

THE JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL
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MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

ARTICLES INCLUDE:

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The Untold Story of Women and the Reformation
Stephen J. Nichols

The Translation of
Gender Terminology in the NIV 2011
Denny Burk

A Review of *Liberating Tradition* by Kristina LaCelle-Peterson
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A Word to Husbands (And a Few More for Wives):
1 Peter 3:1–7
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AND WOMANHOOD**

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created equal in the image of God,
because these teachings are essential for
obedience to Scripture and for the health
of the family and the Church.

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Editorial: Writing and Worldviews

Denny Burk

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A recent news report caught my attention—not so much because it was particularly surprising or unheard of (it wasn't), but because it was an unhappy sign of the times. It contains another subtle marker of how much the public's thinking about gender issues has changed in a relatively short time. But the shift is not in the substance of the story itself (tragic as it is) but in how the story is told. From the opening paragraphs of the report:

Woman charged in transgender beating at McDonald's

ROSEDALE, Md. — An 18-year-old woman has been charged in an attack on a transgender woman over using a McDonald's restroom in a Baltimore suburb—an incident captured on video by a McDonald's employee...

A video of the April 18 fight posted online shows two young women kicking and punching 22-year-old Chrissy Lee Polis in the head until she appears to have a seizure.

Polis told The Baltimore Sun that before she was attacked she heard a teen say she was a man using the women's restroom.¹

The substance of this report is at once troubling and sad and ought to evoke the outrage of every decent person that reads it. Nevertheless, the events in the report aren't what I want to focus on.

Instead, I want to highlight a subtlety in *how* the story is written that may have gone unnoticed by many readers. Notice that the male victim is designated as a transgender "woman," and the report goes on to refer to *him* four times with the feminine pronoun "she." What is going on here? Perhaps a bit of explanation would help.

A transgender person is someone who identifies psychologically with a gender that is opposite of his biological gender. The whole category of transgender assumes that gender is a social construct. This view treats gender not as something that you are born with (vis-à-vis biology) but as a set of stereotypes and preferences that one learns from culture. On the nature-vs-nurture spectrum, this view holds gender to be all nurture and no nature. Gender is something that you learn, not something that you are.

Thus in contemporary gender theory, one's

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gender is not biologically determined. It is set by whatever a person feels themselves to be. If a person that is biologically male *feels* like he should be a female, then we should call him a “she.” Because maleness and femaleness is a social construct, one need not be biologically female to, in fact, be a female.

As you can see, this point of view differs radically from the biblical worldview, which sees maleness and femaleness as distinctions that God Himself has embedded in the order of creation. In the Christian worldview, *maleness and femaleness* originate with the creative intention of God, not with a social construct we learn from human culture. In the beginning God differentiates humankind as male and female, and God unambiguously calls this differentiation “good” (Gen 1:27, 31). God also assigns some behavioral roles based on this differentiation (e.g., Eph 5:21–33; 1 Pet3:1–7).

Notice how the definition of transgender emerges in the news report cited above. The use of feminine terms to refer to a male human reflects an underlying worldview commitment. Yet what we see in this article is not merely a one-off flight of fancy by a single reporter. The language reflects the usage prescribed by *The Associated Press Stylebook* (New York: Basic Books, 2009) when referring to “transgender” people.

Transgender. Use the pronoun preferred by the individuals who have acquired the physical characteristics of the opposite sex or present themselves in a way that does not correspond with their sex at birth.

If that preference is not expressed, use the pronoun consistent with the way the individuals live publicly (p. 279).

So when you read any news report that follows the AP stylebook, you cannot take gender references as straightforward descriptions of a person’s sex.

So here are the bottom-line questions that beg to be answered. Does this news report take sides on the underlying worldview question? Yes, it does. Does it side with contemporary gender theory against a biblical worldview on gender? Yes, it does. Instead of identifying the victim as a “man

posing as a woman,” it identifies the man simply as a “woman” trying to make use of a public bathroom.

My point here is not to rally support for a revision of the AP stylebook, nor is it to nit-pick the surface structures of language. My main concern is for Christians to take note of the clash of worldviews that can emerge even in “straightforward” news reports. Readers are frequently being asked in reports like this one to take on assumptions that cut directly against biblical revelation. The passive reader risks accepting these assumptions uncritically if he is not vigilant to recognize the aberrations when he sees them. Christians must, therefore, be active and wise readers. They must know the biblical worldview so as to take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5).

ENDNOTES

¹Thankfully, the victim in this story was not seriously injured and in fact was able to give a video interview to a reporter. “Woman charged in transgender beating at McDonald’s” MSNBC.com [cited 5 April 25 2011]. Online: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/42750492/ns/us_news-crime_and_courts.

Odds & Ends

An Egalitarian Gets Biblical

Rachel Held Evans is an egalitarian, and she wants to live according to the Bible for one year ... just to see what it's like. Her aim is to follow all the commands of the Bible that are directed towards women. Among other things, this project will include "submitting" to her husband as Col 3:18 teaches. She invites everyone to follow along on her blog (<http://rachelheldevans.com>) to track her progress. Thomas Nelson has agreed to publish a book in 2012 describing her year of living obediently. [Read the announcement of her project here: <http://rachelheldevans.com/womanhood-announcement>]

There is an irony in the description of her project. She says that she is going to obey the Bible's commands as "literally" as possible. She seems to be admitting that the "literal" interpretation of Col 3:18 involves following the leadership of her husband. That would seem to be a counterintuitive admission for such a committed egalitarian. Does she really mean to concede the literal interpretation of this pivotal text to complementarians?

In any case, it looks like the real aim of her experiment and book is to discredit complementarianism. The only problem is that she is not really trying out complementarianism. She's conflated Old Testament law with New Testament norms and has labelled it "living biblically." But no complementarian that I ever heard of would consider such a conflation as "living biblically." For that reason, this work looks to be more of an eccentricity than a contribution. I am sure it will make for an interesting book, but I am not hopeful that this project will move forward the evangelical conversation about the Bible's teaching on gender roles.

—Denny Burk

Moral Collapse at *Ms.* Magazine

For almost forty years, *Ms.* magazine has been the most famous voice of the feminist movement in print. Co-founded by Gloria Steinem in 1972, the magazine is stalwartly feminist, retaining the language and spirit of the feminism of the 1970s. In other words, *Ms.* is the voice of feminist ideological orthodoxy. And the demand for unrestricted abortion rights is at the center of that ideology.

That's what makes the Winter 2011 edition of the magazine so interesting—and so disturbing. The issue features an article by Madeline Wheeler entitled "Saving the Girl Child," which offers a report on "India's epidemic of female infanticide and sex-selection abortion" (Madeline Wheeler, "Saving the Girl Child," *Ms.* [Winter 2011]).

The appearance of that article does come as something of a surprise. After all, *Ms.*, and the feminist movement it represents, insist that a woman must have the right to abort a pregnancy for any reason or for no reason. This claim, they have long insisted, is central to the very idea of reproductive freedom. So, what about sex-selection abortions—when it is female babies who are most commonly aborted? On this issue, *Ms.* seems to have found cause for feminist concern. Wheeler explains that Indian women "are under severe pressure to bear sons." She continues, "In fact, female infanticide and sex-selection abortion over the last two decades has led to a dearth of baby girls and an unnatural gender ratio." This dearth of baby girls is described as a "problem."

The article also reveals that even though sex-selection abortions are illegal in India, they remain common. The arrival of sophisticated prenatal imaging technologies, such as the ultrasound, have allowed the identification of fetal gender, leading to the targeting of baby girls in societies like India and China, which are marked by a clear "son preference."

So far, so good. If anything, the article fails to

indicate the full scale of the tragedy — but it also fails to describe “the problem” as tragic in any sense. In reality, the targeting of female babies by abortion and infanticide has meant over 100 million missing girls in India and China, as documented by *The Economist* earlier this year.

Madeline Wheeler does describe the “problem” of sex-selection abortions targeting girls, and then she writes, “Even worse, families unable to afford ultrasound procedures often resort to infanticide.” She cited the report of filmmaker Nyna Pais-Caputi, who was told by the director of an orphanage that the facility was located on the shore of a lake in order “to encourage families to give their infant daughters up for adoption rather than drown them in the lake.”

The article points with hope to a campaign led by the government. “Save the Girl Child” is an effort to “save girls.” How? By addressing the morality of abortion? Of course not. Instead, the campaign will include fashion shows, special birthday cards for girls, doctors who will argue against sex-selection abortions, and “government schemes offering cash incentives to families to raise girls.”

Wheeler ends her article by quoting filmmaker Nyna Pais-Caputi: “Women need to be seen as valuable, positive role models. People need to feel the magnitude of the problem.”

On that statement, we can all agree. But the obvious question is this — has *Ms.* magazine felt anything even close to “the magnitude of the problem”?

Their feminist ideology does not even allow them to acknowledge that sex-selection abortions are perfectly legal in the United States, and that feminists have insisted that any woman has a right to an abortion at any time for any reason or for no stated reason at all. The pro-abortion ideology is so extreme that any opposition to the targeting of girls by sex-selection abortion is undermined by the movement’s enthusiasm for unfettered abortion rights.

The moral bankruptcy of their situation is revealed by the tepid language employed in the article and the lack of moral outrage. But how can *Ms.* muster any genuine outrage about sex-

selection abortions in India when it has demanded unfettered abortion access in our own country? It cannot, and it does not. This monumental tragedy is described only as “the problem.”

The moral collapse of their position is seen in the fact that this murderous rampage against female babies cannot be described in the language moral sanity demands. The only morally sane response to this tragedy is outrage against the killing of all babies — followed by the affirmation of the sanctity and dignity of every human life.

We can only pray that embarrassment over this article might force some readers of *Ms.* magazine to rethink the entire question, for, as tepidly expressed in the closing words of the article, “People need to feel the magnitude of the problem.”

