 above from *Good News for Women*. However, in private correspondence with Groothuis, she has assured me that it was not her intent, despite this language, to limit women’s subordination to marriage. This being so, much of the present paragraph is moot vis-à-vis Groothuis. Nevertheless, to cover all the possible ways in which she (or other egalitarians) *could* understand the scope of the comprehensiveness of women’s subordination, I think these points need to be made.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 328 (emphasis in original).

<sup>19</sup>For an explication and defense of this view of Eph 5:21–33, see George W. Knight III, “Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21–33 and Colossians 3:18–19,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 165–78. For a contrary perspective, see I. Howard Marshall, “Mutual Love and Submission in Marriage: Colossians 3:18–19 and Ephesians 5:21–33,” in *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 186–204.

<sup>20</sup>This point is well-established in complementarian literature and is uncontroversial. E.g., John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “Overview of Central Concerns: Questions and Answers,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, 61: “Submission refers to a wife’s divine calling to honor and affirm her husband’s leadership and help carry it through according to her gifts. It is not an absolute surrender of her will. . . Christ is her absolute authority, not the husband. She submits ‘out of reverence for Christ’ (Ephesians 5:21).”

<sup>21</sup>All of this shows that woman’s subordination is analogous to the relationship between the Levites and the rest of the Israelites—an analogy that Groothuis attempts to debunk by appealing to the fact that the Levites were not consistently advantaged with respect to other Israelites in that other Israelites could own land and the Levites couldn’t (see “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 327). Given these counterexamples, women are not consistently disadvantaged either.

<sup>22</sup>Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 305.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 317.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 310 (italics hers).

<sup>25</sup>Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, 55 (italics hers).

<sup>26</sup>This is not the first time that egalitarians have been challenged on

their misleading uses of terms like “unequal” and “inferior” in these contexts. See, e.g., Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 106.

<sup>27</sup>Groothuis, “Equal in Being, Unequal in Role,” 314.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 320, 327.

<sup>29</sup>Groothuis, *Good News for Women*, 51.

<sup>30</sup>I wish to thank Rebecca Merrill Groothuis and the editor of this journal for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

## Order in the Court: God's Plan for Marriage

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If you've ever had the unfortunate occasion to be in court, you know that order is very highly valued. If you break the order of the court and don't heed the judge's gavel, he or she can hand down some pretty harsh punishments. *The Illinois Lawyer's Trial Handbook* says the punishment should be "sufficient to vindicate the authority of the court and serve as a deterrent to others." If the judge bangs the gavel, you better come to order fast or experience some heavy consequences.

God likes everything in order too. When He made the universe, He put everything in its place. God is not disorganized; He doesn't forget or misplace things. God is not busy or hurried. He is never stretched or stressed or maxed out or exhausted or dismayed in any way. God is a God of order (see, for example, 1 Cor 14:33, 40; Col 2:5; Titus 1:5).

If you're serious about living under God's authority, you want to live under His good and gracious order. It matters a great deal to God that we fulfill the roles that He's called us to. Nowhere does this hit hardest and have the most impact than behind the doors of our own homes. God's Word so often meets us at a place where our thinking has eroded and corrects the ways we have bought into the world's way of thinking. Colossians 3:18-23 outlines God's order that leads to life and joy and peace:

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.  
Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

This passage clearly calls our lives at the most personal level to order in God's court.

### **Wives Follow God's Order through Submission.**

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord." The Greek word for submission, *hupotassō*, means to place yourself willingly under the authority of another.

Luke 2:51 uses this word of Christ when He placed Himself under His parents' authority.

Luke 10:17 describes how demons were placed under the authority of the disciples.

Rom 13:1 calls each of us to put ourselves under the law of government.

Eph 1:22 tells of the day when Jesus Christ will return and the entire universe will be under His feet.

Col 3:18 commands, “wives to submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”

There it is—the first half of God’s order. A wife is willingly to place herself under the direction of her husband, under the covering and protection that his leadership provides. The bulls eye of this teaching is that submission is the wife’s personal choice. It can never be forced but is always her decision.

The best illustration of this comes from traffic. When you see the “merge” sign, you know that someone has to go first and someone has to go second. Too often the *I’m-going-to-go-first* battle causes nothing but frustration. Everyone knows that there is only a place for one, so someone has to lead.

God Himself is the leader of the universe. Elders are the leaders of the church. Husbands are the leaders of the home. That clear biblical teaching has been understood and accepted in the church for two thousand years—*until recently*.

In man’s small attempt to compromise God’s line of order, the idea of co-headship between a husband and wife has become an acceptable work-around. But co-headship is always a collision. “Two heads” only describes a monster. In attempting to blur the distinction between men and women, co-headship in effect erases the fingerprint of the creative genius of Almighty God.

### **Let’s Get Some Misunderstandings Cleared Up** ***Submission Has Nothing to Do with Equality***

The Son is not pouting around heaven saying, “Why can’t I be the Father?” The Son is in submission to the Father, and the Spirit is in submission to the Father and the Son. Yet Scripture teaches they are equal. Headship has nothing to do with equality. Go back to the first book and first chapter of the Bible and notice that men and women are created equal before God. Galatians 3:28 also makes it very clear that there is no male nor female in salvation and in the church but that men and women are equal under God in every way.

But hear this: equality does not require sameness. This is where the world makes the mistake.

They think that in order for men and women to be really equal they have to be able to do the exact same things. God did not design men and women to be interchangeable. Women can do things that men cannot do, and the converse is also true.

### ***Submission Has Nothing to Do with Worth***

I love Prov 31:10, “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.” Submission in no way implies inferiority in status or worth.

### ***Submission is Not about Gifts***

In certain areas, my wife has natural gifts that far exceed mine. It’s also important to note that spiritual gifts are not distributed based on gender (1 Corinthians 12).

Submission is about God’s design for the order in the home today, not just in the culture of the original instruction. God is the reference point, the God who never changes, and says, “This is fitting in the Lord.”

However, because of the way that Col 3:18 has been twisted and used to injure godly women, we must make several caveats:

*First, submission does not apply to all men, ladies.* Ephesians 5:22, the parallel passage, clearly says, “Submit yourselves to your own husband.” The bigger text of Scripture teaches that godly women find their protection under the covering of godly husbands and then eldership in a local church. Not just any guy qualifies.

*Submission does not apply in the case of sin.* If your husband asks you to sin or asks you to do something unbiblical, you’re not to do it. Acts 5:29 says “to obey God rather than man.” Ladies, you don’t want to show up in heaven someday and say, “Well, I know I shouldn’t have done that, but my husband told me to.” You personally are responsible to do what’s right before God.

We are naïve if we shield ourselves from the reality that some men have abused this scenario. The question then becomes, *how much abuse is too much to take?* Abuse can range from a careless comment or a mean-spirited word all the way to physical or sexual harm. Where to draw that line is difficult to determine. But of this I am sure: when



the authority structure in the home fails and begins to cause injury, God provides the authority structure of the church as a protection. If the message of submission produces fear in a woman's heart, i.e., fear that her husband will use this truth to cause injury, then the woman needs to go to her pastor and/or elder at her church, and they must offer her help in appropriate proportion to the danger. May God help us to be the strong, protective leaders He calls us to be.

### ***Correction, Please!***

Now, as much as I'd love to move on to the next point right now, we must heed Titus 1:9 and correct those in opposition. A while back I was handed a tape by a local pastor, whom I respect, who was promoting a position called egalitarianism, which promotes the elimination of all role distinction based upon gender. I must tell you that as I listened to his teaching, I had to turn the tape off five times just to get through it. This teaching is absolutely in error and wreaks havoc in the churches that teach it. It breaks down and confuses the authority structure that God intends for our homes. Again, it mandates that equality requires sameness. Clearly, the Bible teaches that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal yet the Spirit submits to the Son and the Son submits to the Father. This is God's order for Himself. Would we humble ourselves to recognize that He also establishes order for the church and the home?

### **Husbands Follow God's Order through Love**

Now I think I understand our hesitation to the whole concept of submission. We're all concerned for the abuse of the order. Again, let's turn to Scripture for the balancing truth. Ephesians 5:22-25 calls men to order in a very specific way.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her; So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself (v. 25).

What woman won't follow a man who loves his wife as Christ loves the church? Leadership

is not dictatorship. Authoritarian men who abuse the role of leadership are the number one reason why women struggle to fulfill the role that God has ordained for them.

In God's order, men are responsible for the condition of their marriage. I believe with all of my heart that everything rises or falls on your leadership, men. You are the God-ordained leader of your home. If you have a great home or a great marriage, you can praise God for the rewards that will come from that. If you have a hurting or a struggling marriage or your wife is discouraged for whatever reason, you can have a powerful impact on bringing her from wherever she is now to where she needs to be by applying consistently God's Word.

Do you want to spark the passion, fan the flame, feel the fire that took you to the front of a church and pushed from your lips the words, "I do"? Then follow God's order for your marriage.

Here are some tips from 1 Pet 3:7 on how to achieve this ideal in your own marriage.

"Likewise, you husbands, dwell with [your wife] with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel and, as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered."

This one verse is packed with six ways to follow God's order of leadership in your home:

#### ***(1) Spend Time with Your Wife ("Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them ...")***

That word *dwell* is interesting. It could mean "to cohabit" and possibly refer to the sexual relationship, but most commentators agree that the intention is deeper than just physical intimacy. The term encompasses all that married life involves. The nearest English equivalent to the word *dwell* is the idea of "to make a home with" but it means a whole lot more than just living at the same address. To dwell with your wife is to really invest, to share, to do life with her.

Every man understands the concept. If you want to lower your handicap or raise your bowling average or grow the best lawn or shrink your

waistline or demolish the competition at work—*it takes time!* Get this in your head: you don't get a great marriage by riding around in the same car, or by sleeping in the same bed or eating at the same table. A good marriage is not contagious—you can't catch it. You have to invest in it. Pour time into your relationship or you're not going to have a great marriage. That is what it means to dwell with her.

I'll bet you're thinking, "How much time is this going to take?"

Start with this: 15 minutes a day. One evening a week. One whole day a month. One weekend a year.

I pray to God that our homes will ring afresh with phrases like, "Why don't you come with me? We can talk." Or, "Let's go together because I want to be with you." Husbands, dwell with your wives.

## **(2) Study Your Wife ("Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them with understanding ...")**

The New International Version translates it as, "be considerate." The New American Standard version says, "live with them in an understanding way." A literal rendering of the Greek text is, "dwell with your wife according to knowledge."

Knowledge about what? Knowledge of every piece of information you can get your hands on. Study the Bible. "What kind of husband am I supposed to be?" As you spend time with your wife, observe her. Become a student of your wife, men. Know what she loves. Know what she hates. Know what fires her up. Know what discourages her. Know when the good time and the bad time is to approach her. Understand what makes her tick. You will bless her if you do.

Wives love to be understood. It fires them up. They love it when they don't have to explain stuff to you; they love it when you just *know*. Get serious about it. Your wife is praying you will.

## **(3) Honor Your Wife ("Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife ...")**

"What's honor?" This word is used only here in the New Testament. In another ancient document, it was used of a military officer who was commended for giving his soldiers due respect.

This is the idea to value who she is, what she does, and to reward her with every means available to you. Give her what she deserves. The primary focus here, however, is verbal. Honor her in public, in front of people, and not just in private.

In fact, if I wanted to see if you were really honoring your wife, all that would need to be done is to ask for the phone numbers of your parents and her parents and all the guys that you work with and the people you know that she doesn't know, and survey them, "What does [Husband] think of [Wife]?" Whatever their answers to those questions—that's it right there. What do you *say* about her?

## **(4) Protect Her ("Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel ...")**

All through Scripture, the human body is compared to a vessel (Jeremiah 18, Acts 9, Romans 9, 2 Timothy 2). The word "vessel" communicates the idea that the human body is like a piece of pottery or a clay jar.

Some people find the idea that women are the weaker vessel to be offensive. If you have a hard time accepting that, declare an arm wrestling tournament in your church or community. I would bet that the top ten finishers would be men. True or false? While it's true women are physically weaker, we've already determined that women are equal to men.

Husbands, protect your wives. God has wired women in such a way that they feel safest when they have that sense spiritually and, here in this text, physically that you are protecting and caring for them. It's a big deal to women.

Ask yourself, "Does my wife feel safe with me?" Does she feel covered by my strength? Does she feel protected by my God-given presence? Does she feel secure because of my sensitivity to her given need for protection?

## **(5) Open Up to Her ("... as being heirs together of the grace of life ...")**

The "grace of life" is all of the blessings that God pours into our lives—all His goodness that we don't deserve. The grace of life is everything

from the joy of the honeymoon to the children, to the children's marriages, to all of the joyful, happy things that happen in married life.