—R. Albert Mohler

Post-feminist Regrets

Jennifer Moses thinks that sexual liberation did not deliver on its promise to deliver the good life. And now, the specter of past sexual exploits haunts post-feminist mothers who feel hypocritical for trying to lead their own children to practice some sexual restraint. In an OP-ED for *The Wall Street Journal*, she writes,

It has to do with how conflicted my own generation of women is about our own past, when many of us behaved in ways that we now regret. A woman I know, with two mature daughters, said, “If I could do it again, I wouldn’t even have slept with my own husband before marriage. Sex is the most powerful thing there is, and our generation, what did we know?”

We are the first moms in history to have grown up with widely available birth control, the first who didn’t have to worry about getting knocked up. We were also the first not only to be free of old-fashioned fears about our reputations but actually pressured by our peers and the wider culture to find our true womanhood in the bedroom. Not all of us are former good-time girls now drowning in

regret—I know women of my generation who waited until marriage—but that’s certainly the norm among my peers.

So here we are, the feminist and post-feminist and postpill generation. We somehow survived our own teen and college years (except for those who didn’t), and now, with the exception of some Mormons, evangelicals and Orthodox Jews, scads of us don’t know how to teach our own sons and daughters not to give away their bodies so readily. We’re embarrassed, and we don’t want to be, God forbid, hypocrites.

Still, in my own circle of girlfriends, the desire to push back is strong. I don’t know one of them who doesn’t have feelings of lingering discomfort regarding her own sexual past. And not one woman I’ve ever asked about the subject has said that she wishes she’d “experimented” more (Jennifer Moses, “Why Do We Let Them Dress Like That?” *The Wall Street Journal* [March 19, 2011]. Online: <http://online.wsj.com>).

The rest of the article is about how mothers of teenage girls might be able to make boundaries for their daughters—even though those very same mothers observed no boundaries when they were younger. But this article really isn’t about boundaries. Nor is it really about parenting. I think this is about something deeper.

There is an entire generation of men and women mired in the regret of something they cannot undo. Sexual liberation was not nearly as liberating as it promised to be. “Liberation” inevitably leads to slavery to the baser instincts of the human condition. It shackles the human heart to its own vanity. Or, as the apostle Paul says it, “you are slaves of the one whom you obey” (Rom 6:16). Those who obey their lust eventually find it to be a very cruel master that leaves heartache and regret in its wake.

That is why the restlessness that these women feel is not an accident. God made us for his glory, and he has a purpose for our sexual lives (1 Cor 6:13, 20). When we ignore that purpose, we ignore the Creator’s design, and that has consequences. That is why even among those who do not confess

Christ or a Christian sexual ethic, there sometimes emerges an unexplainable urge to go back to that which they initially wished to be free from—the covenanted union of one man and one woman in marriage. There is more to Moses’ article than meets the eye.

—Denny Burk

Women in Black Too: The Untold Story of Women and the Reformation¹

Stephen J. Nichols

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The home, cities, economic life, and government would virtually disappear. Men can't do without women. Even if it were possible for men to beget and bear children, they still couldn't do without women.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, John Calvin, Conrad Grebel, Menno Simons, Thomas Cranmer, John Bunyan, Jeremiah Burroughs—all of them have at least one thing in common. They're all men. When the story of the Reformation gets told, it's typically their story. There is another story to be told, however—the inspiring story of the courage and fortitude of the women of the Reformation. Their too often untold story needs to be heard.

The women of the Reformation fit into two categories: Reformers' wives who made quite an impact themselves and women who made substantive contributions on their own. Among the first category, none is more well-known than Katherina von Bora, the former nun who married Martin Luther. In the latter category we find mostly nobility and even royalty—some risking great wealth and family honor for their commitment to the Reformation cause. All of them played significant roles.

The official dogma of the Roman Catholic Church disallowed a married clergy. Monks and

the ranks of the clergy were married to the church; nuns were married to Christ. Breaking the vow of celibacy whether theoretically or officially would mean that one would have to give up a position in the church. Unofficially and practically, of course, there were secret marriages and mistresses and affairs. Thomas Cranmer, for instance, had a wife long before he and Henry VIII brought about the British Reformation. When Ulrich Zwingli became priest of the Great Minster at Zurich he was replacing a “celibate” priest who somehow managed to father a number of children.

The Reformers, with Luther and Calvin leading the way, championed the institution of marriage and the family. They saw no biblical warrant for celibacy of the priesthood—Peter, after all, had a mother-in-law. Conversely, they saw marriage elevated and celebrated everywhere in the pages of Scripture. Once they got married, however, they faced a challenge that the church as a whole hadn't faced in over a millennium: What does a minister's family look like? Just as they broke new ground on so many areas of theology, they also needed to pioneer the Christian home. Fortunately, they were not alone. They had formidable wives to help them figure it out.

Married to the Reformation

While Katherina von Bora might be the most famous of the Reformation wives, she didn't quite compare with Wibrandis Rosenblatt, at least not when it came to the number of husbands. She was Wibrandis (Rosenblau) Keller-Oecolampadius-Capito-Bucer. Yes, she had four husbands, and all of them were significant Reformers, causing one writer to dub her "the Bride of the Reformation," or as she is known in German, the *Reformationfrau*.² Wibrandis and her widowed mother lived in Basel, where she met her first husband, Ludwig Keller. He died after just two short years of marriage, leaving Wibrandis widowed at the age of twenty-two and the mother of a small child, also named Wibrandis. She soon after married Johannes Oecolampadius (1482-1531)—his last name means "house lamp"—a leader in the Swiss Reformation. Having been a Roman Catholic priest, Oecolampadius gave up being a bachelor at the age of forty-five. After four years of marriage and having a son named Eusebius, after the famed historian of the early church, Wibrandis was again left a widow when Oecolampadius died on November 23, 1531. "Pray the Lord to give us a long and happy marriage," Oecolampadius had written to William Farel, his friend in Geneva. It wasn't to be.³

At about the same time that Oecolampadius died, his friend and fellow Reformer at Strasbourg, Wolfgang Capito (1478-1541), lost his wife. Martin Bucer, a friend and a frequent visitor in Oecolampadius's home, served as matchmaker for the widow and the widower. The next year Wibrandis packed her home and took her two children off to Strasbourg. Tragedy would soon strike, however, as the plague ravaged Strasbourg, taking the lives of Eusebius Oecolampadius, the two children of Wibrandis and Wolfgang Capito, and the life of Capito himself. The plague also claimed the life of Elisabeth Bucer, the wife of Martin. For a third time, Wibrandis was widowed.

In 1542 Wibrandis entered her fourth marriage to, of course, Martin Bucer (1491-1551). In 1548 the Reformation in Switzerland took a turn for the worse, causing the hard-line Reformers to look for freer environs. Bucer headed for Cam-

bridge, England, where, under the reign of Edward VI, he had a great influence in preaching and teaching. The climate, food, and culture, however, never quite agreed with Bucer. He died in 1551. This was actually the longest marriage that Wibrandis had, even though it only lasted nine years. After Bucer's death, Wibrandis returned with the family to Strasbourg before returning to her first home of Basel. There were no children in the marriage to Bucer, but there were children from Bucer's first and children from her previous marriages. She lived until 1564, when the plague again swept through Basel. Wibrandis (Rosenblatt) Keller-Oecolampadius-Capito-Bucer was truly married to the Reformation and was a matriarch of the Swiss Reformation.

Wibrandis's marriages were punctuated by tragedy, yet she persevered. Children died in infancy. Her husbands faced uphill struggles as they fought for the Reformation. Finances were stretched thin. She cared for her widowed mother. Her home was more like a hostel, full of travelers and children and relatives. Bucer once said of her, "I can only hope to be as kind to my new wife as she to me." She could write in German and Latin, and according to her second husband, Oecolampadius, she knew her theology. But she was always in the shadows, her contribution never applauded, her role not to be center stage. Could Keller, Oecolampadius, Capito, and Bucer have done what they did without her?

John Calvin drew the same strength from his brief and tragedy-filled marriage to Idelette de Bure. They had one child, a son who died in infancy. After nine years of marriage, Idelette was brought low by illness. She never enjoyed good health throughout the course of their marriage. She died in 1549. Calvin was devastated. Writing to his friend and fellow Reformer Pierre Viret, he declared his grief, "I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life." To Farel he stated, "I do what I can to keep myself from being overwhelmed by grief." He recalled their last few moments together. "She was unable to speak, and her mind seemed to be troubled. I, having spoken a few words about the love of Christ, the hope of eternal life, concerning our married life, and her departure, engaged in prayer. In full possession of her mind, she both heard the

prayer and attended to it.”⁴ Calvin could never find a companion of equal stature to Idelette, remaining a widower until his death in 1564.

And then there’s Martin Luther’s Katharina von Bora, or “Katie, my rib,” as he called her. Luther thought himself to be a confirmed bachelor until Katie came along. Luther’s literary output was incredible. He preached and taught and consulted and administered tirelessly. But he couldn’t manage a household for anything. Those of more noble standing showered him with gifts of money and property. Most of it slipped through Luther’s hands as quickly as it came into them. Luther just didn’t seem to have room for thinking about such things. Katie managed it all expertly.

Luther was traveling when he fell ill and died. Just weeks after his death, Katie wrote to a sister-in-law, “Yes, my sorrow is so deep that no words can express my heartbreak.... I can neither eat nor drink, not even sleep.... God knows that when I think of having lost him, I can neither talk nor write in all my suffering and crying.” She would sign her letters “solitary widow.” The following years were not easy for her. She had her children to attend to, and after her famous husband’s death, many simply forgot about the Luther family. As was said in her eulogy, “She experienced much ingratitude by many people of whom she should expect help and support for the sake of her husband’s public merits in the service to the church.” Her self-description near the end has her “clinging to Christ like a burr to a dress.” She died in 1552.⁵

The Courage of Queens

One of the shortest reigns of any monarch perhaps of all time lasted only nine days. In some sense her reign was a front; she being a puppet with the strings controlled by her handlers, not the least of which was her father. Yet Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554), England’s famed “Nine Day Queen,” had a mind all her own. Jane Grey, as portrayed in a major motion picture, is seen in historical memory as precocious, if not irascible, depicted as a teenager bent on finding herself and asserting herself, right up to the end when she dies heroically. The movie errs most, however, in paying too slim atten-

tion to the theological and religious dimension of Jane Grey. Her handlers knew they were getting a Protestant, but they didn’t know they were getting a Protestant theologian. Jane, barely in her teen years, corresponded regularly with Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli’s successor in Switzerland. One time she asked him about the best course of study for learning Hebrew.