Notice Scripture says a man and a wife are heirs together of the grace of life. If you are one of God's children, you have some good things coming. And as those good things come into your home, you are heirs together. *Together* is the operative word. It's not my right to hoard the blessings of life on myself. God's design is that we would share life together. If you're going to have a relationship with your wife, that is going to mean you must open yourself up to her, disclose yourself to her, share yourself with her.

Women's number one complaint as it relates to their husbands—Christian or otherwise—is “Why won't he open up to me?” I'm not an expert on many things, but this was the subject of my doctoral thesis. I've read 1500+ pages on the often-documented fact that men do not disclose themselves normally to their wives. And the fallout in their relationship is incredible.

While a man's behavior is visible, his experience most often is not. Your wife can't know you by watching you. The only way she can get to know you is if you tell her about yourself. It does not work simply to live in the same house and she watches you come and go. It doesn't work. She has to be able to understand what you are feeling and experiencing, or she cannot know you.

The process of making oneself known is called self-disclosure. We may speculate about a person by watching what they do, but we will not truly know them as they are without them choosing to make themselves known. Simply put: Self-disclosure is letting myself be known as I understand myself to be.

Some women know the pain of living with a husband who is a closed book. If you say, “I can't figure out why my wife can be close to so-and-so, but not to me.” I'll tell you why—it's because you won't make yourself known. She can't know you.

People are only willing to disclose with others who are willing to reciprocate. While someone may make themselves vulnerable as an investment in the relationship, they will quickly pull back if they sense that they have given something that they will

not receive in turn. Do you get it? She may open up and disclose herself for a while, but if she is not finding out information equivalent to that which she is giving, she will stop making herself known to you. That is how couples grow apart.

So to help you, here are five ice-breakers to get you started opening up to your wife. Just say, “Honey,

(1) I don't know why it's hard for me to open up, but I want to ...”

(2) (Or its corollary) Do you know why it's so hard for me to open up?”

(3) It means so much to me when you ...”

(4) Something that really frightens me is ...”

(5) A hard time for me is when ...”

Here it is in a sentence: If you want a hot, happening marriage in the order that God has designed, then open up to your wife. Answer her little questions about how you feel about something. It may seem trivial to you, but may be important to her. If you want to have a relationship, you have to make yourself known.

#### ***(6) Pray with Her (“... that your prayers may not be hindered.”)***

The word *hindered* means *to cut off*. It's the idea of throwing an obstacle in the way of an intended path. If you're not doing these things with your wife, your prayer life is being blocked.

In the original Greek, there is no adjective describing hindrance. That means it doesn't say it will hinder your prayer life in some specific way. It will hinder your prayer life in *every way*. Do you struggle with prayer? Do you find it hard to concentrate in prayer? *God doesn't answer me. I practically never pray with my wife. My prayers are cut off somewhere.* All that describes the word “hindered.” This is a negative promise of Scripture. It says that if you don't dwell with your wife in an understanding way, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, as heirs together of the grace of life, your prayers will be made difficult in every way.

Allow God Himself to convict your heart

about your responsibilities in your marriage, men. And do something about it!

than what it says. God's order for marriage and the home leads to life and joy and peace.

## Conclusion

The world is clamoring to blur the distinctive roles between men and women. Even many in the church, in the name of "liberation," seek to break down the walls of role and gender distinction. I think it interesting that the following statement, written by the Southern Baptists (the largest evangelical denomination in the world) and adopted by Campus Crusade for Christ (the largest parachurch ministry in the world), supporting God's order for marriage appeared on a full page ad in *USA Today* in August 1999, and voiced the affirmation of 131 evangelicals that "you are right!" in holding forth the Bible's teachings on marriage. Here is just a summary (for the full statement, see [www.baptistpress.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=648](http://www.baptistpress.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=648)):

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God. Since both are created in God's image, the marriage relationship models the way that God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband, even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God, as is her husband, and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. In a marriage lived according to these truths, the love between husband and wife will show itself in listening to each other's viewpoints, valuing each other's gifts, honoring one another in public and in private, and always seeking to bring benefit and not harm to one another.

We need not compromise, manipulate, or revise God's Word to accommodate a pagan culture. God's Word is very clear and means no less



# Who's Explaining Away Blue Parakeets?

A Review of Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible*.  
Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

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## Survey of the Book

The title of Scot McKnight's new book is intriguing and beckons the reader to its contents. What does a blue parakeet have to do with interpreting the Bible? McKnight tells the story of the surprising arrival of a blue parakeet to his yard, and compares its unexpected presence to texts in the scriptures that confound our conventional explanations of what the Bible says. None of us, says McKnight, really does everything that the Bible says. We are selective in applying the Bible, and so we pick and choose what parts of scripture to practice. For instance, no one, claims McKnight, actually practices the Sabbath as it is set forth in the Old Testament. Most of us don't practice footwashing, even though Jesus explicitly commanded us to do so. Indeed, Jesus commanded his disciples to give up all their possessions, but very few, if any, do this either.

How should we respond to the fact that we don't do everything the Bible says? McKnight says that we could try to put ourselves back into the world of the Bible and literally do all that it commands. Those who do so are to be commended for their sincerity, but it is impossible for twenty-first century people to try to live in accord with a first-century culture. Indeed, "it is *undesirable and unbiblical* to retrieve it all" (26). We need to apply the teaching of the scriptures in a fresh and powerful way to our time instead. Others read the Bible in accord with tradition, and McKnight applauds

the desire to read the scriptures in accord with "the Great Tradition." Still, we must beware of "traditionalism," which hardens the tradition in such a way that a fresh word of scripture can never dent the tradition. McKnight proposes instead that we must read the Bible "*with* the Great Tradition" (34), so that the Bible rather than tradition functions as our final authority, even though we are informed by the tradition. Otherwise, we will fall into the danger of losing the wonder of seeing the blue parakeets in scripture.

So, how should we read the Bible? McKnight emphasizes throughout the book that the Bible must be read as story, as part of a grand narrative. McKnight identifies five wrong ways to read the Bible: (1) reading the Bible as a collection of laws without considering their place in the overall story; (2) isolating texts of scripture so that we take verses out of context and apply the "blessings" promised to ourselves; (3) reading the Bible arbitrarily, so that we see in the Bible what we want to see; (4) putting together the Bible like we put together a puzzle, making all the pieces fit into a system, even though all the pieces don't fit so neatly. Hence, we claim our Baptist, Lutheran, Wesleyan, etc. version captures what the scriptures teach. Those who move in this direction mistakenly think that they have mastered the Bible; (5) finding our master or "Maestro" in the Bible, so that we become "Jesus" Christians or "Pauline" Christians and fail to see

the variety God intended in scripture.

If we read the Bible as story, according to McKnight, we will be true to its message and apply it rightly in our day. And how do we do this? McKnight affirms that “the secret to reading the Bible” is found in the saying “that was then and this is now” (57). In other words, it is unwise and even unbiblical to try to do everything commanded in scripture. We must recognize the unfolding story found in the scriptures, and so any single passage or command in the Bible must be read in light of that story.

What *is* the story of the Bible? McKnight summarizes it as follows: (1) God created us in his image, so that we would be one with him and others; (2) Human beings sinned, and their union with God and others was sundered; (3) God forms a covenant community to solve this problem in Genesis-Malachi; (4) Christ—who perfectly images God—redeems his people and restores the unity lost; (5) We experience perfect oneness at the consummation of all things. It is this story that holds the Bible together, and the pieces of the Bible must be interpreted within such a context. McKnight particularly emphasizes unity between human beings as the goal of the story. Indeed, he says, “The story of the Bible aims at Galatians 3:28” (75). The ultimate goal of the entire Bible is the unity we enjoy and will enjoy in Christ Jesus. The fundamental purpose of Pentecost is to “create oneness” in “the covenant community” (77). Believers are united with God, but “the focus of this oneness in the Bible is oneness with *others*” (78).

We must read the Bible as story, and we do this well, says McKnight, by listening to what the Bible says. Here is the danger of what McKnight calls an “authority approach” to the Bible, where people say God has told us what to do, and our job is to submit and obey. Such a view is deeply unsatisfying, for it fails to see that we have a relationship with God and that his words are not a duty but a delight. We must remember that God is not the Bible. Instead, he speaks to us in the Bible. We have a serious problem if we emphasize our knowledge of the Bible instead of the God who speaks to us in the Bible. McKnight concludes that those

who are truly loving God and delighting in him “*never need to speak of the Bible as their authority nor do they speak of their submission to the Bible*” (93). In the same way, McKnight notes, those who describe the relationship of a husband and wife in terms of authority and hierarchy instead of a relationship of love distort the nature of that relationship. What it means to listen to God in the Bible is to hear his voice, and ultimately to do what he says. Still, we need to beware of a mechanical reading of scripture. We need to read the scriptures with a kind of “missional living.”

So, how do we apply the Bible today once we recognize that the Bible is fundamentally a story? Most of us agree that there are many things in the scriptures that are no longer required. Prohibitions against tattoos, wearing garments with two kinds of material, eating meat with blood in it, etc., are not considered normative by most Christians today. Naturally there are disagreements, but the fundamental issue says McKnight is discernment. We discern in many instances that a command is no longer normative for us because “that was then, but this is now” (117). McKnight returns to the issue of how we selectively apply what the Bible says, noting that we do not even do all that Jesus commands. Hence, we must all admit that we decide which parts of the Bible apply to us by discerning in the community of faith what is still normative. Naturally there are different opinions on some issues. When it comes to women preaching and the participation of gays and lesbians (which McKnight puts in “the grey and fuzzy area,” 131) we need to avoid “seeing the Bible as a law book” (131). The situation is messier than that, according to McKnight.

McKnight proceeds to other examples. How do we apply the scriptural teaching on divorce and remarriage? Paul himself had to discern what Jesus taught on divorce in a new situation, and he added an exception not found in the teaching of Jesus. In the same way, the early church had to decide on circumcision. The OT clearly required it, but the church through a “*pattern of discernment*” (134), as it was led by the Spirit, determined circumcision was no longer demanded. Similarly, very few Christians

today follow what Peter and Paul commanded about women not wearing jewelry and expensive clothing. In fact, women today often wear expensive jewelry and dazzling clothing to church. The Bible teaches an earth-centered cosmology, but we now realize through our growth in scientific knowledge that the sun is the center of the solar system. McKnight also takes up the issues of capital punishment and tongues. Acknowledging that the former is quite difficult, he inclines to the view that it should no longer be practiced for theological, legal, social, and historical reasons. There were some periods of church history that suggested that tongues were passé, but now we live in a period where tongues are widely accepted as real.

The remainder of the book takes up women in ministry as a case study. One of the features that makes this book interesting is its autobiographical tone. McKnight regrets that he did not stand up for women in ministry while teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is clearly a strong advocate now for all ministry roles being open to women. In reading the scriptures we need to recognize, says McKnight, that it was written in a patriarchal world by men, and their perspective shaped what was written, even though it was God's will at that time for men to write the scriptures. Despite the male-centeredness of scripture, Genesis 1–2 teaches the mutuality and equality of men and women. The attempt to dominate and rule over one another is evident in Gen 3:16, but this text can hardly function as a prescription for today since it reflects the *fall* rather than *creation*. So, McKnight wonders how complementarians can appeal to the fall to support restrictions on women (189) instead of focusing on the new creation inaugurated by Jesus.

According to McKnight, the key texts for discerning whether women should have all ministry roles open to them are those that describe what women actually did in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Since women functioned as prophets, apostles, teachers, and leaders, the texts that appear to prohibit such should not be accepted as timeless advice for today. For instance, Miriam was a prophet and a leader. Deborah functioned as a judge, prophet, and a mother in Israel, so she

was a spiritual, military, and political leader. Huldah spoke the word of the Lord as a prophet, and Esther ruled as a queen. The dawning of the new creation in the ministry of Jesus represents a leap forward for women in ministry. In the new age of the Spirit there will be even more female prophets (Acts 2:17). And women did not only function as prophets; they were also apostles, as the example of Junia shows (Rom 16:7). Phoebe occupied the office of deacon (Rom 16:1–2), which likely had leadership dimensions. Priscilla taught Apollos (Acts 18:26), and hence functioned as a teacher and a theologian.

What about texts that limit women in ministry? The requirement that women be silent (1 Cor 14:34–35) is not a word for all time, for elsewhere Paul commends women for speaking. Hence, McKnight thinks the restriction was a temporary measure due to disturbances in the Corinthian church. The prohibition against women teaching in 1 Tim 2:9–15 has a cultural component. Paul likely responds to new Roman women who were arguing for male subordination to women and who dressed in sexually provocative ways. What Paul emphasizes here is that women should learn before teaching, and so the restrictions on women teaching are temporary and are to be lifted once women are educated. The storyline of the Bible as a whole, and the examples of what women did in the scriptures lead McKnight to the conclusion that all ministry roles should be opened to women.