When Edward VI died, at a young age but not entirely unexpectedly, the court went into a tailspin. Mary, soon to be Bloody Mary, was the rightful heir, being the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. She was Catholic to the core, and her ascent to the throne threatened to unravel the entire Reformation in Britain. Those committed to seeing the Reformation through entered into a backroom political blitz, resulting in the plan to put Jane Grey on the throne.

They plied her status as the great-niece of Henry VIII to qualify her for the throne (Jane Grey’s mother was daughter to Henry VII’s sister—remember this for the quiz). Everyone, however, could see straight through the transparent plot to undermine England’s long-held belief in the divine right of kings, which means in short, don’t mess with the bloodline in the accession of the throne. Even though Mary was Catholic, not putting her on the throne would have been tantamount to reversing the course of the planets. In other words, Jane Grey enjoyed only a small circle of support because even many friends of the Reformation could not go against the divine right of the monarchy. Mary’s forces easily routed the meager army defending Jane Grey. Those who put her on the throne and Jane Grey herself all ended up in the Tower of London. They were the first to fall in Mary’s reign of terror and revenge, revenge both on the Protestant “heretics” for deposing Roman Catholicism and on those who co-conspired in the “annulment” of Henry VIII’s marriage to Mary’s mother, Catherine of Aragon. Those long decades Mary spent in exile in France provided ample opportunity for her to nurse both her Catholicism and her plans of vengeance.

After Mary had Jane Grey arrested in 1553, however, she attempted to show her mercy, pitying

her as a pawn in the sordid plot, as she herself had been as a child. If Jane Grey would but take the Roman Mass, Mary would give Jane her life. Jane was sixteen years of age at this time, which meant that she had quite a bit of life to consider living. But the price proved too high. Jane Grey refused, adamant in her Protestant beliefs to the last. So adamant was she in her beliefs that she chastised her family's chaplain for conveniently converting to Catholicism when Mary came to power. "Wilt thou refuse the true God, and worship the invention of man, the golden calf, the whore of Babylon, the Romish religion, the abominable idol, the most wicked mass?" she wrote. Jane Grey took theology seriously.⁶

After her arrest, Lady Jane was quizzed by Mary's archbishop, Feckenham, in the chapel at the Tower of London before an audience of Mary's supporters, which is to say before a Roman Catholic audience. Jane Grey withstood Feckenham's challenges of her rejection of the Roman view of the Lord's Supper, outfoxed him in arguing for the Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone), and got the upper hand on the issue of justification and our standing before God.

In the exchange over justification, Feckenham tried to trip her up by accusing her of rejecting good works, so clearly required of the Christian. "It is necessary unto salvation to do good works also; it is not sufficient only to believe," he told her. She returned, "I deny that, and I affirm that faith only saves; but it is meet for a Christian to do good works, in token that he follows the steps of his Master, Christ, yet may we not say that we profit to our salvation; for when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, and faith only in Christ's blood saves us."⁷ Luther could scarcely have put the doctrine of justification by faith better. On February 12, 1554, two days after her interview with Feckenham, Lady Jane Grey, the nine-day queen, was martyred for her beliefs. Her last words upon the scaffold were, "I here die a true Christian woman and I trust to be saved by the blood of Christ, and by none other means."⁸

At least Jane Grey has survived in memory. Jeanne D'Albret (1528-1572), Queen of Navarre, has essentially not, which is surely to our loss.

Jeanne became ruler of Navarre, a small but crucial state interposed between Spain and France, after her father Henry died in 1555. By 1560 she publicly declared her allegiance to Protestantism and Calvinism. The territories under her control likewise became Protestant. She received a congratulatory letter from Calvin himself. "I cannot adequately express my joy," he wrote, and this from one who found a way to express himself on just about everything.⁹ Not everyone received the news with equal fervor. The pope excommunicated her. The rulers in Spain thought that was justified because she took her lands by force. France, however, rather curiously supported her, not moving against her as the pope wished. That was surprising, of course, because of France's deeply embedded Catholicism.

Jeanne of Navarre's reign occasioned the display of her prowess at theology. She came by it honestly, learning from the example of her mother, Marguerite de Navarre, a frequent correspondent of Calvin and a significant force in the Reformation in France. Marguerite, though officially remaining Catholic to the end, embraced both the Reformers and Reformation principles. Sympathetic to Luther and to the Swiss Reformers, she read their Latin and German works, even translating some of Luther's writings into French. She wrote marvelously about devotion to God. She, at her own risk, defended persecuted Protestants in France. Roland Bainton wrote of Marguerite that "she had so harrowed the soil of Navarre that it became the most fruitful field of the Huguenot movement to be spearheaded by her daughter, Jeanne d'Albret."¹⁰

During the reign of Queen Jeanne, the lands of Navarre and Beam became a further stronghold for the Huguenots, and they indeed prospered. Queen Jeanne, however, foresaw the need to provide for the future of Protestants in France. She went to the King of France's court to arrange a marriage for her son that would secure his ascension to the throne in France. She also had a plan to secure a permanent region in France that would be a safe haven for Protestants. The marriage was granted, but not the permanent Protestant region. She died of tuberculosis in 1572, just two months prior to her son's wedding. The wedding actually proved disastrous

for France's Protestant future, which all but came crashing down in August 1572.

Many of the Huguenot leaders gathered in Paris for the wedding, held on August 18. Catherine de Medici, the Queen of France who at first tolerated the Huguenots and the wedding, seized the opportunity to purge France of its Protestant stain. And with Queen Jeanne dead, nothing stood in Catherine's way. On August 23, St. Bartholomew's Day, the slaughter began. In Paris alone over two thousand were martyred. By the time it ran its course, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, as it came to be known, claimed over twenty thousand Huguenots throughout France.¹¹ It takes its place in history as one of the bloodiest episodes in the tumultuous history of the Reformation.

Jeanne's son, Henry, kept his life by taking the Roman Mass. He would eventually become the King of France, being dubbed Henry IV. As king, he embraced Catholicism in order to bring peace. "Paris is worth a Mass," he famously quipped. Had his mother lived to hear that, she would have been devastated.

Jeanne d'Albret of Navarre's dreams for a Protestant France would not be realized. France would officially be Roman Catholic, the surviving Huguenots forced underground. Without the assistance of the mother and daughter Marguerite and Jeanne of Navarre, however, the Huguenots would have been in even more dire straits. Jeanne had once written that there is no greater obligation for a monarch "whom [God] has saved from sin and death by his grace and goodness alone" than "to procure the complete establishment and advancement of [Christ's] kingdom."¹²

The Piety of Poets

Though she wasn't born on American soil, Anne Bradstreet takes her place as America's first poet. She was born in 1612 in England. By 1619 her father, Thomas Dudley, served as steward for the Earl of Lincoln, granting his daughter access to the world of learning contained in the earl's library, and she likely shared in the tutelage received by the earl's children. She learned theology through the Geneva Bible and reading Puritan works, then fresh

off the printers press. While at the Earl of Lincoln's estate, she met Simon Bradstreet, who had been the earl's charge since he was orphaned at the age of fourteen. They married in 1628, he at the age of twenty-five and she having just turned sixteen. As Charles I and his infamous archbishop Laud turned up the heat on the Puritans, the Bradstreets and Dudleys set off for the safe haven of the New World in 1630. They arrived at the harbor of Salem, Massachusetts, after two long months at sea.

Both Anne's father and husband would take the role of governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. She would, like every other colonial woman, carve out a life in the so often referred to "howling wilderness" of early New England. Unlike other colonial women, and men for that matter, she would also write poetry. John Woodbridge, Anne Bradstreet's brother-in-law, took her poetry back across the sea to old England, resulting in the 1650 publication of *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America*. Bradstreet did not know of Woodbridge's plans, and no one was as shocked as she to see the book.

Her work is poetic theology, evincing the influence of both poets and Puritan theologians. She gave perhaps the finest expression of the Puritan emphasis of the "pilgrim" life of the Christian, rivaled only by Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. This theme reverberates throughout her work, reaching a crescendo in her poem, "As Weary Pilgrim, Now at Rest." In the middle of the poem she sighs:

*A Pilgrim I, on earth, perplext,
with sinners with cares and sorrows vext
By age and paines brought to decay
And my clay house mouldring away
Oh how I long to be at rest
and soar on high among the blest.*¹³

In a lengthy letter to her children recalling her own life's pilgrimage, she writes of times "in sicknesse, weaknes, paines," of times when she and her children suffered. Of these times, she further declares, "I have found them the Times when the Lord hath manifested the most Love to me."¹⁴ She could further testify of God:

*My hungry Soul he filled with Good,
He in his Bottle putt my tears,
My smarting wounds washt in his blood,
And banisht thence my Doubts and feares.*¹⁵

Bradstreet once wrote of scoffers of her poetry who thought a knitting needle fit her hands better than a quill. The German poet Anna Owena Hoyers (1584-1655) faced a similar challenge. She also presents her detractors poetically:

*Who say: it is not right
That a woman should write.*

Hoyers has been described as a “profoundly Christian” Renaissance poet, which is to say that she did not share in the narrow humanism of other Renaissance figures. God and Christ figure prominently in her poetry.¹⁶ Marguerite of Navarre, mentioned above, also wrote poetry. Her tribute to Luther is seen in her poem on the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone. She writes,

*To you I testify
That God does justify
Through Christ, the man who sins.
But if he does not believe
And by faith receive
He shall have no peace,
From worry no cease,
God will then relieve,
If faith will but believe
Through Christ, the gentle Lord.*¹⁷

When Anna Hoyers rhetorically posed the question, “Who say: it is not right/That a woman should write,” she was making a significant point. When Anne Bradstreet took up a quill, she was doing the church a service, for which we should be grateful. In persecution and in poetry, the women of the Reformation can and should be seen and heard.