### Evaluation of the Argument

I have sketched in McKnight's book in some detail without comment, hoping that thereby I have fairly summarized the book. McKnight is a very fine New Testament scholar, and I have especially enjoyed his books *A Light among the Gentiles* and *A New Vision for Israel*. His article on the warning passages in Hebrews is also outstanding, even if I would not endorse all his conclusions. I have to admit that I have a fond spot for him in my heart because he invited me to write my first book, and served as my editor. So, my response to him here, though I strongly disagree with him at points, is part of what I hope is a friendly dialogue.

McKnight raises critical hermeneutical questions, and rightly reminds us that there are texts that are uncomfortable for all of us. Our systems can squeeze out what the Lord actually says, so that we domesticate the text to fit with our pre-formed notions. McKnight also articulates a helpful way to consider tradition. The tradition of the church is respected and consulted, but the scriptures, not tradition, constitute the final authority. Nevertheless, McKnight fails to say something very important at this point. Pride of place goes to tradition, so that a novel interpretation must be defended quite convincingly to overcome the tradition. The tradition, if it is virtually unanimous, represents the interpretation of many generations of Christians for 2000 years. We become accustomed to talking to ourselves in our own day and can easily fall into the error of “chronological snobbery” as C. S. Lewis warned. Nevertheless, McKnight rightly warns us about the dangers of traditionalism; the tradition always stands under the scriptures, for they function as the final authority, and hence we must beware of canonizing tradition.

McKnight is also correct in saying that we must interpret the scriptures in light of the entire biblical storyline. Still, McKnight’s own summary of the story, though it has positive features, is truncated.<sup>1</sup> For instance, it is unconvincing to say that much of the Old Testament (Genesis 12 – Esther) is focused on community. What is striking is how the God- and Christ-centeredness of biblical revelation is muted. For example, isn’t the consummation of all of biblical revelation seeing God’s face and living in his presence forever (Rev 21:3–4)? But McKnight’s so-called goal statement focuses on the horizontal (Gal 3:28). Indeed, many of the laws in the Pentateuch were not given fundamentally for the sake of community, but were declared so that God’s people would be holy before him. Similarly, the Psalms emphasize that the Lord is to be praised, and Paul stresses that the root sin is the failure to praise and glorify God (Rom 1:21). Such themes could be emphasized more in McKnight’s sketch of the biblical storyline.

McKnight also underemphasizes the role of law in the story (cf. most of Exodus 19 to the end

of Deuteronomy). Yes, laws must be interpreted in light of the story, but one wonders what role law actually plays in McKnight’s hermeneutic. He quotes approvingly F. F. Bruce’s statement that we should not turn Paul’s letters into law (207). It is difficult to see what practical role moral norms play in McKnight’s thinking. He seems to focus almost solely upon discernment (see below) and the Spirit. McKnight believes homosexuality is unbiblical and has taken a stand against it. Still, his claim that the participation of gays and lesbians is in a fuzzy and gray area is confusing, for it could be taken to mean that gays and lesbians may participate in our churches without repenting of their sin. McKnight assures me that he thinks homosexuality is wrong. Still, his discussion here could give the wrong impression since in the same context he criticizes turning the Bible into a law book (131). It seems that McKnight privileges his story-version of scripture over law, but scripture consists of both stories and laws. Yes, the laws must be interpreted in light of the story, and yet at the same time we must also stress the universality of moral norms. McKnight’s appeal to story runs the danger of becoming reductionistic.

McKnight wisely warns against trying to master the Bible by putting all the pieces of the Bible together, as if we are able to shove every piece into place. There is a kind of know-it-all arrogance that is off-putting, and I am sure McKnight ran into it in fundamentalist circles. And even though I did not grow up as a fundamentalist, I have seen the same. And yet McKnight goes too far. Here the Great Tradition is more balanced than McKnight. Systematic theology, historically, is an attempt to capture what scripture as a whole teaches. It should be informed by biblical theology, and it has sometimes ignored the storyline of scripture, but such abuses do not rule out the task of systematic theology as a whole. The Great Tradition comes from scholars who did systematic theology, and we ignore their work to our peril. McKnight gives the impression that if we can’t put all the pieces together, then it is wrong to put any pieces into the puzzle, as if the storyline approach he favors is the only way to do theology. Story and systematics, at the end of the



day, should not be played off against each other. They are friends and not enemies. McKnight's book would have more resonance and depth if he drew on the wisdom of those who have done systematic theology. If systematic theology has sometimes gone to extremes, a focus on story may end up committing the same kind of error.

The Bible should be a delight rather than a duty, and here McKnight is fundamentally right. And yet he goes a step too far in saying that people “*never need to speak of the Bible as their authority nor do they speak of their submission to the Bible*” (93). Such a statement does not fit with the repeated phrase “it is written” in the New Testament. The scripture is appealed to as an authority; it is the definitive word in all matters of faith and practice. Naturally obedience should be a delight, and yet obedience is still demanded. Even in Paul, commands play a significant role. See for instance the helpful treatise on this issue by Wolfgang Schrage, *Die konkreten Einzelgebote in paulinischen Paränese: Ein Beitrag zur neutestamentlichen Ethik*. Human beings *should* submit to scripture, even if they do not wish to do so. Of course, such obedience should be a delight and not merely a duty, but it is still a duty. Furthermore, Jesus himself emphasizes in the Gospel of John that he was sent to do the Father's will, that he received a command as to what he should do (John 12:49–50), and that he always obeyed his Father. Naturally, he *delighted* in obeying the Father (John 15:10–11), but such obedience was also demanded (John 14:31). Along the same lines, McKnight rightly remarks that marriage is about much more than headship and submission, and that too many conservatives become fixated on these themes, so that submission is virtually all they talk about when it comes to marriage. I agree. That happens. Nevertheless, authority and submission are still an important dimension in Christian marriage and should not be written out of the script.

One of the things McKnight does well is to remind us of hard cases in scripture—issues where there isn't a simple answer, whether it is divorce, capital punishment, or the Sabbath. At the same time, his own hermeneutical method is not very helpful. To say “that was then and this is now,”

and that we need a pattern of discernment as we are led by the Spirit in community is insufficient. How McKnight's program works out is remarkably vague and amorphous.

McKnight introduces various laws from the Old Testament that we do not follow today (not sowing fields with two kinds of seed, not wearing garments with two different kinds of materials), and circumcision is also brought in as one of his major case studies. What was quite astonishing is that he neglects redemptive history in discussing these examples. In other words, both Paul and the author of Hebrews emphasize the discontinuity between the old covenant and the new. The new age has arrived with the coming of Jesus Christ, and his death and resurrection. Hence, God's people are no longer under the old dispensation inaugurated under Moses. So too, the issues of food laws and circumcision and the place of the law in Luke–Acts are raised because the kingdom has arrived (already-but not yet) in Jesus Christ. Indeed, it could be argued that a redemptive-historical approach should inform our interpretation of the entirety of the New Testament. The status of the Old Testament law must be assessed in light of the great redemptive events of Jesus' death, resurrection, exaltation, and the pouring out of the Spirit. It is surprising that McKnight, who stresses the storyline of the Bible, says virtually nothing about the flow of redemptive history in assessing how the Bible applies today. Surely the issue of footwashing is harder to assess than whether we should wear garments with two different kinds of material, precisely because of where it is located in the Bible's storyline. And yet we would scarcely know that one is harder than another in reading McKnight. There is no clear recognition that where a command occurs in the biblical story is important. We are left with saying, “that was then and this is now,” and then we use discernment. Ironically enough, then, the problem with McKnight's view is an inadequate explanation of the Bible's storyline. He seems to treat every command of the Bible with the same kind of flat-earth hermeneutic, without considering where the command is found in the story—without considering how the differ-

ent epochs of the scripture relate to one another.<sup>2</sup>

McKnight also could be a bit more helpful in thinking through some commands in the Bible. Should we greet one another with a holy kiss? Must we drink wine if we have stomach aches? Obviously no. I am sure McKnight would agree. But is there no instruction for us in these commands? Isn't there a principle in the commands that applies to today? We learn that we should greet one another warmly in ways that fit with our culture. And if we have stomach problems, it is fitting to use medicine. McKnight is correct in saying that we cannot return to the first-century world, and yet he doesn't offer much help in translating the biblical word into the twenty-first century. It is insufficient to simply say about the holy kiss, "That was then, and this is now." More reflection is needed than is offered here.

Let me take up another theme discussed by McKnight. How should we apply Jesus' instructions on riches? Too often we ignore Jesus' words on this matter altogether. Should we give up our wealth as the rich young ruler was called to do? McKnight rightly says that we are not necessarily called upon to practice literally what Jesus said to the rich ruler. But again McKnight could offer us more assistance by considering the biblical theology of riches in Luke–Acts. If we read Luke–Acts as a whole, we see that Jesus' view of wealth must be assessed from more than one text. For instance, when Zacchaeus was saved, Jesus did not command him to give all his money away. The Lord was pleased that he gave half of his wealth to the poor (Luke 19:1–10). Peter reminded Ananias that he was not required to sell his property, nor was he required to give it to the church. Ananias and Sapphira were punished for lying, not for refusing to give all their wealth to the church (Acts 5:1–11). In Acts 12 the disciples met in the house of John Mark's mother. Presumably she retained her wealth since the church gathered in her residence. Hence, we have some indications in Luke–Acts itself that Jesus' words to the rich ruler should not be applied literally to all. Biblical theology plays an important role in considering how scripture should be applied to today, and a systematic study of all that scripture says about

wealth and poverty would be enormously helpful. Naturally, there is much more that could be said on this issue than is possible here. My point is that the hermeneutical process is much more complex and rich than McKnight suggests. We must do biblical theology (and systematic theology as well!) before applying scripture to our contemporary context.

McKnight applies what he says particularly to the women's issue. It should be said up front that McKnight really offers nothing new on the issue. In some instances, his lack of knowledge of the complementarian view mars his case. For instance, McKnight "makes a big deal" of the fact that Gen 3:16 relates to the fall, not to creation. But no complementarian that I know bases his or her case on this text! Virtually all complementarians see a difference in role between men and women because such is based on the *created order*, and they see indications of differences in role in Genesis 2. Now one could argue that the complementarian exegesis of Genesis 2 is mistaken, but McKnight apparently is unaware that complementarians have defended their case on the basis of creation rather than the fall. Hence, his comments on Gen 3:16 are uninformed and misleading.

The substance of McKnight's argument is his appeal to the actual ministries of women in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. This is familiar ground in the debate that has been rehearsed many times. McKnight does not actually argue from the "that was then and this is now" principle, which we expect him to do from the earlier part of the book. Instead, he appeals to the ministry of women in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Apparently, in this instance his argument is that women always served in all ministry positions, and hence they should continue to do so today. So, strictly speaking, the concluding section of the book does not represent an application of the hermeneutical thesis propounded earlier, and is not a legitimate case-study of what was propounded earlier in the book. In other words, when it comes to women in ministry, McKnight's argument is women "were in ministry then, and they should be in ministry now." Therefore, his *actual* argument for women in ministry does not break any new ground

since he does not base it on the conclusions drawn earlier in the book.

McKnight is correct in saying that women were involved in ministry, but the question is whether there are any transcultural limitations for women in the scriptures. Women did function as prophets in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Even though women functioned as prophets in the Old Testament, they never served as priests. Yes, women prophesied in the New Testament, but there is no evidence for women who served as pastors, elders, or overseers.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Phoebe, in my judgment, served as a deacon (Rom 16:1–2; cf. 1 Tim 3:11), but the office of deacon must be distinguished from the office of elder. Elders are distinguished from deacons in that they must be able to teach (1 Tim 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9) and are required to rule (1 Tim 3:4–5; 5:17). Significantly, Paul insists that women should not engage in teaching men or ruling the church in 1 Tim 2:12. Hence, women serving as deacons does not mean that they should occupy the pastoral office. Certainly women served in a variety of ministries in the New Testament: Romans 16 almost serves as a roll call for such noble women. And we must not forget the evangelistic ministry of Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2). Still, the example of Priscilla does not mean that women can teach men publicly since she and Aquila instructed Apollos in a private setting (Acts 18:26). The pattern of the New Testament is more complex than the “all or nothing” approach of McKnight. Yes, women may serve in ministry as deacons, prophets, and missionaries, but they are not to serve as pastors/elders/overseers. The example of Junia does not advance McKnight’s thesis (Rom 16:7), for in calling her one of the apostles, Paul is not identifying her as one of the twelve, nor is he putting her on the same level as the apostolic circle. The word “apostles” is used in a non-technical sense here, signifying that Andronicus and Junia served as missionaries. Indeed, it is likely that Junia’s ministry in a patriarchal world was to women (not men). As Ernst Käsemann remarks, “The wife can have access to the women’s areas, which would not be generally accessible to the husband.”<sup>4</sup> So, McKnight’s examples do not establish that all

ministry positions are open for women. Complementarians, on the other hand, must beware of battenning down the hatches in such a way that there is no space for a woman to minister among us. At the same time, we are called to be faithful to the instructions of the scripture, and we are hesitant to differ with the “Great Tradition,” especially when the exegetical arguments offered by egalitarians are unconvincing.