Conclusion

Reformation scholars are divided on the issue of what the Reformation in fact accomplished for women. Steven Ozment has led the way for the view that the elevation of women and marriage

and families is nearly the singular achievement of the Reformation’s impact on culture. Others, such as Lyndal Roper, argue that the Reformation did little by way of the female gender. If judged by certain standards, the Reformation may in fact be seen as making little headway for women. At least in Roman Catholicism women had the capacity to serve the church officially in the convent. The Protestant Reformers, who restricted ordination to men, had very little to offer in a similar vein. Further, the Reformers believed in male headship in the home, and some, like John Knox, had serious problems with women in positions of civic leadership—though, in fairness to Knox, he objected more to Mary and Elizabeth’s religious views than he did to their gender.¹⁸

Yet Ozment should not be so readily dismissed in his estimation. The Reformation indeed brought a new dignity to women and to marriage. He argues compellingly that the patriarchal households provided a refuge for women at a time and place in history when women had little if any rights. It was, after all, Calvin’s Geneva that enacted laws against wife abuse and enacted more equitable laws of inheritance for widows and daughters. Ozment is persuasive when he tells us it’s an injustice to the Reformers to underplay their achievements for women.

The Reformation is not only about the achievements for women, however. It also chronicles the achievements of women. Lady Jane Grey, Marguerite and Jeanne of Navarre, Anne Bradstreet, and others have a legacy all their own, each making significant contributions to the Reformation and the founding of Protestantism. Yet their stories have too often gone untold. The church of today can only benefit by telling and retelling them again.

ENDNOTES

¹This essay originally appeared in Stephen J. Nichols, *The Reformation: How a Monk and a Mallet Changed the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 115–28. Edited and reprinted with permission of Stephen J. Nichols and Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.

²Edwin Woodruff Tait, “Bride of the Reformation,” *Christian History*, October 2004.

³Cited in Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany*

and Italy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1971), 82. Wibrandis and Oecolampadius had three children—Eusebius, who died at the age of thirteen, Alatheia, and Irene.

⁴The letters to Viret and Farel may be found in *Calvin's Selected Works*, Vol. 5: *Letters Part 2, 1545–1558* (ed. Jules Bonnet and David Constable; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 216–19.

⁵Citations in Rudolf K. Markwald and Marilyn Morris Markwald, *Katharina Von Bora: A Reformation Life* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 176, 192–93.

⁶Cited in *Voices of the English Reformation, A Sourcebook* (ed. John N. King; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 320.

⁷Cited in Paul F. M. Zahl, *Five Women of the English Reformation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 109–13.

⁸Cited in *Voices of the English Reformation*, 324.

⁹*Calvin's Selected Works: Letters*, Vol. 7, 162.

¹⁰Roland Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in France and England* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973), 38.

¹¹The estimates by contemporaries and historians vary, some placing it as low as five thousand, others as high as thirty thousand.

¹²Cited in Nancy Lyman Roelker, *Queen of Navarre: Jeanne d'Albert, 1528–1572* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1968), 340.

¹³Heidi L. Nichols, *Anne Bradstreet: A Guided Tour of the Life and Thought of a Puritan Poet* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2006), 196.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁶Cited in *Women Writers of the Reformation*, 311.

¹⁷Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in France and England*, 21.

¹⁸See Steve Ozment, *When Fathers Rules: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983); and Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1989).

Hard to Believe?

Biblical Authority and Evangelical Feminism

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Anne Eggebroten visited Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, and what she found there shocked her. As a matter of fact, she was so shocked that she wrote about that experience in the July 2010 edition of *Sojourners* magazine. Readers of her article are likely to experience a shock of their own—they will be shocked that Eggebroten could actually have been surprised by what she found there.

In “The Persistence of Patriarchy,” Eggebroten writes about “the wide reach” of complementarian views of manhood and womanhood among conservative Christians. Her article is subtitled, “Hard to believe, but some churches are still teaching about male headship.” Hard to believe?

Can anyone really be surprised that this is so? In some sense, it might be surprising to the generally liberal readership of *Sojourners*, but it can hardly be surprising to anyone with the slightest attachment to evangelical Christianity. Nevertheless, Anne Eggebroten’s article represents what I call a “National Geographic moment”—an example of someone discovering the obvious and thinking it exotic and strange. It is like a reporter returning from travel to a far country to explain the strange tribe of people she found there—evangelical Christians believing what the Christian church has for 2,000 years believed the Bible to teach and require. So ... what is so exotic?

She begins her article at Grace Community Church in California, where, in her words, “God is male, all the pastors, deacons, and elders are male, and women are taught to live in submission to men.” That is a snappy introduction, to be sure, but

it requires some unpacking. When Eggebroten says that, at this well-known evangelical church “God is male,” she is echoing the arguments of the late radical feminist Mary Daly, who famously asserted that “if God is male, then male is God.” At Grace Community Church, as in the Bible, references to God are masculine, but God is not claimed to be male. Interestingly, she also missed the fact that Grace considers the role of the deacon in terms of service, rather than authority, so women in fact do serve as deacons with responsibility for particular ministries.

Nevertheless, Eggebroten is certainly onto something here, especially when Grace Community Church is contrasted with the Episcopal congregation visited by her husband on that same Sunday. In that church, a woman is preaching the sermon. We can’t miss the point when Eggebroten writes, “These two different worlds exist side by side: congregations where men and women are equal partners in service of Jesus Christ, and others where gender hierarchy is taught as God’s will and the only truly biblical option. On Sunday morning we all drive past one flavor of gender teaching to worship in another.”

Well, on this Sunday Anne Eggebroten did not drive past Grace Community Church. Instead, she heard a sermon by Dr. John MacArthur, who for more than 40 years has served as pastor of the church. Beyond that, MacArthur has become one of the most respected and influential preachers of our times, with perhaps the most widely-disseminated ministry of exposition in the history of the Christian church.

Eggebroten enjoyed the sermon, remarking that MacArthur's message was "excellent." She added, "I guess that's how megachurches get started." Well, one can hope.

The central part of her report from the trenches at Grace Community Church comes from an experience at a visitors' reception after the sermon. Eggebroten asks a woman there (a physical therapist with a degree from the school where Eggebroten teaches), "Is women's submission to their husbands stressed in this church?" The answer, of course, was yes.

It appears that Eggebroten could hardly have been surprised, for she wrote,

At least things aren't as extreme as they sound on the church Web site. There, I had listened to Anna Sanders lecture women on how to live in submission to their husbands. "We need to beat down our desire to be right and have our own way," she had said, citing John Piper, Nancy Leigh DeMoss, and Martha Peace—all authors published in the last decade. "It's his way, his rights, his expectations, and his plans.... Be a helper."

So, there was little ground for surprise when Eggebroten asked the question at the visitors' reception. But there was more to come. She writes, "I'm stunned to find that the 300-student Master's Seminary on the church campus enrolls only men."

Well, let's see. The Master's Seminary, according to its own mission statement, "exists to advance the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ by equipping men to be pastors and/or trainers of pastors." The logic is simple and straight-forward. The church believes that the Bible restricts the office of pastor to men. The Master's Seminary trains only pastors and trainers of pastors; thus, it limits admissions to men. What could possibly be stunning about that?

As Eggebroten acknowledges, seminaries that train for roles beyond the pastorate may enroll women for those programs without compromising this conviction. But Master's does not offer those programs, so what is possibly shocking?

In the course of her article, Eggebroten con-

tinues her reports of conversations with members of the complementarian tribe before getting to the more deeply theological portion of her essay. In this passage she gets to the core issue:

Here's the question: Is God permanently committed to the kinds of social hierarchy that existed in the first and second millennium B.C.E. and continued until recently, when education and voting were opened to women? Or does the vision of Paul in Galatians 3:28—"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"—take precedence?

At this point the agenda becomes clear. Eggebroten argues that the church has simply perpetuated the patriarchal traditions of the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures that formed the social context for the early Christian church. Against these she contrasts the Apostle Paul's beautiful declaration in Gal 3:28—"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

But this is the kind of sloppy and agenda-driven exegesis that reveals the desperation of those who would reject the New Testament's limitation of the office of pastor to men. In Gal 3:28 Paul is clearly speaking of salvation—not of service in the church. Paul is declaring to believers the great good news that "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (verse 26). He concludes by affirming, "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise" (verse 29).

To read Gal 3:28 the way Eggebroten reads the verse, you would have to believe that the Apostle Paul was in direct contradiction with himself, when he restricts the teaching office to men in letters such as 2 Timothy and Titus.

Or ... you can try to deny that Paul actually wrote those latter letters. Eggebroten accuses conservative evangelicals of ignoring "evidence that the 'pastoral epistles' (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) were written in honor of Paul long after he died

and reflect a second-century debate over women's roles in the church—whether to conform to social customs for the sake of winning converts, or to advocate radical social equality (and even celibacy) in the last days before the Second Coming.”

What this reveals, of course, is the argument of many evangelical feminists that we can discard the teachings of the Pastoral Epistles. We can keep the Apostle Paul we like (taking Gal 3:28 out of context, for example) and disregard the Paul we do not like.

Nor are the Pastoral Epistles the only biblical texts subverted by this line of argument. With reference to 1 Cor 14:35 (“Let a woman learn in silence with full submission”), Eggebroten suggests, among other options, that “verses 34-35 began as someone’s marginal comment, later copied right into the text.”

With this approach to the Bible, you can simply discard any text you dislike. Just dismiss it as a marginal comment, or deny that Paul even authored the text. This is where the denial of biblical inerrancy inevitably leads—the text of the Bible is deconstructed right before our eyes.

“So what is the will of God for women today: silence or preaching, subjection or mutual submission?” Eggebroten asks. She adds, “Many Christians in all denominations, including evangelicals aren’t even asking this question any more—yet the neo-patriarchal movement remains widespread.”

The answer to that question, as Eggebroten’s essay helps to clarify, depends on your view of Scripture. In order to reach her conclusions, you must accept her evasions of the biblical text. If you are willing to do that on this question, you will be willing to do so on other issues as well. The central issue is, and will ever remain, the authority of Scripture.

Anne Eggebroten has written a fascinating report that, like so many others of its kind, reveals more about the reporter than the reported. Eggebroten teaches religion at California State University, Northridge, and she is a founding member of the Evangelical and Ecumenical Women’s Caucus. In her other writings she has, for example, profiled “the reality of abortion as a morally responsible

choice being made by countless Christian women of all denominations.”

In what sense can any of this be bent to fit within evangelical identity? This essay reveals again how these arguments—and the magazine that publishes them—are so very distant from the beliefs of most evangelicals. If there is anything genuinely shocking about this article, it is the fact that the writer would attempt to lay claim on evangelicalism.

In yet another twisted use of Scripture, Eggebroten concludes by citing Gal 5:1, “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” As Paul asserts, in Christ we are free from the slavery of attempting to prove our righteousness by the Law. Paul is not liberating the church from the Bible.

In the end, that is the real issue. There are Christians who would demand to be liberated from the Bible. Now that is what really should be shocking.

The Translation of Gender Terminology in the NIV 2011

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Introduction

My dad led me to Christ when I was nine years old. Almost immediately after my profession of faith and baptism, a desire welled-up within me that I had never experienced before. I wanted to read and understand the Bible for myself. I had been taught that it was God's Word to me, and I knew that growth in Christ depended on my knowledge of it. So I picked up my blue hardback King James Version—the standard-issue text used by children for “Bible Drill” in Southern Baptist churches—and I began reading. Not knowing any better, I just started at the beginning, Gen 1:1. It did not take very long for my little nine-year old brain to bog-down in the archaic English of the 1611 King James Version. As a result, I eventually gave up on being able to read the Bible for myself with any real comprehension. I would continue to use my King James at church, but it was not something I felt comfortable reading on my own.

It would be another 8 years or so before my parents gave me one of the best Christmas gifts of all time—a new Bible. But this was not just any Bible. It was a Life Application Bible, and the translation was the New International Version (NIV). This was just the text that an unlettered adolescent like me needed. This gift changed my life. Yes, the

notes, maps, and other study helps were valuable. But the best thing about this Bible was the translation itself. For the first time in my life, I owned a Bible that I could actually read and comprehend, and I devoured it. I began reading the Bible again as for the first time.

By the time I reached my sophomore year in college, I became convinced that I needed to read this book from cover to cover every year. The first time I read the Bible all the way through from Genesis to Revelation, I read from the NIV. I look back on those days of reading the NIV as the most formative period of my spiritual life. I had a hunger for God's Word, and the NIV was where I found my nourishment.

Even now as I thumb through the pages of that old NIV Bible and read the highlights and notes I added to it so many years ago, I am filled with gratitude for the NIV's place in my own story. That is in part why I was thrilled several years ago to contribute to a primary study-aid for readers of the NIV, *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*.¹ As I write this critical review, therefore, I write as one whose testimony has been inexorably shaped by the NIV translation.²

But this is not just my story. According to

the Christian Bookseller Association, the NIV is by far the best-selling Bible in English—ahead of the King James Version, the English Standard Version, and a host of others.³ It is hard to overstate the influence of the NIV among English speaking evangelicals (especially in North America). Its influence has been pervasive for a generation of believers. In many ways, the 1984 revision of the NIV has become the authorized version of evangelicalism.

That is why the last two attempts at revising the NIV have proved so controversial.⁴ The NIV has a wide influence, and both revisions (the NIVI and the TNIV) adopted the much-criticized gender-neutral philosophy of Bible translation. There is a great difference of opinion among scholars, pastors, and other leaders over the proper way to render the Bible's gender language into English. The gender-neutral approach of the TNIV became such a lightning-rod that the version never caught on with American evangelicals and is now discontinued.

Nevertheless, the TNIV provoked a lively discussion among evangelical scholars and Bible readers about translation philosophy in general and about gender-neutral approaches in particular. The debate actually preceded the appearance of the TNIV. It began in the late 1990's and extended through the mid-2000's. Many of the contested issues in that discussion remain unresolved.⁵ And many evangelicals who once benefitted from the NIV (like myself) have not been happy with the gender-neutral revisions. It is no surprise, therefore, that many evangelicals have been anticipating the release of the 2011 NIV. Readers want to see how this latest revision has resolved (or not resolved) points of contention about gender language that are left over from these previous discussions.

The first point to remember is this: The NIV 2011 is not a fresh translation or a revision of the previous NIV but is a revision of the now defunct TNIV. So the question that everyone wants answered is this: Have the weaknesses of the TNIV been sufficiently overcome in the NIV 2011? In the end, the answer has to be no.

If the answer is no, what does that say about

the viability of the translation? Will the NIV 2011 enjoy the same prominence among evangelicals that the NIV 1984 has had for so many years? Or will the NIV 2011 fall into disuse and go the way of the TNIV?

To be sure, the NIV translators have made numerous improvements that are worthy of note.⁶ For instance, in most cases the key Pauline term *sarx* has been changed from "sinful nature" to the more literal and precise term "flesh" in the 2011 NIV (for example, Rom 8:4). In Rom 1:17 and related texts, "righteousness from God" becomes "righteousness of God." In other verses, "observing the law" becomes "works of law" (see Rom 3:20, 28). All three of these changes now leave open important interpretive options and represent a significant improvement over renderings in the 1984 NIV that closed those options.

There have also been a number of important improvements related to the use of gender language. For example, in 164 passages, "man" and "mankind" have replaced a gender-neutral equivalent such as "humanity" (as in Gen 1:27, which now says, "God created mankind in his own image," retaining the male-nuanced meaning of Hebrew *'adam*).⁷

Similar welcome changes have been made in hundreds of verses where "brother," "father," "son," and "he/him/his" have been restored, replacing the gender-neutral alternatives that were used in the TNIV. In total, we have counted 933 places where gender-neutral translations in the TNIV have been changed in the 2011 NIV, and in most cases they have been replaced with more accurate, gender-specific translations.⁸

We are thankful for this significant improvement in nearly a thousand places in the 2011 NIV, and we recognize that the NIV's Committee on Bible Translation expended a large amount of effort and scholarly discussion to make these changes. In fact, many of these improvements were made in verses that were highlighted in previous criticisms of the TNIV by CBMW and others. And there are numerous other improvements as well that we cannot mention here.⁹

Even though these are all welcome advances over the TNIV, there are still a great many unre-

solved issues related to gender language. And so the question we wish to explore in this article is whether or not NIV 2011 sufficiently corrects the problematic renderings of the TNIV with respect to gender language in particular and to gender-related texts in general.

For the reasons enumerated below, we believe that improvements to the TNIV have not been extensive enough in NIV 2011, and that some new changes represent a step in the wrong direction.

The Vast Majority of Problematic Gender Renderings from the TNIV Are Retained in the NIV 2011

Wayne Grudem and Vern Poythress were instrumental in cataloguing problematic renderings in the TNIV Old and New Testaments. Over

the course of two different books, they catalogued some 3,686 “inaccurate translations in the TNIV” Old and New Testaments that relate to gender language.¹⁰ The current study has surveyed all of these 3,686 problems in the TNIV to see how they were rendered in the NIV 2011.¹¹ We found that although the NIV 2011 walks back many of its most controversial renderings of gender language from the TNIV, the majority of the problems identified by Poythress and Grudem still remain. In many cases, the NIV 2011 unnecessarily removes male-oriented terminology—especially the use of generic masculine forms of expression. Below is a numerical summary of our findings. The following charts (Tables 1-3) represent revisions from TNIV to NIV 2011.¹²

Table 1 – Summary of Revisions of Gender Language from TNIV to NIV 2011

Testaments	Same as TNIV	Revised from TNIV	%Same	%Revised
OT	2194	597	79%	21%
NT	572	336	63%	37%
Totals	2766	933	75%	25%

Table 2 – Summary of New Testament Revisions¹³

Category	Same as TNIV	Revised from TNIV	%Same	%Revised
A. Changes from Singular to Plural to Avoid the Use of “He/Him/His”	385	223	63%	37%
B. Changes to Avoid the Word “Father” and Related Words	35	4	90%	10%
C. Changes to Avoid the Word “Brother” (Or to Add the Word “Sister”)	53	33	62%	38%
D. Changes to Avoid the Word “Man”	22	52	30%	70%
E. Changes to Avoid the Word “Son”	19	6	76%	24%
F. Changes to Avoid the Phrase “The Jews”	24	0	100%	0%
G. Changes that Lose the Nuance of Holiness in “Saints”	27	14	66%	34%
H. Other Changes	7	4	64%	36%
Totals	572	336	63%	37%

Table 3 – Summary of Old Testament Revisions

Category	Same as TNIV	Revised from TNIV	%Same	%Revised
A. Changes Made from Singular to Plural (and a Few Related Changes) to Avoid the Use of “He/Him/His”	1617	429	79%	21%
B. Changes Made to Avoid the Word “Father”	293	23	93%	7%
C. Changes to Avoid the Word “Brother”	10	17	37%	63%
D. Changes to Avoid the Word “Man”	256	117	69%	31%
E. Changes to Avoid the Word “Son”	14	11	56%	44%
F. Changes Made to Avoid the Word “Women”	4	0	100%	0%
Totals	2194	597	79%	21%

Of the 3,686 “inaccuracies” that Poythress and Grudem identified, we found that three-fourths of them (75%) stayed exactly as they were in the TNIV. That means that whatever improvements have appeared, the vast majority of the “inaccurate” renderings of gender language persist in NIV 2011.

A close inspection of the 25% that was revised shows that the NIV 2011 eliminates some of the most heavily criticized gender-neutral renderings of the TNIV, and for that we are thankful. Nevertheless, the modifications were incomplete, since the vast majority of the problems previously identified during the TNIV debate still remain.

These problems fall in several main categories, including these: changing singular pronouns (“he/him/his”) to plurals (“they/ them/ their”); changing “man” to “human” or “person”; changing “brother” to “friend” or something else; changing “son” to “child” or “children”; and changing “father” to “parent” or “parents.” Detailed lists of these changes can be found at <http://www.dennyburk.com/JBMW/NIV2011-OT-Spreadsheet.xlsx> and <http://www.dennyburk.com/JBMW/NIV2011-NT-Spreadsheet.xlsx>.