Naturally, 1 Tim 2:9–15 plays a major role in the debate. The claim that the text is addressed to the new Roman women is possible but scarcely proven. Too often in NT studies alleged background material is used to “prove” various interpretations. Anyone who reads in NT studies knows how speculative such reconstructions can be. In reading such reconstructions I have often wondered why we complain about systematic theologians being speculative! Even if the situation is as McKnight alleges, Paul grounds his command that the women should not teach or rule on a creational difference between men and women (1 Tim 2:13). He does not give a cultural reason! The same appeal to creation surfaces in the argument in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 11:8–9). Remarkably, the singular role that creation has in applying the scriptural word to today is not discussed in McKnight’s hermeneutical scheme. After all, Paul appeals to creation in indicting homosexuality (Rom 1:26–27), in justifying eating foods (1 Cor 10:25–26; 1 Tim 4:3–5), in promoting marriage (1 Tim 4:3–5), and in regard to the role of women. In the same way, Jesus appealed to creation in articulating the permanence of marriage between one man and one woman (Matt 19:4–6). An alleged background to a text must not remove the blue parakeet of 1 Tim 2:11–14 and 1 Cor 11:2–16. Egalitarians leap over what the text actually says to justify their reading, and allege that the women were uneducated, untaught, or promulgating false teaching. But Paul does not say they were uneducated or spreading false teaching. All the false teachers mentioned in the pastorals are men, and 1 Tim 5:13 is scarcely strong support for the notion that women were purveyors of false doctrine. Indeed, it is quite implausible to claim that all the women in Ephesus were untaught,

uneducated, or advocates of false teaching. The prohibition is grounded in God's created order. Facts are stubborn things, and the argument of 1 Tim 2:11–14 is like a blue parakeet. McKnight doesn't succeed in explaining the parakeet away, and neither should we.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The brevity of the book does not fully account for the omissions here, for the matters addressed could have been sketched in rather briefly.

<sup>2</sup>In an email to me McKnight says he holds substantially the same position as I do on salvation-history, and that he believes that there are indications in the book of such a stance. In my view, his discussion needs to be much clearer at this very point.

<sup>3</sup>I would argue that the terms *pastor*, *overseer*, and *elder* all refer to the same office.

<sup>4</sup>Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. and ed. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 413.



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# Rob Bell's "Feminine Images" for God

A Review of Rob Bell, NOOMA: "She." Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008.

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With the release of "She," Rob Bell's NOOMA video series reached its twenty-first installment. Published by Zondervan, these videos are well-produced and quite engaging to watch—due largely to the fact that Bell is a captivating speaker. Bell is pastor of Mars Hill Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a leading figure in the "emergent church." Regarding manhood and womanhood, his theological commitments are clearly egalitarian.

Competent, biblical critiques of the NOOMA videos are available elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> I would like to focus on the most recent video—"She"—and what Bell describes as "feminine images" for God in the Bible.

Before addressing my concerns with Bell's presentation, let me acknowledge at least three areas of agreement: (1) Bell says that, according to the Bible, "man is created in the image of God," and "woman is created in the image of God." He is absolutely right. This affirmation is *foundational* to any biblical discussion of men and women. (2) Bell is right to praise the care and sacrifice of mothers. In spite of the fact that it is a high and noble calling, motherhood receives little commendation today. But few roles have such a profound impact on future generations. (3) Bell is also right to speak out against women being treated as "second-class citizens." God has gifted Christian men *and* women to serve and function together in the church—the body of Christ. Every part of the body is necessary (1 Cor 12:12-31). A church in which women are not encouraged and granted opportunity to serve as vital members of the Christian community is both disobedient and unhealthy.

However, Bell's larger concern in the video is

to talk about God. And this is where his discussion becomes problematic. Here is an excerpt from the video:

There is this maternal impulse, this ancient nurturing instinct. And it transcends time; it transcends culture; it transcends economics. There is an ancient mothering impulse, and it's also a divine impulse. Throughout the Bible, God is described as compassionate. In Hebrew, the original language of the Scriptures, it's the word "raham." It's also the word for "womb." So, God is compassionate. God is "womb-like"? This is a feminine image for God.

Now see a lot of people are very comfortable with male imagery for God. So God is the Father; God is the Warrior; God is the Judge; God is the Lawgiver. But feminine images for God?

Well there's this great line in the book of Job. God is pointing out all the complexity and creativity of creation and essentially saying to Job, "Who do you think made all of this?" And at one point, God ask Job, "From whose womb came the ice? Who gave birth to the frost from the heavens?" God's answer to Job is "God." God's womb? God gave birth? Obviously it's poetry here, so you can't take it too literally. But this is feminine imagery for God.

Now these images can be very helpful in describing the divine. But Jesus said that God is Spirit. And Spirit has no shape; it has no form; it has no physical essence. I mean, God is, in essence, beyond male

and female. Or perhaps you could say it more accurately: God transcends and yet includes what we know as male and female.

Later, Bell affirms, “There is a masculine dimension to God, and there is a feminine dimension to God.”

Bell is saying nothing new. Feminist writers and some evangelical egalitarians have been making similar observations and claims for some time now. Bell is just saying it with a “cool factor.” However, given his following and the popularity of the NOOMA video series, his teaching deserves a reply.

I’d like to register at least three concerns with Bell’s interpretation and teaching in the video:

(1) Bell claims that the Hebrew word for compassionate is “*raham*” and that “it’s also the word for ‘womb.’ So, God is compassionate. God is ‘womb-like’? This is a feminine image for God.”

However, the same word in Hebrew *does not* mean both “compassionate” and “womb.” The words are related, but they are not the same word. Furthermore, it is false to say that the Hebrew word for “compassionate” means “womb-like.” Bell knows just enough Hebrew to be dangerous.

The Hebrew words for the noun “womb” (רֶחֶם), the noun “compassion” (רַחֲמִים), the adjective “compassionate” (רַחוּם), and the verb “have compassion” (רָחַם) all have the same root (רָחַם). Yet, even if the words speaking of “compassion” are *derived* from the noun for “womb,” it is erroneous to read the meaning of the latter into every instance of the former. Bell is guilty of the “root fallacy.” Simply because words are related by etymology, it does not follow that an author intends for a “root meaning” to be hidden in any and all words derived from it.

(2) When one examines the Old Testament use of the verb (“have compassion”), the noun (“compassion”), and the adjective (“compassionate”), it is clear that a “feminine image for God” is *not* intended. For, if Bell is right about the meaning of the adjective “compassionate” (i.e., “womb-like”), we would expect it (as well as the noun and verb) to be used primarily to speak of a mother’s compassion for her children. But this is clearly not

the case. In fact, if anything, the evidence points in the other direction.

In most instances, these words are used of God. However, when used of human beings, they are used primarily for males—rulers, warriors, and once for a *father* showing compassion on his children (Ps 103:13). In only two instances (one verb, one adjective) is there reference to a mother’s compassion for her children (Isa 49:15; 1 Kgs 3:26).

This does not, of course, mean that only men show compassion. But it does dispel any notion that “compassion” is solely a *feminine* trait. And when the Bible says, “God is compassionate,” it is *not* a “feminine image for God”—much less is it saying “God is womb-like.”

(3) Bell is quick to point out that poetic language comparing God to a mother cannot be taken literally. But he still refers to these examples as “feminine imagery for God.” He acknowledges that God is Spirit, with no physical form. Then he says, “God transcends and yet includes what we know as male and female.” Also, “There is a masculine dimension to God, and there is a feminine dimension to God.”

In the Fall 2008 issue of *JBMW*, Randy Stinson and I address the question of feminine imagery and terminology for God. We observe in our essay that the Bible includes a few metaphors and similes comparing some of God’s actions to those of a mother.<sup>2</sup>

For example, Moses says that Israel “forgot the God who gave you birth” (Deut 32:18). “As one whom his mother comforts,” says the Lord to his people, “so I will comfort you” (Isa 66:13). According to Hosea, God says he will “fall upon” Israel “like a bear robbed of her cubs” (Hos 13:8). In his NOOMA video, Bell mentions a passage from Job. Do these passages imply a “feminine dimension to God”? Of course not.

Consider this: Scripture uses similar figurative language to describe the actions of *male human beings*. Hushai says David and his mighty men “are enraged, like a bear robbed of her cubs” (2 Sam 17:8). Paul tells the Galatians he is “in the anguish of childbirth” until Christ is formed in them (Gal 4:19), and he claims he treated the Thessalonians

“like a nursing mother taking care of her own children” (1 Thess 2:7). These are graphic literary devices that make for vivid descriptions. I know of no preacher who describes this as “feminine imagery” for Paul. No commentators conclude that there must be a “feminine dimension” to David. Why, then, do Bell and other egalitarians draw these conclusions for God?

These analogies are not intended to tell us about God’s “feminine side.” Instead, they are a demonstration of God’s abundant mercy to us. God employs various metaphors and pictures, using simple concepts that we can understand, so that he might explain what he is like. As one whom his mother comforts, so God comforts his children. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. The love of Christ for wretched sinners is so glorious that it “surpasses knowledge” (Eph 3:19). What a demonstration of amazing grace, then, for God to point to a mother’s (or a father’s) compassion and say, “This is what I am like—only far better.”

Biblical metaphors and similes are meant to bring clarity to our understanding of God. Unfortunately, Rob Bell’s teaching only serves to muddy the waters.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Greg Gilbert, “The Scoop’a on NOOMA” at 9Marks. Online: [http://sites.silaspartners.com/partner/Article\\_Display\\_Page/0,,PTID314526|CHID598014|CIID2396222,00.html](http://sites.silaspartners.com/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID314526|CHID598014|CIID2396222,00.html).

<sup>2</sup>See Randy Stinson and Christopher W. Cowan, “How Shall We Speak of God? Seven Reasons Why We Cannot Call God ‘Mother,’” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 20–23.

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# The Definitive Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:12

A Review of Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds.,  
*Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*. 2d ed.  
Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

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The role of women in the church is becoming an increasingly explosive issue in American culture, and *Women in the Church* defends a complementarian position that is radically counter-cultural. The book's thesis is that 1 Tim 2:9–15 teaches “that it is not God's will for women to teach or have authority over men in the church” and that the office of elder is “reserved for men” (8). The book's intended audience is scholars more than lay people. The discussion is advanced, complex, and exacting.

## Differences from the First Edition

This second edition differs from the first (1995) in at least eight ways:

- (1) It is 48 pages shorter.
- (2) Its subtitle alters the older one (previously *A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*).
- (3) It adds an application essay by Dorothy Kelley Patterson, which is reflected in the new subtitle.
- (4) It omits two essays: T. David Gordon's “A Certain Kind of Letter: The Genre of 1 Timothy” and Harold O. J. Brown's “The New Testament Against Itself: 1 Timothy 2:9–15 and the ‘Break-through’ of Galatians 3:28.”
- (5) It omits both appendixes: Daniel Doriani's “History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2” and Henry Scott Baldwin's “*αὐθεντέω* in Ancient Greek Literature.”
- (6) It omits sections from the included essays such as Robert W. Yarbrough's summary of *New Testament Abstracts* since 1956 to gauge what scholars have

been writing on 1 Tim 2:9–15.

(7) It uses endnotes rather than footnotes.

(8) It updates the included essays in light of scholarly developments by interacting with responses to the first edition and incorporating newer literature such as *Two Views on Women in Ministry*.

Köstenberger and Schreiner explain, “To enhance the work's usefulness, material judged to be less central to the overall argument of the book has been omitted” (7). The material omitted, however, still advances the book's argument in helpful ways, so readers who already own this book's first edition may be wise to keep it. The latter does not replace the former; at several key points in its argument, the second edition references the first edition because the second edition omits significant (though not “central”) material.

## Tracing the Argument

This scholarly volume presents six essays on aspects of 1 Tim 2:9–15 in a tightly argued progression:

- (1) Historical context: S. M. Baugh, author of “Paul and Ephesus: The Apostle Among His Contemporaries,” demonstrates in painstaking detail that Ephesus was a normal Greek society, not a unique, feminist one. The egalitarian argument (e.g., Richard and Catherine Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11–15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992]) that 1 Tim 2:12 applies only to *Ephesian* women in Paul's day is untenable.



(2) Word study: Henry Scott Baldwin narrows the possible lexical meanings of αὐθεντέω in 1 Tim 2:12 (a *hapax legomenon*). He approaches word studies with care, recognizing their limitations and avoiding fallacies such as indiscriminately combining a word's verbal, nominal, and adjectival forms. After exhaustively studying αὐθεντέω in extrabiblical literature, he concludes that four meanings are possible: (1) to control, to dominate; (2) to compel, to influence; (3) to assume authority over; and (4) to flout the authority of.

(3) Syntax: Andreas J. Köstenberger, author of *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), picks up where Baldwin left off. The pattern of 1 Tim 2:12 is “(1) a negated finite verb + (2) infinitive + (3) οὐδέ + infinitive + (4) ἀλλά + infinitive” (55). Using advanced computer technology to explain this syntax, he meticulously examines the only parallel construction in the New Testament (Acts 16:21), fifty-two similar New Testament parallels (οὐδέ or μηδέ links verbals other than infinitives), and forty-eight syntactical parallels in extrabiblical literature. His thesis is that διδάσκειν and αὐθεντεῖν (two infinitives joined by οὐδέ) both denote either positive or negative activities; since διδάσκειν must be positive, αὐθεντεῖν is a positive activity and thus must mean “to have or exercise authority” and not “to flout the authority of” or “to domineer.” He then interacts with fourteen responses to his essay in the 1995 edition, observing that his syntactical conclusion “has met with virtually unanimous acceptance and has held up very well” (84). (See also my “Interview with Andreas J. Köstenberger on 1 Timothy 2:12,” July 30, 2008, available at <http://theologica.blogspot.com/2008/07/interview-with-andreas-j-kstenberger-on.html>.)

(4) Exegesis: Thomas R. Schreiner, author of “Women in Ministry” (in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* [Rev. ed.; ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005], 265–322), contributes the book's climactic article, an intensive exegesis of 1 Tim 2:9–15. His thesis is “that the recent interpretations of 1 Timothy 2:9–15 in defense of the egalitarian position are exegetically unpersuasive.” His subtitle, “A Dialogue with

Scholarship,” is accurate: he includes no less than 266 endnotes! He draws two principles from vv. 9–10: Christians must not wear clothing that is (1) “extravagant and ostentatious” nor (2) “seductive and enticing” (95). Verses 11–12 are an inclusio, beginning and ending with ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ (“quietly”); Paul contrasts women learning with teaching and pairs submission with not exercising authority. The created order and Eve's deception are the reasons for v. 12's universal prohibition (vv. 13–14). Christian women are saved through childbearing (v. 15) in the sense that childbearing is a synecdoche for a woman's domestic role and that these good works are a necessary consequence of salvation rather than its basis or means.

(5) Hermeneutics: Robert W. Yarbrough contrasts his historic hermeneutic with the progressive hermeneutic of egalitarians with reference to 1 Tim 2:9–15. He responds to critiques of his 1995 essay (e.g., William J. Webb and Kevin Giles) and explains the relatively recent Western view of women, concluding, “The ‘progressive’ interpretation of Paul is indebted significantly to the prevailing social climate rather than to the biblical text” (133). He then refutes Krister Stendahl's and F. F. Bruce's egalitarian readings of Gal 3:28 and separates the alleged connection between complementarianism and slavery. Slavery is not in the same category as a woman's role because (1) God did not ordain slavery, (2) God set six-year limits for Israel's slaves, (3) Paul encourages slaves to become free if lawfully possible, and (4) the New Testament does not mandate slavery but instead serves as the foundation that has historically abolished it. Missiologically, the majority of church growth has been occurring in South America, Africa, and Asia, and a progressive hermeneutic that justifies egalitarianism generally brings reproach rather than approval in those cultures.

(6) Application: Dorothy Kelley Patterson provides a unique perspective: on the one hand, she is a woman, wife, mother, and grandmother; on the other hand, she is a professor of theology with a Th.D. She reflects on tensions that she has personally wrestled with, and she shares how submitting to God's revelation in Scripture has satisfyingly resolved them.

## Evaluation

This volume has only a few relatively minor limitations. Baldwin's essay might be further strengthened by incorporating insights from John Lee's *A History of New Testament Lexicography* (ed. D. A. Carson; Studies in Biblical Greek 8; New York: Peter Lang, 2003). The book's use of end-notes is irritating and inefficient (especially when the reader must flip back and forth 266 times when reading Schreiner's essay!), and it seems unwarranted for a technical volume. Some items in the bibliography have not been updated to the most recent editions since the 1995 edition.

This book continues to serve the church as the definitive analysis of 1 Tim 2:12. It is a scholarly rebuttal to recent egalitarian arguments about 1 Tim 2:9–15 that run counter to the evidence. Its approach is charitable, evenhanded, calm, fresh, scrupulous, confrontational, courageous, and convincing. Indeed, "we live in a time where being conservative may be the most radical thing of all" (179).

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# A Solid Primer on the Gender Debate

A Review of Jack Cottrell, *Headship, Submission and the Bible: Gender Roles in the Home*.  
Joplin, MO: College Press, 2008.

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On the back cover of Jack Cottrell's newest book, Dorothy Patterson's endorsement has this to say: "The reading of his volumes is necessary for any serious student in women's studies." This is high praise indeed, but an acclamation that Cottrell has worked hard to earn with previous books. His newest work is *Headship, Submission and the Bible: Gender Roles in the Home*, and it too is a must-read for any student of the evangelical gender debate.

The current volume is actually the third in a trilogy of Cottrell's works on complementarian theology, which includes *Feminism and the Bible* (College Press, 1992) and *Gender Roles and the Bible* (College Press, 1994). Cottrell's purpose in *Headship, Submission and the Bible* is to examine the two concepts mentioned in the title and to subject the exegesis of egalitarian theologians to rigorous biblical review. Not surprisingly, his conclusion is that the way egalitarians handle headship and submission is not faithful to Scripture or sound scholarship. Readers should note that Cottrell limits his study to the concepts of submission and headship in the home. While many of his conclusions would apply to church life as well, that is not the focus of this study.

Much of the book takes the form of extended word studies on the biblical terms for submission (part one of the book) and headship (part two). He begins each part by explaining the egalitarian position, and then follows with a complementarian critique, answering the egalitarian arguments point by point. Along the way he surveys the critical New Testament passages—Ephesians 5, Titus 2, 1 Peter

3, 1 Corinthians 11, and so forth—and examines both the larger and immediate context for all of them. The two main pillars of Cottrell's exegesis are word backgrounds and context, and in each part more time is spent on these discussions than any other. Of course, this is exactly as it should be since the debate between egalitarians and complementarians on these key passages often centers on exactly these issues.

In part one Cottrell takes egalitarians to task for their emphasis on the concept of mutual submission. He charges that the egalitarian view of Ephesians 5 is wrecked by their presuppositions. Their decision to base their exegesis of the entire passage on a skewed reading of verse 21, he argues, is grounded not in the text itself but by an assumption of the meaning of mutual submission. In part two Cottrell spends most of his time on the debate over the meaning of *kephale*, what he calls the "*kephale* wars." He steers the last two chapters of the book toward matters of practice, demonstrating that egalitarians are guilty of the "perversion fallacy" with regard to headship and submission; just because a concept has been abused, he argues, does not mean that concept is false or wrong. It simply means it must be understood properly in order to be practiced properly. It is to that end that Cottrell has written.

Two things must be noted before evaluating Cottrell's work. First, there is little new ground broken here. As the author himself admits, the bulk of the material was written more than a decade ago. This does not mean the study itself is dated, but

it does mean that much of the discussion will be familiar to scholars of the field. Second, by design, this is a polemical work. Cottrell's purpose is to examine egalitarian arguments against male headship and female submission, and then critique them from a complementarian perspective. Thus each part begins with the egalitarian position and moves to the complementarian response.

In this reviewer's opinion, Cottrell has accomplished the purpose for which he wrote the book. He has marshaled substantial arguments for the veracity of the complementarian position on the issues of submission and headship, and he has critiqued the egalitarian positions with an even-handed sensibility and a responsible hermeneutic. As stated before, no new ground is broken here, so there is little chance that those committed to an egalitarian position will change their stance once they read Cottrell's book. But they will have to reckon with his arguments.

*Headship, Submission and the Bible* would be a solid introductory text for many evangelical women's studies classes, as it contains the core elements of the gender role debate. Cottrell's accessible prose makes it an excellent choice for the educated layman who is interested in deeper study on these critical biblical issues.



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# What Was This Body and Soul Made For?

A Review of Peter Jones, *The God of Sex: How Spirituality Defines Your Sexuality*.  
Wheaton: Victor, 2006.

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“God and sex,” says Peter Jones, “make an odd couple.” So begins Jones’s 2006 publication, *The God of Sex: How Spirituality Defines Your Sexuality*. “God,” Jones notes, “represents disembodied, ethereal holiness,” while “sex is the very essence of hard-driving material pleasure” (9). This observation begins *The God of Sex*, a text that is one part cultural overview and another part biblical theology of sex. Authored by a professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, California, *The God of Sex* offers a sexually confused world an incisive exploration of the relationship between God and sex.

In Part One of the text, “Sexuality According to the Pagan View of God,” Jones covers in five chapters the unbelieving approach to sex and to God. Jones first provides a bit of background on the cultural revolution that occurred in the 1960s, tracing the devolution of traditional views on sexuality to Alfred Kinsey and his studies of American sexual practices (20–21). In Kinsey’s wake, traditional mores have collapsed, leaving Western culture awash in pornography. Abortion and homosexuality proliferate, cohabitation replaces marriage, and cultural elites trumpet the arrival of countless forms of sexual identity (22–31). This project of perversity receives the untiring support of a wide variety of spiritualities (35–42).

*The God of Sex* then addresses what Jones calls “the coming sexual utopia,” an era in which relativism reigns and all boundaries regulating sexual practice collapse (47–55). As “deep religious notions are overthrown and replaced by conflicting

religious ideas,” gender loses all meaning and takes the form of a social construct (55). Accordingly, a shared societal sense of sexual propriety quavers in the wind; the spreading acceptance of “polyamory” threatens a day when all regulations concerning sexual practice fade away (60). Homosexuality’s cause proves relentless in our soft-bellied culture and offers the world a new spirituality (70–81). All of these trends threaten children most significantly, as they are powerless before them (91–97).

Jones switches tracks on page 99, where he sums up his argument:

The pagan gospel preaches that redemption is *liberation from* the Creator and *repudiation of* creation’s structures. It offers the “liberation” of sex from its heterosexual complementary essence. The Christian gospel proclaims that redemption is *reconciliation with* the Creator and the *honoring of* creation’s goodness. This gospel celebrates the goodness of sex within its rightful, heterosexual limits.

Part One, as we have seen, covers the first part of this argument; Part Two, “Sexuality According to the Biblical Worldview,” addresses the second.

Spread over six chapters, Part Two walks through the biblical testimony on sex, contrasting it with what Jones calls the “pagan monism” view that teaches that there is no god and that all is one without any distinction between Creator and creation. Using a Schaefferian approach that emphasizes antithesis between Christianity and all other

systems of belief, Jones offers a basic theology of God, sketching the character of the One who rules sex just as He rules all of the cosmos (108–18). He then covers the biblical view of the body, the marital covenant, and the marital act (119–38). Next Jones considers Paul’s words to the Romans on the subject of homosexuality, observing in the course of the section that “[t]hose who reject the Creator also reject the notion of the created ‘natural’ order. If there is no Creator, there are no norms or boundaries,” for “[h]omosexuality destroys the heterosexual separation that God has placed between male and female.” This “joining together of the opposites that God has separated is both a radical rejection of creational norms and a powerful spiritual expression of pagan monistic rebellion” (147). This is a crucial passage, for it illustrates that sexuality is not an arena for personal experimentation and expression but is the forum in which God calls humanity to embrace in the most fundamental manner the contours of His wise and elegant design.

The author continues by exploring the way in which God “recreates” humanity through His Son and Spirit, observing that the Christian, the new creation of God, fundamentally heeds the Creator’s call to a life of submission to God’s will (158–67). Jones then calls the Christian to observe not a set of sexual do’s and don’ts, but a way of life that simultaneously celebrates sex and obeys the Creator’s directions concerning sexual morality (174–77). Such a way of life will bring sanctification and allow the Christian to fit rightly into the role reserved for the redeemed by the Lord (178–88). In the end, “while human disobedience stains us with sin and condemns us to death, God’s purposes in creation will ultimately—through the amazing grace of his redemption action in Christ—have the last word” (198).