The Most Contested Verse in the Gender Debate, 1 Timothy 2:12

One cannot underestimate the importance of 1 Tim 2:12 in the intra-evangelical debate over gender roles and women in ministry: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (1984 NIV).

There is a reason why countless articles and

even an entire book¹⁴ have been written on the interpretation of this single verse. In many ways, this verse is the most disputed text in the debate. It is clear that Paul is prohibiting something, but just what he prohibits has been fiercely contested.

Complementarians argue that Paul prohibits women from doing two things—teaching Christian doctrine to and exercising authority over the gathered church.

Egalitarians argue that Paul prohibits women from doing one thing—a certain kind of teaching. They argue that there is no gender-based authority structure indicated in this text but that Paul means to prohibit women from “teaching with authority,” from “teaching in a domineering way,” or from “teaching false doctrine.” In their view, Paul doesn’t prohibit all teaching by women over men, but only a certain kind of teaching. Recently, some egalitarians have argued that Paul means to prohibit women from a wrongful kind of “teaching and assuming authority” over a man. Philip Payne makes this argument in a 2008 article for *New Testament Studies* and in his 2009 book *Man and Woman, One in Christ*.¹⁵

Sadly, the NIV 2011 reflects the latter approach in its rendering, “assume authority.” Here is how the verse appears in the four NIV versions since 1984 (Table 4).

As the table indicates, the crucial change occurred in the TNIV 2005, which is the basis for the NIV 2011, where “have authority” was changed to “assume authority.” What difference does this change make? “Assume authority” seems to imply

Table 4 – Revisions of 1 Timothy 2:12

Text of 1 Timothy 2:12	Notes
^{NIV 1984} I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.	
^{TNIV NT 2002} I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over ^b a man; ^c she must be quiet	^b Or <i>to exercise authority over</i> ; or <i>to dominate</i> ^c Or <i>her husband</i>
^{TNIV 2005} I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; ^{1,2} she must be quiet.	¹ Or <i>teach a man in a domineering way</i> ; or <i>teach or to exercise (or have) authority over a man</i> ² Or <i>over her husband</i>
^{NIV 2011} I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; ^b she must be quiet.	^b Or <i>over her husband</i>

the idea of acting independently in order to take up an undelegated authority.¹⁶ In other words, “assume authority” has the ring of a sinful power-grab. On this view, Paul is not prohibiting women from exercising authority *per se*, but only from *assuming* a stance of independent (and thus illegitimate) leadership in the church. So *women may in fact teach men and exercise authority over them* so long as such authority is properly delegated to them by the church.¹⁷

It appears, therefore, that the NIV 2011 comes down on the side of egalitarianism in its rendering of 1 Tim 2:12.

The NIV translators, however, do not see it this way. They argue that “assume authority” tilts neither in the direction of complementarianism nor of egalitarianism. In their “Translators’ Notes,” they write,

“Assume authority” is a particularly nice English rendering because it leaves the question open, as it must be unless we discover new, more conclusive evidence. The exercise of authority that Paul was forbidding was one that women inappropriately assumed, but whether that referred to all forms of authority over men in church or only certain forms in certain contexts is up to the individual interpreter to decide.¹⁸

But is it really true that this translation “leaves the question open”? I don’t think so. From the trans-

lators’ own words, we see that “assume authority” denotes an “inappropriate” taking up of authority. This gives a negative connotation to the word, and Andreas Köstenberger has shown that a negative connotation is not possible in this particular grammatical construction—a conclusion that has been widely received among feminist and complementarian scholars alike.¹⁹ So “assume authority” does not leave the question open but moves the discussion decidedly into the direction of egalitarianism.

For the record, I am not the only one who views “assume authority” as an egalitarian rendering. Interpreters from both sides of the debate view it the very same way that I have it here. This translation is in fact the preferred translation of Payne, a New Testament scholar who has devoted the better part of his scholarly career to defending an egalitarian reading of Scripture. Payne writes,

Since lexical and contextual evidence favors the meaning BDAG gives for *authentein*, “to assume a stance of independent authority”, this article translates αὐθεντεῖν “to assume authority”....

Teaching combined with assuming authority is by definition not authorized

What 1 Tim 2.12 prohibits, it must regard as negative: a woman teaching combined with assuming authority over a man. . . .

This οὐδὲ construction makes best sense as a single prohibition of women teaching with self-assumed authority over a man.²⁰

Complementarian Wayne Grudem likewise agrees that this is an egalitarian interpretation. In his 2006 book *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* he writes,

In 1 Timothy 2:12 the TNIV adopts a highly suspect and novel translation that gives the egalitarian side everything they have wanted for years in a Bible translation. It reads, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man”.... If churches adopt this translation, the debate over women’s roles in the church will be over, because women pastors and elders can just say, “I’m not assuming authority on my own initiative; it was given to me by the other pastors and elders.” Therefore any woman could be a pastor or elder so long as she does not take it upon herself to “assume authority”.... So it is no surprise that egalitarian churches are eager to adopt the TNIV.²¹

Even though the TNIV 2005 employed the translation “assume authority,” it at least preserved alternatives in the note, “*teach a man in a domineering way; or teach or to exercise (or have) authority over a man.*” This note has disappeared in NIV 2011, so a complementarian interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12 will no longer be available to readers of the NIV. All the reader has is an egalitarian rendering in the text. If the translators intended to “leave the question open,” why is this note removed in NIV 2011?

What is the upshot of this translation for the average reader of the NIV? Those readers will see a significant change in their translation the next time they purchase an NIV. In their new Bible, “have authority” will give way to “assume authority” with absolutely no explanation in the notes. Those readers may very well conclude that women may exercise authority over men (i.e., serve as pastors) so long as they do not “assume” that

authority independently.

One cannot judge a translation based on a single verse. Nevertheless, the NIV’s rendering of 1 Tim 2:12 is particularly important because it is a watershed in the evangelical gender debate. Unfortunately, the NIV 2011 obscures Paul’s prohibition of women having governing authority over the entire church. Furthermore, many readers, perhaps most, will read the verse as permitting women to serve as pastors and to teach men. Hence, I would not recommend that individual Christians or churches adopt the NIV 2011, for it misleads in a crucial verse in the gender debate and it lacks clarity and accuracy, as I noted above, in many other verses as well. Individual Christians and churches who are concerned about evangelical accommodations to feminism need to exercise caution before adopting the new NIV Bible.

A Survey of Key Texts and Translation Tendencies²²

The main question facing current NIV readers is not how much the new NIV is like the TNIV (see above), but rather, *How much has changed from the 1984 NIV that I am currently using?* Therefore the following section examines changes from the 1984 NIV to the new 2011 NIV.

The new NIV adopts feminist translations of key verses

This is not to presume upon the motives of the translators or their individual convictions about the gender debate. Indeed, we know that there are complementarians on the Committee for Bible Translation, and the chairman himself has written one of the definitive arguments in favor of a complementarian reading of 1 Tim 2:12. Nevertheless, feminists who claim that women can be pastors and elders will find much to their liking in the 2011 NIV because it tilts the scales in favor of their view at several key verses. In the previous section we already discussed the most important text, 1 Tim 2:12. Other verses have been reoriented in a similar way.

1984 NIV **Rom 16:7** Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

2011 NIV **Rom 16:7** Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was. (same as TNIV, except for footnote)

This verse changes “Junias” (a man’s name) to “Junia” (a woman’s name; the Greek spelling could refer to either a man or a woman), and now says that “Andronicus and Junia” are “outstanding among the apostles,” thus making the woman “Junia” an apostle. This is a highly disputed verse, but the NIV now clearly gives more weight to the feminist argument that says there was at least one woman apostle, and if a woman could be an apostle (like Paul or Peter!), surely women can be pastors and elders as well.

Some other recent evangelical translations also translate this name as “Junia” (a woman), but at least three translations do not then make Junia an apostle. Based on what some believe to be a better understanding of the Greek phrase *episēmoi en tois apostolois*,²³ both the ESV and the NET Bible say that Andronicus and Junia are “well known to the apostles,” and the HCSB says they are “noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles.” Thus, the apostles *recognized* Andronicus and Junia, but they were not themselves apostles. (The new NIV also gives a similar reading to this as an alternative in a footnote.) We recognize that there are other explanations (including the claim that “apostle” here has a weaker sense),²⁴ but it still should be noted that, in contrast to three other recent evangelical translations,²⁵ the new NIV adopts the translation strongly favored by feminists, apparently making Junia an apostle.

1984 NIV **1 Cor 14:33-34** For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.
As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak,

but must be in submission, as the Law says.

2011 NIV **1 Cor 14:33-34** For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people. Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. (same as TNIV)

The question here is where to divide the paragraph and where to put the phrase, “as in all the congregations of the saints.” The old NIV put the phrase with what follows, so Paul said, “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches.” There is a good reason for this: the Greek word *ekklēsia* (“church, congregation”) is repeated in both phrases, tying them together, and a statement that something is done “in all the congregations” is an appropriate way for Paul to give weight to what he says about women speaking in church.

What does Paul mean by “women should remain silent”? Many interpreters take this to mean that women should be “silent” when spoken prophecies were being judged (a governing function for the whole church). But whatever kind of silence Paul meant, the phrase “As in all the congregations of the saints” showed that Paul was not just solving some *local* problem at Corinth but was reminding them about the established practice of *all the churches*. “All the churches” had some kind of restrictions on some kinds of speech by women in the assembled congregation.

But the 2011 NIV now *disconnects* the phrase “as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people” from the statement, “women should remain silent in the churches” (1 Cor 14:33-34). They put that phrase with the previous sentence: “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people” (1 Cor 14:33). Now Paul’s statement, “Women should remain silent in the churches,” (1 Cor 14:34) starts a new paragraph, and the feminist argument that Paul was *only addressing a local problem at Corinth* (not a problem that applies to churches today) has gained

new force. Once again the new NIV has been modified in a way that favors a common feminist interpretation.

Now it must be said that at several of these verses the new NIV does give an alternative, more conservative reading in a footnote, and we appreciate that. But what people read in a translation are the words in the Bible text itself, far more than the footnotes. And the 2011 NIV has shifted some key verses in a gender-neutral way that supports women apostles and women elders.

There is one last text in this category that is worthy of note. Making Phoebe a deacon in Rom 16:1 will be of concern to churches where male deacons have a governing role over the church.

^{1984 NIV} **Rom 16:1** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea.

^{2011 NIV} **Rom 16:1** I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon [footnote: or *servant*] of the church in Cenchreae. (same as TNIV)

This verse changes Phoebe from a “servant” to a “deacon” of the church at Cenchrea, and thereby it endorses women as deacons. Both translations are possible meanings for the Greek word *diakonos*, and the decision must be made from the larger New Testament context. (In the entire New Testament, the NIV translates *diakonos* as “deacon” only four times out of twenty-nine occurrences: here in Rom 16:1 and in three verses where no individual is named but a church office is clearly in view: Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12.)

CBMW has not taken a position on whether women can be deacons.²⁶ My comment here is more of an observation than an objection. For churches and denominations that do *not* have women deacons, the new NIV will prove difficult. These churches hold that “deacon” is a governing office in the church and that 1 Tim 3:12 requires deacons to be “the husband of one wife.” But if such churches use the 2011 NIV, the debate about women as deacons will shift: Phoebe is now named as a deacon in Rom 16:1; therefore, it seems, women should be

deacons today. This will be of concern to a number of churches.²⁷

The new NIV changes “father” to “parent”

^{1984 NIV} **Prov 15:5** A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

^{2011 NIV} **Prov 15:5** A fool spurns a parent's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence. (same as TNIV)

But the Hebrew text has *'ab*, which means “father,” not “parent.” Fifteen other verses in the 2011 NIV make a similar change. Why seek to eliminate “father” when that is the precise meaning of the Hebrew text?

There are no cases in the Old Testament where the singular Hebrew word *'ab* means “parent” rather than “father.” Hebrew lexicons define this word in singular as “father,” not as “parent.”²⁸ Moreover, the Proverbs are consistently and specifically cast as the exhortation of a father to a son.²⁹ The use, therefore, of an individual “father” to teach a general truth about all parents is natural and expected. Nevertheless, the new NIV translators in verses like this were unwilling to translate the word with the clear, simple English equivalent “father.”

Similar changes in other verses diminish the role of the father in Israelite society. For example,

^{1984 NIV} **1 Sam 18:2** From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house.

^{2011 NIV} **1 Sam 18:2** From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. (same as TNIV)

Although the Hebrew text in such verses speaks several times of a “father's house” or “father's family” and uses the ordinary Hebrew word for “father” (*'ab*), the new NIV eliminates the word “father” and substitutes “family” or some other expression. The new expressions remove any suggestion of a father's leadership role in the family. These new NIV verses are not translated as accu-

rately as possible, but they are consistent with the new NIV's practice of removing male-oriented details of meaning from the text of the Bible.

The new NIV changes "forefather" to "ancestor"

^{1984 NIV} **Josh 19:47** (But the Danites had difficulty taking possession of their territory, so they went up and attacked Leshem, took it, put it to the sword and occupied it. They settled in Leshem and named it Dan after their forefather.)

^{2011 NIV} **Josh 19:47** (When the territory of the Danites was lost to them, they went up and attacked Leshem, took it, put it to the sword and occupied it. They settled in Leshem and named it Dan after their ancestor.)

The Hebrew text has *'ab*, the ordinary word for "father," and here the translation "forefather" is appropriate for such a reference to a male ancestor from earlier generations. But the new NIV's word "ancestor" *eliminates* the male component of meaning that would have been evident to every Hebrew reader because this was the common word meaning "father." This change occurs 313 times in the 2011 NIV. Why does the new NIV seek to eliminate male meaning that is present in the Hebrew or Greek text?

The new NIV changes "son" to "child"

^{1984 NIV} **Prov 13:24** He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

^{2011 NIV} **Prov 13:24** Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

The Hebrew word here is *ben* (singular), and it means "son," not "child" and certainly not "children." The pronoun connected to "son" is masculine singular and means "his" not "their."

The Bible often teaches by giving a specific, concrete example (such as a single father who is disciplining a specific son) and then expecting the

readers to apply this vivid example more generally as appropriate. But the new NIV finds such a specific masculine example objectionable and changes it to a broader truth about "whoever" and "their children" generally, all in the interest of removing the masculine specificity that is there in the Hebrew text of Scripture. Several other verses in the OT make this same change.

This tendency to avoid the word "son" also affects the phrase "son of man" in some verses:

^{1984 NIV} **Ps 8:4** what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

^{2011 NIV} **Ps 8:4** what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?

The phrase in Hebrew is *ben-'adam*, and *ben* (which is singular) means "son" and *'adam* means "man." The translation "son of man" is correct, and this verse is understood that way in Heb 2:6. There is a clear possibility that Jesus thought of himself as fulfilling this passage (as well as Dan 7:13) when he referred to himself frequently as "the Son of Man." But the connection to the New Testament and to Christ is obscured with the new NIV, as it removes male components of meaning from verse after verse.³⁰

The new NIV changes "brother" to "brother or sister" or to other non-family words

^{1984 NIV} **Luke 17:3** So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.

^{2011 NIV} **Luke 17:3** So watch yourselves. "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them.

Why did the NIV make this change? Jesus gave a specific example of a brother who sins. He could have said "brother or sister" if he had wanted to, because elsewhere a New Testament author says "brother or sister" in Greek (Jas 2:15, "Suppose a brother or sister [Greek *adelphos ē adelphē*] is with-

out clothes and daily food”). But Jesus did not say that. He gave a specific example of a brother. English translation, therefore, should retain the specific example of a brother.

Yet the new NIV does this many other times, changing “brother” to “brother or sister,” or to some other gender-neutral expression. This happens in the Old Testament as well:

^{1984 NIV} **Deut 22:1** If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him.

^{2011 NIV} **Deut 22:1** If you see your fellow Israelite's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to its owner.

The Hebrew word *'ab* normally means “brother,” but can by metaphorical extension refer to “fellow tribesman” or “fellow countryman.”³¹ Yet in this context, the word most likely has a masculine component of meaning. Why not translate this word in a way that recognizes that property rights in patriarchal cultures (like ancient Israel) belong to men? Why not translate this common word according to its ordinary meaning, which includes the rich family imagery of “brother,” unless you are trying to eliminate much of the male-oriented language from the Bible?

The new NIV changes “he” and “him” to “they” and “them”

This is the largest category of changes in the new NIV, and it makes a significant difference in meaning. This is because changing singulars to plurals removes the emphasis in a verse on individual, personal relationship with God and specific individual responsibility for one's choices and actions.

^{1984 NIV} **John 14:23** Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

^{2011 NIV} **John 14:23** Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My

Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. (same as TNIV)

The “If” that Jesus said (Greek *ean*) is omitted, and three masculine singular pronouns (Greek *autos*) are translated with “them,” removing the amazing emphasis on the Father and Son dwelling with an individual person. In the 2011 NIV, maybe “them” refers to the whole group of those who obey. How can we know? Though some of these changes have been corrected from the TNIV, such changes from singular to plural (or from “he” to “you” or “we” or no word at all) still occur 2,002 times in the new NIV.

Such changes from singular to plural still occur many hundreds of times in the new NIV. And at times the desire to avoid the words “he” and “him” leads to English sentences that brim with the awkwardness of politically correct speech:

^{1984 NIV} **Rev 3:20** Here I am! 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.

^{2011 NIV} **Rev 3:20** Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

The expression “that person” has a cold, impersonal feel in comparison to both “them” and “him.” That is not how we speak when we want to maximize the warmth and intimacy of our relationship with someone in English. “That person” is how we speak about someone we don't know. In order to avoid the word “him,” the new NIV struggles with sentence awkwardness and with such impersonal connotations regularly.

The Use of the Collins Dictionaries Report

One of the major criticisms of the TNIV was its regular use of generic plural forms in place of generic masculine singular forms.³² John 14:23 offers us an example of how this point has been debated in previous conversations.

Table 5 – John 14:23

NA27	ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ με τὸν λόγον μου τηρήσει, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ἀγαπήσει αὐτὸν καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ’ αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα.
NIV1984	Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him , and we will come to him and make our home with him .”
TNIV	Jesus replied, “ Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them , and we will come to them and make our home with them .”
NIV2011	Jesus replied, “ Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them , and we will come to them and make our home with them .”

The underlying issue in this text is the rendering of the Greek word *autos*, which occurs three times in this verse as masculine and singular. The 1984 NIV translates it accordingly, but the TNIV and 2011 NIV translate *autos* with the generic plural “them.” It is true that the Greek pronoun probably has a gender-inclusive meaning in this verse. The translator, therefore, has a challenge before him in trying to figure out the most accurate way to render this verse. Since English has no gender-inclusive singular pronoun, the translator can either translate as “him” and risk losing the gender-inclusive sense of *autos*. Or he can translate as “them” and risk losing the singular sense of *autos*. At least this is how the problem is commonly put forth.

The problem as formulated above, however, presumes that generic singular pronouns (like “him”) are no longer intelligible in English. And yet this is precisely the point in the debate that remains unresolved. On one side, Poythress and Grudem have argued that generic masculine singular forms are still intelligible in English.³³ On the other side, D. A. Carson, Mark Strauss, and others have argued that such forms are no longer acceptable among large sectors of English speakers.³⁴ In fact, Carson suggests that such forms might unwittingly exclude “half of humanity” from texts that should include them.³⁵ Such forms, therefore, should not be favored in translating the Bible.

The NIV 2011 translators have shown great awareness of this ongoing dispute and have tried to address the problem by commissioning an empirical study of English gender language. On this point, it will be worth quoting the translators at length:

All previous Bible translation efforts have been hampered by the lack of accurate, statistically significant data on the state of spoken and written English at a given time in its history. Beyond appealing to traditional style guides, all that translators and stylists have been able to do is rely on their own experiences and others’ anecdotal evidence, resulting in arguments such as, “I never see anybody writing such-and-such,” or “I always hear such-and-such,” or “Sometimes I read one thing but other times something else.”