*The God of Sex* is a helpful, richly theological meditation on the consequences of both the pagan and Christian worldviews. Jones succeeds in his quest to show that spirituality and sexuality are directly related. He also proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that paganism begets all manner of evil and perversion, that Christianity offers the only sane and beautiful worldview and sexual perspective

known to man, and that these two options or “gospels,” in some form, confront every person. Clearly trained as a worldview thinker, Jones avoids mere denunciation and moralizing in his text and consistently points the reader to the true gospel and the glorious metanarrative of life and thought into which sexuality fits.

Readers will find the second half of the book particularly helpful. Gifted with a creative mind and a command of the biblical material, Jones delves into various texts of Scripture and unearths a number of gems that illumine the passages. To cite just a few (and there are many more), Jones addresses the healing nature of a cohesive understanding of life and sexuality (134–35); discusses the importance of a creative function in an ideal sexual relationship (149); looks insightfully at the temptation of utopianism (157); shows how God is both Creator and re-Creator, a fascinating duality of roles (159); and covers the awesome nature of heaven as it relates to our future roles (168). In these and a number of different places, Jones gives the reader a fresh perspective on familiar concepts and helpfully introduces others. One comes away from the text with a broadened understanding of sexuality and, even more significantly, the Christian’s status as a new creation in Christ.

Made as physical creatures, with strong appetites and natural desires, the race of men must inevitably confront the matter of sexuality. Possessing a soul, with a spirit created by almighty God, mankind is also inherently spiritual—unable, however hard he may try, to avoid the Creator and the implications of His existence. As Jones has shown, these personal realities intertwine. The way one approaches sex reveals the way one approaches God; the way one relates to God shapes the way one relates to sex. One approach frees mankind and places him under the loving care of his Creator; the other promises liberation but ensnares him for destruction. If sex and spirituality seem disconnected now, it is apparent that our conception of their relationship echoes into eternity, either hurtling us toward God or sending us far from His love.

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# Beholding the Wonder of the Trinity

A Review of Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationship, Roles, and Relevance*.  
Wheaton: Crossway, 2005.

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Those who read Bruce Ware's writings have come to expect what the very best in evangelical scholarship on the doctrine of God has to offer: sound biblical interpretation, compelling argumentation, theological clarity, historical awareness, practical application, strong convictions and conclusions—and these with a passionate but pastoral tone. *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* does not disappoint such expectation. Ware's contributions on various aspects of the doctrine of God include an incisive critique of Open Theism in *God's Lesser Glory* (2000) and a constructive proposal of God's providence in *God's Greater Glory* (2004). In *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, Ware invites his readers to behold the wonder of the Trinity, especially in terms of the relationships the members share with each other, the roles that each member fulfills, and the relevance of trinitarian doctrine for human relationships.

The book is comprised of six chapters, including an introductory discussion of the importance of trinitarian doctrine in chapter 1, a historical overview of the development of trinitarian doctrine in chapter 2, an exposition of the Trinity in chapters 3–5, and a closing consideration of the practical relevance of trinitarian doctrine for the home and the church in chapter 6.

Setting the foundation for what follows in the book, Ware rhetorically asks,

Would God have chosen to reveal himself to us as the God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, unless he knew that this would be important to our understanding of him and of our faith? Must it not be the case that God cares greatly that

we 'get it,' that we see him for who he is? And must it not matter to our own lives whether or not we understand him as the triune God that he is? (13).

These questions demand our affirmation that since God has revealed himself as Father, Son, and Spirit, it is not only our duty to understand who he is but also our joy to behold the mystery and the majesty of our triune God. So, Ware's purpose is "to examine especially the ways in which the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit *relate to one another*, how they *relate to us*, and what *difference this makes in our lives*" (14–15).

Chapter 2 offers a brief historical overview of trinitarian formulation. Ware notes that the development of trinitarian doctrine is based on both scriptural monotheism (24–28) and scriptural trinitarianism (29–35). That is, the biblical data affirms that God is one as well as three; or better said, God is three in one. The early church recognized both scriptural emphases, but as they sought to develop further a doctrine of the Trinity, theological error and controversy ensued, as the well-known Arian controversy demonstrates (36–37). While these controversies helped clarify the deity of the Son and of the Spirit, the early church's formulation culminated in the work of Augustine, who "proposed that we understand the triune nature of God in such a way that we distinguish the senses in which God is one and three, respectively. God is *one in essence* or *nature*, but God is *three in person*" (41). Augustine's proposal has been maintained as orthodoxy throughout church history as Christians of every generation seek to understand our triune God.

The heart of the book is found in chapters 3–5, where Ware delineates his understanding of the relationships and roles within the Trinity. All three chapters begin with the same introduction:

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 the identically same, eternal divine nature, yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of the one undivided divine nature.

Because each Person of the Trinity is equally and fully God, Ware argues that what distinguishes them from each other are the particular relationships between them and the roles they occupy with respect to one another. What then are the relationships and roles that distinguish them?

Ware argues that the unique role of the Father is one of supreme authority in the Trinity, seen especially in the Bible's attestation to the Father as the "Grand Architect" and "Wise Designer" of creation, salvation, and consummation (46–53). The Father's *paternal* relationship to the Son and the Spirit signals the unique position of authority that belongs rightly and only to him. This position must not be taken to mean that the Father acts unilaterally in what he does, since he demonstrates a "profound divine humility" by working *through* the Son and the Spirit (55–59).

The Son, Ware argues, eternally submits himself under the Father's authority: "the Son in fact is the *eternal Son* of the *eternal Father*, and hence, the Son stands in a relationship of eternal submission under the authority of his Father" (71). This submission is seen in the incarnation and earthly mission of the Son (cf. John 8:28–29), in eternity past (cf. John 3:16–17; 6:38; Acts 2:23), and also in eternity future (cf. 1 Cor 15:24–28). The Son's submission to the Father is not one of compulsion or servitude, but one of love (cf. John 14:31); thus, submission to the Father and love for the Father are

inseparable (86). What of the Son's relation to the Spirit? The Son's relationship to the Spirit is complex on account of the uniqueness of the reality of the incarnation. That is, Ware argues, the incarnate Son submits to the Spirit *as a man* in order to fulfill his role as the Spirit-anointed, Spirit-led Messiah (88–94). Yet, *as the divine Son* he has authority over the Spirit, evidenced by the Son's authority with the Father to send out the Spirit (94–98).

As for the Holy Spirit, Ware argues that the Spirit's unique role is to take the "background position" in the Trinity (104), since the Bible indicates that the Spirit does nothing on his own authority (cf. John 16:12–14). Thus, the important role of the Spirit is to carry out the work of the Father—including scriptural inspiration, regeneration, and sanctification—in order to glorify the Son (105–25).

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* has numerous strengths. Each chapter is saturated with Scripture, which is the primary strength of the book. Ware's commitment to the authority and sufficiency of the biblical text is evident in both his theological conclusions as well as practical applications.

Ware's ability to take the historical development and expression of orthodox trinitarianism and demonstrate its relevance for contemporary theology is an additional strength of this book. Part of showing the relevance of trinitarian doctrine is to address—as Ware does with conviction and clarity—the ways in which such doctrine come to bear on specific theological and practical issues today.

For example, Ware does not shy away from the hot button issues of authority and submission in the home and in the church. As noted above, Ware argues textually and theologically for the Father's authority and the Son's submission. In light of these claims, Ware defends a complementary understanding of the roles and relationships between men and women in the home and in the church (138–51). For Ware, authority and submission are equally God-like qualities (137), and thus, they are manifested in human relationships since men and women are created in God's image. Those who consider themselves egalitarians will be challenged by Ware's argument, and Ware anticipates their objection:



It is not difficult to see 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. And if so, would it not stand to reason that when God creates the world he would fashion it in a way that reflects these eternal structures? And would it not make sense, then, that the authority-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—at least objectionable in these two spheres of human relationships—they clearly resist seeing this relational dynamic as true of the eternal relations within the Godhead (76–77).

Another strength of this book is found in Ware's pastoral and practical applications found in each chapter, and particularly in chapter 6. Among all his rich and helpful observations, Ware's discussion of learning from God what true fatherhood is like is especially insightful (60–63). For those who have had terrible experiences with their human fathers, Ware counsels not to abandon the biblical truth of God as Father (as many are doing in contemporary theology), but to allow its truth to heal and restore what has been lost as the result of sinful actions in earthly relationships.

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* is an important tool for pastors and teachers who want to challenge and instruct lay people or students in the doctrine of the Trinity. But even more, as is common among Ware's writings, this book deepens the reader's admiration for the triune God and leads one not only to think theologically about him, but also to respond doxologically to him.

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# Looking for More in the Wrong Places

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

Candi Finch

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As a wife, mother, and teacher, Ruth Haley Barton understands the struggles many Christian women face through the different seasons of life, and it is her own experiences in her family and in ministry that seem to drive her passion to help women find their own “transformation” in Christ (i.e., Barton became dissatisfied with her role as “only” a wife [120] and also with a complementarian understanding of a woman’s role in the church [64–65]). Barton is cofounder and president of The Transforming Center, a ministry devoted to “caring for the souls of pastors.” She is also the author of several books including *Sacred Rhythms*, *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*, and *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*. Her present work, *Longing for More*, was previously published by Waterbrook as *The Truths That Free Us*.

Barton’s book is divided into eleven chapters and is followed by two appendices, one on 1 Timothy 2 and one on adapting the book for a group study. The book is geared for a popular level audience. The first four chapters serve as background and exhortation to show women why they need transformation in Christ. Chapters five through ten look at six areas where women may need to experience transformation (overcoming materialism, in marriage, embracing biblical sexuality, embracing the transformations of motherhood, dealing with adversity, and relating to fellow Christian women). The final chapter serves as a conclusion to show what can happen if women are willing to experience transformation.

As one reads her work, a person may think it reminiscent of Betty Friedan’s “problem without a

name” in *The Feminine Mystique* in which women surveyed their lives and said that there had to be more to life than what they were experiencing. Barton echoes this sentiment. As a wife and mother, she began to feel that her identity had become too wrapped up in those labels. Unlike Friedan, though, Barton points readers to Christ to experience a fuller life.

One of the strengths of the work is Barton’s transparency about her own struggles and hardships. Women reading the work will appreciate hearing her testimony and her references to biblical women who have experienced similar troubles. Unfortunately, Barton’s solutions at points are based more on personal experiences and preferences than scriptural principles. It is dangerous because Barton refers to the “truth of her experiences” as warrant for positions she and other women take (88). A person’s experience, though, is not truth like God’s Word is truth. For example, Barton discusses a time in her life when she “needed to drop out of church for a while in order to let old wounds heal” (166). One wonders, however, how this pattern coheres with the biblical injunction that believers are not to give up assembling together (Heb 10:25). It is a slippery slope when one’s own experience becomes the decisive factor in scriptural interpretation. Though Barton rightly criticizes feminists in several places throughout her book, she falls into the same trap they do by elevating experience as a source or norm by which truth can be learned and revealed.

Her opening chapter urges women to find their identities not in a man or a position, but in

Christ alone. Her appeal is to married and single women alike that “none of us . . . can afford to invest our human relationships and endeavors with the meaning that only a relationship with God can provide” (24). This is true, but Barton’s appeal to women to strengthen their “self-esteem” (29) is an appeal more to modern psychology than to Scripture. Certainly, women should find their identities and worth in Christ, but the Christian life is about putting others before ourselves; it is a life of denial—putting aside our own wants for the sake of the kingdom. This is the testimony of Christ (Matt 20:28, Luke 9:23). Self worth in Christ is a different concept than the world’s idea of self-esteem.

Barton also denigrates the role of the homemaker suggesting that women may need more meaning in their life than “stereotypical women’s work” (38). She states “women in our society have not always been encouraged to achieve outside the home or to be independent. This is another detriment to healthy self-esteem. . . . [S]he might miss out on the sense of self-worth that comes from developing her interests and gifts, and using them in the context of work that is meaningful and challenging” (39). Does that mean that a woman like Susanna Wesley who invested her life in her family and home probably suffered from low self-esteem or that her work in the home was not meaningful or challenging? Ironically, later in the book Barton recalls a time where both she and her husband were working outside of the home, so they paid their sixteen-year-old daughter to “cover the home front” two days a week (121). The activities her daughter took care of were “cooking, cleaning, shopping, driving and overseeing the activities of two younger sisters” (122). Interestingly, Barton notes that her daughter enjoyed these activities more than any of her summer jobs, and it “gave her valuable experience” and appealed to her “capacity for leadership and organization” (122). Why is it that when a teenager gets paid to do “women’s work” it is valuable and appealing, but when a mother does the exact same things, it may hinder her self-esteem?

In chapters two and three and in the first appendix, Barton treats some of the gender passages in the Bible like Genesis 1–3, Gal 3:28, and

1 Timothy 2. The scope of her book does not allow for an in-depth treatment of these passages. She takes an egalitarian interpretation, and her footnotes reveal the great influence that the Kroegers’ work on 1 Timothy 2 (*I Suffer Not a Woman*) had on her own understanding. Barton plays the Holy Spirit’s gifting against scriptural instruction concerning headship in the home and in the church. She suggests that if the Holy Spirit gifts a woman for the pastorate then it cannot conflict with Scripture for her to serve in that capacity (76–77).

In the heart of Barton’s book she examines six areas where women need to experience transformation—areas in which women may struggle to honor Christ. She argues that materialism causes women to seek contentment in the things of this world instead of in Christ. This is one of the strongest chapters in her work; she correctly diagnoses a problem that plagues American culture and Christianity.

As Barton moves to address the areas of marriage, sexuality, and motherhood, she relies more on the testimonies of women to support her arguments than scriptural principles. She suggests that stress caused by a woman submitting to her husband and “surrendering her personhood” is the culprit for dissatisfaction within marriage for women (114–16). However, the example she cites is of a woman whose husband did not exercise headship in a God-honoring way. She even links domestic abuse with headship and cites women who have been abused by husbands who were seen as pillars in the Christian community as warrant for why headship is a dangerous concept (188). However, it is the abuse of headship that is the problem in the examples she cites.

Two final observations regard the contradictions in Barton’s work. She critiques the baby boomer’s sense of entitlement (103) and people who strive for positions of prominence (219). She states, “With the baby-boomer generation came a propensity toward an attitude of entitlement that has influenced us all” (103). Yet, when she discusses women’s service to the church, it is exactly the concept of entitlement that characterizes her attitude to women serving in positions of authority. Later in

the book she says, “if we are at all honest, many of us would say that we too have wasted time and energy striving for positions of prominence at times when we could have been serving” (219). However, just a few pages later she questions, “Why should women be like Christ in humility and suffering yet unlike him in authority power and exaltation? The answer is: there is no reason at all” (221).

The title of Barton’s book is *Longing for More*, and her claim is that “more” can only be found in Christ, yet she spends a good portion of her book arguing that a woman must be free to pursue her calling in any area of ministry and any place as long as it is not just in the home. She argues that true fulfillment can never be found in a person or activity but then seems to suggest that women will never find true fulfillment if they are restricted from certain ministries. In a sense she argues for “Christ first” in some parts of the book and then “me first” at other points. Because of this mixed message, *Longing for More* is not the answer for women who are struggling in the six areas that Barton identifies. Her work is helpful in diagnosing many of the problems women struggle with, and that is helpful so far as it goes. But those who are looking for solutions to these problems will have to go elsewhere.



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# Annotated Bibliography for Gender-Related Articles in 2008

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In this issue of the journal we profile some of the most significant gender-related articles from 2008. 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 between men and women—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

**Berry, Everett.** “Complementarianism and Eschatology: Engaging Gordon Fee’s ‘New Creation’ Egalitarianism.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 59–68.

Berry takes on Fee’s assertion that complementarianism contradicts NT teaching on how believers should presently relate to one another in

light of coming eschatological realities. Fee contends that complementarians, with their insistence on male headship, are advocating an idea that will not be found in the new creation. Berry responds to Fee’s assertion by noting, broadly, that egalitarianism operates from an over-realized eschatology. Berry concludes by noting that whatever life in the new creation looks like, we will still have unique roles to play, and we will retain our distinct essence as male and female creatures.

**Carter, Micah Daniel.** “Reconsidering the Maleness of Jesus.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 27–41.

Feminist theologians have sought to reinterpret much of what constitutes orthodox Christian doctrine. As Carter points out in this insightful article, Christology is no exception. Carter outlines the rationale for feminist reinterpretations of Christology and surveys their alternative interpretations of the incarnation. He critiques such reinterpretations by noting that they contain a faulty starting point—women’s experience—that leads to a loss of biblical authority. The result is a Christological conception that has lost any connection with the text of Scripture. In light of such reinterpretations, Carter concludes his article by affirming the necessity of the maleness of Jesus.

**Dever, Mark.** “Young vs. Old Complementarians.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 23–24.

Dever briefly summarizes differences between young and old complementarians. While he finds

significant agreement on the issue itself, the differences center on the strategy for presentation of the complementarian position. According to Dever, younger complementarians tend to be more up front with the issue than do older complementarians. He offers two reasons for this: different personal experiences and different theological assessment.

**Duncan, J. Ligon.** “Why ‘Together for the Gospel’ Embraces Complementarianism.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 25–26.

Duncan offers the reasons for including complementarianism in the “Together for the Gospel” theological statement of affirmations and denials (<http://t4g.org/beta/pdf/affirmations-denials.pdf>). Duncan notes that the main reason is because egalitarianism undermines the authority of Scripture. The remaining reasons, such as damage to Christian discipleship and inclusion of non-biblical anthropology, flow from this foundational concern.

**Hunt, Susan.** “Defenders of Women.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 24–30.

Hunt notes that one important aspect of male leadership in the church is the responsibility for men to protect women, providing a safe place for those who are or have been hurt. Hunt’s article urges pastors and men within the church to accept this responsibility and learn how to fulfill it effectively. To that end, Hunt offers a series of helpful suggestions, designed to assist churches in protecting women.

**Köstenberger, Margaret.** “What’s at Stake: ‘It’s Hermeneutics!’” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 36–42.

Köstenberger seeks to understand the hermeneutical method behind various feminist interpretations of Jesus’ ministry to women. Her article surveys some hermeneutical issues that drive the feminist studies of Jesus’ approach to women, such as the endeavor to reconstruct biblical history and the alleged patriarchal nature of Scripture. Her

conclusion is that any assessment of feminist interpretations of Jesus must also assess the viability of the underlying hermeneutics.

**Kotter, David.** “Answering Lottie Moon’s Cry: A Call for Dialogue On the Role of Women in Missions.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 31–35.

Kotter details the frequent questions regarding the application of complementarian gender roles in missionary work. He does not seek to offer answers to all such questions. His goal, rather, is to call for dialogue on the topic in hopes of developing a consensus that can guide those who are engaged in missionary activity.

**McCully, Carolyn.** “Raunch Culture Rip-Off.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 12–19.

McCully’s article discreetly details the rise of the “raunch culture” and its effect on young people, specifically young women. She notes that a biblical view of sexuality is often foreign to young women who have come of age in today’s porn-saturated culture. McCully’s contention is that the biblical view of sex is an absolute necessity today, and it can be effectively communicated by one-on-one mentoring that presents a clear picture of marital intimacy.

**Phillips, Benjamin B.** “Method Mistake: An Analysis of the Charge of Arianism in Complementarian Discussions of the Trinity.” *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 42–47.

Phillips surveys the debate between complementarians and egalitarians concerning intra-Trinitarian relations between the Father and the Son. Phillips’s article provides a summary of the egalitarian philosophical argument used in the debate, noting the deficiencies of the claim that any subordination that extends into eternity must entail an ontological subordination. Phillips also affirms that while philosophical arguments may be helpful, Scripture must be the final authority regarding intra-Trinitarian relations.

Stinson, Randy L., and Christopher W. Cowan. "How Shall We Speak of God? Seven Reasons Why We Cannot Call God 'Mother'." *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 20–23.

While noting that few evangelical feminists openly advocate feminine language for God, Stinson and Cowan also recognize that such language may become increasingly prevalent among evangelicals as the pressure to accept egalitarian gender roles intensifies. In an effort to combat such pressure, Cowan and Stinson offer seven biblical and theological reasons why Christians should not refer to God as "Mother."

Stinson, Randy L., 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.

Stinson and Cowan offer a practical guide for applying complementarian gender roles within the ministry of the local church. Their suggestions are motivated by a desire to help churches faithfully apply biblical teaching so that each and every believer has opportunity to exercise his or her gifts in a way that glorifies God and honors Scripture's commands. The article is particularly helpful in that it addresses specific ministry positions that are most prone to uncertainty regarding the application of complementarian gender roles.

Van Neste, Ray. "Pursuing Manhood." *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 (2008): 12–16.

In light of culture's confusion regarding manhood, Van Neste's article attempts to provide some guidance for young men on how to pursue biblical manhood. His suggestions are broadly characterized as follows: fulfill your responsibilities, embrace commitment, and be willing to sacrifice. The result is a vision of manhood in which the most significant cultural engagement begins in the home.

Ware, Bruce A. "Equal in Essence, Distinct in Roles: Eternal Functional Authority and Submission among the Essentially Equal Divine

Persons of the Godhead." *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 2 (2008): 43–58.

Drawing on both Scripture and historical theology, Ware outlines the position that, while the Father and the Son are equal in essence, there exists within the Trinity an eternal authority and submission structure in which the Son submits to the authority of the Father. This article is a helpful introduction to the intra-Trinitarian debate between complementarians and egalitarians.

### Egalitarian

Boris, Anne Clift. "Julian of Norwich: The Loving Motherhood of God." *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 1 (2008): 21–22.

Boris offers three reasons for her admiration of Julian of Norwich. One, Boris appreciates Julian's depiction of God as Mother. Boris even describes Julian's depiction as "theologically precise and orthodox," but offers no defense for such a label. Two, Boris appreciates Julian's writing on sin. Again, Boris highlights Julian's use of feminine imagery for God, saying that Julian encouraged people in sin to flee to God for comfort as a child flees to "his or her mother." Third, Boris appreciates Julian's emphasis on the love of God. On the topic of referring to God as "Mother," see the above mentioned article by Stinson and Cowan (*JBMW* 13, no. 2 [2008]: 20–23).

Chilcote, Paul W. "Biblical Equality and the Spirituality of Early Methodist Women." *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 2 (2008): 11–16.

Chilcote details the role of women in early Methodism and notes some of the factors that allowed for such ministry. Chilcote contends that Methodism's approval of women in ministry enabled Methodist women to be active in a variety of ministries, such as caring for the poor and preaching the Word to those in need.

Dean, David A. "The Role of Women in the Early Adventist Movement." *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 2 (2008): 17–22.

Dean surveys the role that women played in

the Adventist movement, noting the ministries of some particular Adventist women. Dean's conclusion is that women made important contributions to the movement and that such a legacy can teach us about the different ways in which God has used women to build his church.

**Deddo, Gary W. "The Trinity and Gender: Theological Reflections on the Differences of Divine and Human Persons." *Priscilla Paper* 22, no. 4 (2008): 4–13.**

Deddo examines the church's teaching regarding the relation of divine persons within the Trinity. He offers six theses, which he then defends through an examination of the Church Fathers and Scripture. From these six positions, Deddo draws a number of implications from the doctrine of the Trinity for the relationship of men and women. Within these implications, Deddo asserts that there ought to be no essential roles or functions assigned men and women. Deddo bases this assertion on his belief that roles are not essential to deity or humanity. So, in Deddo's conception, gender distinction does not entail role distinction. We can preserve the distinctions between male and female without insisting on different roles for each gender. Furthermore, Deddo concludes his article by offering a number of conclusions for how these implications should be lived out. Some of these conclusions are helpful, such as his insistence that the differentiation of humanity is a product of God's good creation. However, his conclusions also suggest an egalitarian relationship between men and women.

**Franklin, Patrick S. "Women Sharing in the Ministry of God: A Trinitarian Framework for the Priority of Spirit Gifting as a Solution to the Gender Debate." *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 4 (2008): 14–20.**

Franklin argues that Spirit gifting should be the "primary criterion" for Christian ministry. He argues that gifting "trumps" all other criterion, including those of church structure, tradition, or innate personal qualities such as gender. Franklin also notes that while this is a common argument for egalitarianism, it often lacks a suitable theological foundation. As such, Franklin seeks to provide that

foundation by examining the "dynamics of Trinitarian grace" as present in the theologies of Augustine and J. B. Torrance. Franklin hopes that his Trinitarian approach will answer the objection that prioritizing Spirit gifting places too much emphasis on human experience. His conclusion is that gender plays no factor in God's gifting and calling of people in ministry. It is important to briefly note a flaw in the foundation of Franklin's approach. His suggestion that Spirit gifting "trumps" all other criteria fails to take into account New Testament passages that limit ministry positions for reasons other than gifting. For example, the qualifications for elder in the Pastoral Epistles place the greatest emphasis on character, not gifting. As such, it seems that the pattern of New Testament teaching conflicts with his assertion that Spirit gifting is the "primary criterion" for Christian ministry.

**Green, Robert J. "Catherine Booth, The Salvation Army, and the Purity Crusade of 1885." *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 3 (2008): 9–18.**

Green recounts the commendable work of Catherine Booth and the Salvation Army against such social evils as poverty and prostitution. Green's historical survey is intended to determine the origins and intentions of the Salvation Army's social ministry.

**Haddad, Mimi. "Jessie Penn-Lewis' Cross Theology: Gender Relations in the New Covenant." *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 2 (2008): 5–10.**

Haddad's article is a reflection on the theology of Jessie Penn-Lewis, whom Haddad describes as an influential woman associated with the Welsh Revivals and Keswick movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Haddad notes that Penn-Lewis rooted her egalitarianism in the finished work of Christ. In Penn-Lewis' understanding, Christ's work on the cross accomplished the redemption of sinners and the unifying of men and women. Haddad spends the majority of her article surveying Penn-Lewis' *The Magna Charta of Woman*, which was a defense of a contemporary work by Katherine Bushnell. Haddad contends that Penn-Lewis' work enabled women to reject



the subordination to which the church had historically subjected them in favor of full inclusion in all avenues of ministry.

**Hendershot, Kathryn Reese.** “E. Stanley Jones Had a Wife: The Life and Mission of Mabel Lossing Jones, 1878-1978.” *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 2 (2008): 23-26.

Hendershot examines the life of Mabel Lossing Jones, with particular attention paid to her egalitarian beliefs. Hendershot laments that Jones’s story is not more well known, but notes that it provides us with a good example for understanding the woman missionary.

**Johnson, Kristin.** “Morphing Mary: The Medieval Transformation of the Mother of Jesus Christ.” *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 1 (2008): 11-16.

Johnson questions what the church, particularly during the medieval era, has done with the biblical portrayal of Mary. She notes that Protestants tend to ignore Mary, while Catholics tend to distort her. Johnson contends that this tendency is due to physiology rather than theology. So, Mary is ignored or distorted by theologians because she is a woman. Johnson goes on to state that the biblical picture of Mary is one of a fallible human being who trusted the word of God and was used as a part of God’s plan in history. This is certainly a better picture of Mary than the one present in the Catholic Church. Johnson also uses this picture of Mary as the ground for her conclusion that God can choose to use anyone, regardless of gender or economic status or “hierarchical position.” Complementarians would heartily agree that God does indeed save and use people regardless of gender or economic status. However, the underlying assumption of Johnson’s argument must be rejected. God’s choosing of Mary does not somehow indicate that God chooses women to serve in positions in the church today that are prohibited in Scripture.

**Maddox, Mary Agnes.** “The Aggressive Christianity of Catherine Mumford Booth.” *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 3 (2008): 5-8.

Maddox discusses the life and faith of Cath-

erine Mumford Booth, who co-founded the Salvation Army with her husband, William. Maddox approvingly describes Catherine’s belief that since women were equal with men, they should be able to serve in any ministry capacity a man might fill. Throughout the article, Maddox notes how Catherine exceeded her husband in both skill and popularity. The assumption of Maddox’s article appears to be that since Catherine Booth was apparently successful in ministries usually closed to women, then all women should be able to pursue whatever ministry they choose, despite so-called biblical prohibitions. Furthermore, the article fails to offer any defense as to why this particular movement of Christian history, which was by no means mainstream, should be considered normative.

**Molinari, Andrea Lorenzo.** “Women Martyrs in the Early Church: Hearing Another Side of the Story.” *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 1 (2008): 5-10.

Lamenting the tendency of church history to recognize only the male martyrs of centuries past, Molinari recounts a number of stories of the church’s female martyrs. Specifically, Molinari deals with the supposed martyrdom of Peter’s wife, as retold by Clement of Alexandria, and with the martyrdom of two deaconesses of Bithynia, as recounted in Pliny’s writings. Molinari’s goal in pursuing such a thesis is to recover the history of the church’s female martyrs, which, in his estimation, has been lost due to an inequitable emphasis on the church’s male martyrs.

**Morrison, Pam.** “The Holy Spirit, Neglected Person of the Trinity, and Women’s Leadership.” *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 4 (2008): 21-24.

Morrison asserts that attentiveness to and dependence on the Spirit are the marks of effective servants of God. As such, she contends that the church should not base leadership on human achievements and especially not on gender. The primary concern in spiritual leadership should be the ministry of the Spirit. While Morrison is correct in asserting the importance of the Spirit’s work in personal ministry, she incorrectly concludes that this eliminates any and all other qualifications. She

dismisses significant passages of Scripture, such as Eph 5:22–23 and 1 Tim 2:12, as merely “problematic” without offering any explanation as to how those passages actually do fit her understanding of the Spirit’s work in personal ministry.

**Nichols, Bridget. “Women and Liturgical Reform: The Case of St. Margaret of Scotland.”** *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 1 (2008): 23–27.

Nichols’s article is a reflection on the life of St. Margaret of Scotland. To that end, Nichols surveys an early account of Margaret’s life and offers some suggestions for interpreting the history of this particular woman.

**Omelianchuk, Adam. “The Logic of Equality.”** *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 4 (2008): 25–28.

Omelianchuk sets out to examine the logic of the complementarian claim that men and women are equal in essence but distinct in role or function. Omelianchuk outlines a five-part argument that claims it is not logically possible for men and women to be equal in essence but distinct in role or function. In Omelianchuk’s understanding, the Bible is logical and, therefore, those positions that are illogical should not be considered biblical. This is Omelianchuk’s rationale for examining the logic, rather than the exegesis, of complementarian claims. Omelianchuk contends that by disproving the logic of complementarianism, he can prove that the position is not biblical.

**Rader, Paul A., and Kay F. Rader. “Lest We Lose Our Legacy: Officer Women in the Salvation Army.”** *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 3 (2008): 19–22.

The Raders, former Salvation Army officers, discuss the Army’s policy on women in ministry, which stems from the influence of co-founder Catherine Booth. The article details some of the continuing challenges the Army faces in incorporating women in all aspects of ministry. Notably, the authors lament the fact that “far-right conservatism” is preventing new recruits from acknowledging the “scriptural grounds for women’s freedom to preach and lead.” Unfortunately, the Raders do not articulate what those scriptural grounds are.

The article also operates from the assumption that “far-right conservatism” seeks to deny women the opportunity to exercise their gifts in ministry. Of course, complementarians would challenge such an assumption.

**Shade, JoAnn Streeter. “Vocational Identity and Direction: Hagar’s Word to Women in Ministry.”** *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 3 (2008): 23–26.

Shade seeks to identify and deal with questions that women in ministry face. In doing so, Shade hopes to reduce the number of women who, despite being trained for ministry, end up leaving their positions. Shade looks for answers to these questions from the biblical story of Hagar.

**Trumbull, Whit. “Equality and Pastoral Rule: Pope Gregory the Great’s Inner Conflict.”** *Priscilla Papers* 22, no. 1 (2008): 17–20.

Trumbull argues that Gregory the Great held egalitarian beliefs that caused him a significant amount of “anguish” and “dissonance.” Trumbull attempts to demonstrate that Gregory’s view of pastoral ministry, which was based on what Trumbull terms “hierarchy,” contradicted his egalitarianism. She also notes that this hierarchical view influenced the church until the time of the Reformation, when the Reformers reintroduced the concept of the priesthood of believers and reestablished a more egalitarian basis of ministry within the church. Early in the article, a significant flaw in Trumbull’s argument appears. She defines egalitarianism as “belief in fundamental human equality”—falsely assuming that those who are not egalitarian do not believe in fundamental human equality. Furthermore, Trumbull assumes that the Reformation concept of the priesthood of believers fits with her particular understanding of egalitarianism. Certainly, the priesthood of believers asserts the equality of persons before God, but it is questionable whether the Reformers would agree that this concept supports the claims of evangelical feminists.

## Undeclared

**Bird, Michael F. and Robert Shillaker.** “Subordination in the Trinity and Gender Roles: A Response to Recent Discussion.” *Trinity Journal* 29, no. 2 (2008): 267–83.

The authors begin their article by noting the recent increase in interest concerning intra-Trinitarian relationships as they relate to gender roles. Their stated goal is to respond to the recent studies offered in the intra-Trinitarian discussion. After briefly summarizing the two main positions in the debate (as represented by Wayne Grudem and Kevin Giles), the authors offer a four-part critique of Giles’ rejection of functional subordinationism. The points of critique are as follows: (1) Giles’s assertion that function determines ontology is questionable; (2) complete co-equality between the Father and Son endangers the necessity and meaning of the incarnation. The incarnation is the historical expression of an eternal reality, namely, the Sonship of the Son; (3) the subordination of the Son in the economic Trinity corresponds with subordination of the Son in the immanent Trinity. At this point, the authors make use of Rahner’s Rule—in the Trinity, economic relations are identical with immanent relations; (4) there are several biblical texts that are consistent with functional subordination. The authors conclude that the intra-Trinitarian debate is being driven by those who seek to support a particular view of gender relations. The danger, they assert, is that such comparisons can only go so far. Furthermore, the authors claim the analogy from intra-Trinitarian relations to male-female relations does not work. They contend that the conclusions drawn by complementarians do not disprove egalitarian claims. As such, the authors believe that both sides of the gender debate should refrain from appealing to the Trinity for defense of their particular position.

**Greenbury, James.** “1 Corinthians 14:34–35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52, no. 4 (2008): 721–32.

Greenbury attempts to demonstrate some of the problems associated with what he terms the “most popular” interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34–35. The interpretation to which he refers maintains that what Paul prohibits in this passage is women evaluating prophecy within the church. Greenbury finds five problems with this particular interpretation: (1) it makes the evaluation of prophecy more authoritative than prophecy itself, which is problematic in Greenbury’s mind; (2) Paul’s language about learning seems incompatible with evaluating prophecies; (3) Paul’s language in verse 29 more likely denotes silent assessment by the congregation, rather than audible evaluation; (4) Paul uses a general term for speaking, which appears incompatible with a specific activity of speaking such as evaluating prophecy; (5) the popular interpretation does not naturally flow from the text.

**Patterson, Richard D.** “Metaphors of Marriage as Expressions of Divine-Human Relations.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52, no. 4 (2008): 689–702.

Patterson attempts to understand what the marriage metaphors of the Bible reveal about divine-human relationships. He pursues this thesis by examining marriage in the ancient Near East, the Old Testament, and the New Testament. Patterson concludes that these metaphors communicate the necessity of the church submitting to the sanctifying work of Christ, her Bridegroom, as well as the necessity of the church serving Christ.

**Schmutzer, Andrew J.** “A Theology of Sexual Abuse: A Reflection on Creation and Devastation.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 4 (2008): 785–812.

Schmutzer’s article is an attempt to bring light to the reality of sexual abuse and foster a deeper understanding of this reality that can lead to healing for those involved. Schmutzer offers theological analysis, along with exegesis of key creation texts as they relate to the issue of sexual abuse. He concludes by summarizing a series of needs created by sexual abuse that the church must meet.

**Tracy, Steven R. “What Does ‘Submit in Everything’ Really Mean? The Nature and Scope of Marital Submission.” *Trinity Journal* 29 NS, no. 2 (2008): 285–312.**

Noting what he believes is a lack of material concerning marital submission, Tracy attempts to understand what it means for a wife to submit to her husband “in everything” (Eph 5:24). Tracy contends that many of the problems facing modern couples are not addressed specifically in Scripture. This creates difficulty in applying biblical commands concerning marital submission. In light of those difficulties Tracy offers his analysis and conclusions. He begins by surveying three “non-egalitarian” models of marital submission. First, Tracy addresses “Unqualified Submission, Unqualified Male Authority.” He notes that in this model to disobey one’s husband is to disobey God. Tracy rejects this model due to the unqualified nature of the husband’s authority. Second, He looks at “Single Qualification Submission.” This model differs from the previous in that complete spiritual equality between husband and wife is affirmed and in that the wife should not submit if doing so violates a clear biblical command. Finally, Tracy outlines his position, which he calls “Multiple Qualification: Limited Male Authority.” In this model, male headship is qualified by emphasizing sacrificial leadership over authority to wield power. He also offers a number of biblical reasons for limiting male authority. Tracy further contends that while this model is not prevalent in literature on submission, it is the practice of the majority of “non-egalitarian” marriages. He concludes his article by offering six summary principles that should guide the application of submission within marriage. A number of Tracy’s principles are clear guidelines for submission, such as not submitting to physical or sexual abuse. The complementarian position advocated at CBMW certainly agrees with this, so it is difficult to see how Tracy’s conclusion differs at this point. Other principles need more definition. For example, Tracy contends that a wife should not submit to her husband if doing so would violate her conscience. This seems to be a well-reasoned principle, provided we state clearly what a viola-

tion of conscience entails. Overall, Tracy’s article contains much that complementarians agree with and affirm. At points, he seems to read the authors of his second position—Single Qualification Submission—somewhat uncharitably. This creates the impression that there is more difference between his second and third model than actually exists.