As part of the review of gender language promised at the September 2009 update announcement, the committee sought to remove some of this subjectivity by enlisting the help of experts. The committee initiated a relationship with Collins Dictionaries to use the Collins Bank of English, one of the world’s foremost English language research tools, to conduct a major new study of changes in gender language. The Bank of English is a database of more than 4.4 billion words drawn from text publications and spoken word recordings from all over the world. Working with some of the world’s leading experts in computational linguistics and using cutting-edge techniques developed specifically for this project, the committee gained an authoritative, and hitherto unavailable, perspective on the contemporary use of gender language—including terms for the human race and subgroups of the human race, pronoun selections following various words and phrases, the use of “man” as a

singular generic and the use of “father(s)” and “forefather(s)” as compared to ancestor(s). The project tracked usage and acceptability for each word and phrase over a twenty-year period and also analyzed similarities and differences across different forms of English: for example, UK English, US English, written English, spoken English, and even the English used in a wide variety of evangelical books, sermons and internet sites.³⁶

This extended excerpt explains why the translators commissioned this study and how the findings shaped the rendering of gender language in the NIV 2011. The full report from Collins Dictionaries is available online.³⁷ According to the study, generic masculine forms are on the decline, but they are still in use among English speakers. The summary on the translators’ website says it this way: “Between 1990 and 2009, instances of masculine generic pronouns and determiners, expressed as a percentage of total generic pronoun usage in general written English, fell from 22% to 8%.”³⁸ This finding from the study directly impacted the translators’ approach to rendering gender language in the NIV 2011. In particular, the translators adopted the following approach: “Singular ‘they,’ ‘them’ and ‘their’ forms were widely used to communicate the generic significance of pronouns and their equivalents when a singular form had already been used for the antecedent.”³⁹

While the data collected in the Collins Dictionaries report is impressive, the translators’ use of it is not. The translators say that the report “tracked usage and acceptability” of the relevant gender language over a twenty-year period. Certainly the report gives significant insight into English *usage*, but the report itself sheds very little light on the *acceptability* of any given idiom. Moreover, it is not at all clear what is meant by *acceptability*. Does it mean *understandable*? Or perhaps does it mean *inoffensive*? D. A. Carson has defended the translation philosophy adopted by the NIV 2011, and in his defense of it he has used the term *acceptable* to refer to that which may or may not offend people of certain ideological tendencies:

I cannot help noting that generic “he” is more acceptable in culturally conservative sectors of the country than in culturally liberal sectors. But I have been doing university missions for thirty years, and in such quarters inclusive language dominates. Not to use it is offensive.⁴⁰

So for Carson, *acceptability* has something to do with whether or not a given use of language offends the liberal sensibilities of potential readers. But this is not really a linguistic concern so much as it is an ideological one. The Collins report provides no insight on *acceptability* in this sense. In any case, *acceptability* in this sense is certainly not a concern that should determine the translation of a given text—a point with which Carson would likely agree. Perhaps this is not what the translators mean by *acceptability*, and a clarification on this point would be helpful.

It may be that *acceptability* in the Collins report refers to the *understandability* of an expression among potential readers. This would be a linguistic concern, but the Collins data gives very little insight here either. The Collins data says that 8% of all generic forms are masculine generics. If anything, the fact that the idiom is still in use presumes its understandability among English speakers. The infrequency of an expression does not imply its unintelligibility. As Poythress and Grudem have argued,

There is no reason we have to avoid infrequently used expressions in Bible translation. Some words like “heron,” “amethyst,” “blasphemy,” “elder,” and “apostle” may not occur with high frequency in secular writings today, but they are intelligible. Translators can use such words when they need them. The same is true of generic “he” when it is needed to express the meaning accurately.⁴¹

The claim that generic masculines are not understood by wide swaths of English readers is simply not supported by the Collins data. A decline in frequency of a given form by no means implies a decline in understandability.

Herein is the flaw of NIV translators' use of the Collins data. *Usage* and *understandability* are not synonyms, and yet the NIV translators treat them as if they are. For this reason, the translators of the NIV address a relatively small number of the problems previously identified in the TNIV. That is a methodological shortcoming on the part of the translators that led them to retain at least 75% of the problematic renderings from the TNIV in the text of the NIV 2011 (see tables above).

Also note that the NIV translators themselves returned to the occasional use of generic masculine expressions in some key verses (!)—thereby admitting that these uses are still understandable and acceptable. So if they are still acceptable, why not admit that they were wrong in excluding them earlier, and why not use them everywhere the Greek or Hebrew texts use a generic masculine singular, since this is the most accurate translation in English?

So how does this affect the way in which texts like John 14:23 are translated? The English pronoun "him" still works best to render Greek generic masculine singulars. One need not pick between gender-inclusiveness and singularity here. "Him" does well at communicating both, just as it did in the 1984 NIV. If this argument is correct, then Grudem's critique of the TNIV's rendering still applies to the 2011 NIV.

"The 'If' that Jesus said (Greek *ean*) is omitted, and three masculine singular pronouns (Greek *autos*) are incorrectly translated with 'them,' removing the amazing emphasis on the Father and Son dwelling with an individual person. In the TNIV [and NIV 2011], maybe 'them' refers [to] the whole group of those who obey. How can we know?"⁴²

2 Timothy 2:2 and Masculine Specific Meaning

I think the NIV's aversion to generic masculines sometimes causes it to miss instances in which masculine meaning is intended by the author. Take 2 Tim 2:2, for example. This text has not weighed heavily in intra-evangelical debates about gender roles, but it did appear as a topic for discussion in an online scholarly forum last year that discussed

particular renderings in the NIV 2011.⁴³ The text reads, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these things to faithful men [*anthrōpōis*] who will be able to teach others also" (author's translation).

The question here concerns the proper rendering of the Greek term *anthrōpōis*. In preparing to write this article, I made my way through fourteen different commentaries on this verse. Out of the six of them that favored the translation "people," not a single one of them put forth a sustained argument in favor of that translation. The most they have to offer is the observation that the plural of *anthrōpos* is regularly used generically. Craig Blomberg, one of the translators for the NIV 2011, offered an argument in favor of "people" in the aforementioned online scholarly forum. Because major commentators have very little to say on this point, I found Craig Blomberg's contribution to be the most substantive argument in favor of the translation "people" that I have read.⁴⁴

That being said, I do want to contest Dr. Blomberg's conclusion that says "people" is "the only legitimate translation" of *anthrōpōis*. It is true that the plural of *anthrōpos* is often used generically (e.g., 1 Tim 2:1, 4; 4:10; 6:5; 2 Tim 3:2; Tit 2:11; 3:2), but that fact is no argument for a generic referent in a given context. If we want to understand the word's appearance in 2 Tim 2:2, we must look to context. So let me make some observations about the context that in my view tip the scales decisively in favor of the translation "men."

First, there is precedent in the pastorals for Paul's use of plural *anthrōpos* in a gender-specific way. In 2 Tim 3:8, for instance, Paul writes, "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth—*men* [*anthrōpōi*] of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected." The *anthrōpōi* here must be men since they are "worming their way into women's homes."⁴⁵ If this is correct, then the *anthrōpōi* of both 3:2 and 3:13 should be understood as males as well. Consider also the *anthrōpōi* of 1 Tim 5:24: "The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after." In context, Paul is telling Timothy to be careful about

whom he appoints as elders (v. 5:22: “Do not lay hands on a man too quickly”). Since Paul held to an all male eldership (1 Tim 2:12; 3:2), the *anthrōpoi* of 5:24 must also be males. Given Paul’s use of *anthrōpoi* in a gender-specific way both in the pastorals and elsewhere (e.g., 1 Cor 7:7), we have to allow for the possibility that context can determine *anthrōpoi* with a masculine referent.

Second, in the context of 2 Timothy 2, Paul is telling Timothy to entrust the gospel to faithful *anthrōpoi* who will be able to teach others (2:2). Notice the one qualification that Paul has for the *anthrōpoi*. They must be *qualified* to teach “others.” This is significant because “others” is a masculine plural pronoun [*heterous*]. That means that “others” would consist of both men and women or of men only. Since Paul has already prohibited women from teaching Christian doctrine to men (1 Tim 2:12), women would not be qualified to teach “others.” Thus, when Paul employs *anthrōpoi* here, he certainly has in mind males only. Contextually speaking, *anthrōpoi* must be gender-specific in this text. It seems that Paul wishes to emphasize the special responsibility that qualified men have to pass the faith on to the next generation.

With this interpretation in mind, we are in a position to answer the Blomberg’s arguments in favor of “people.”

(1) Blomberg argues that “people” is a grammatical “slam dunk” because the plural of *anthrōpos* is “regularly” used in a gender-inclusive way. Nevertheless, the regular use of *anthrōpos* in a gender-inclusive way is not argument for its meaning in a given context. Gender-specific uses of *anthrōpos* are

also within the term’s range of possible meanings, so the argument for “people” has to be developed within the context of 2 Timothy (and the other pastorals). I do not think Blomberg has provided such an argument yet.

(2) Blomberg argues that translating *anthrōpois* as “people” would not “infringe on those restrictions” Paul set up to prohibit women from teaching men. The problem with this argument is twofold. First, the term “others” is masculine plural, so the teaching of both men and women is in view. Thus, Blomberg cannot placate complementarian concerns with the suggestion that only the teaching of women and children is in view. Second, most English readers will read “people” in a gender-inclusive way. If Paul did not intend to be gender-inclusive in this text, why obscure the point for English readers?

(3) Blomberg says that the translation “faithful men” will be heard by most readers as gender-specific, not as gender-inclusive. In this context, he is certainly right about this. But those who favor the translation “faithful men” do not do so because they believe “men” to be gender-inclusive. On the contrary, they favor “men” because they believe males are in view.

(4) Blomberg also mentions his experience in parachurch organizations for whom this text is a staple. In those organizations, this text is a touchstone for understanding the organic disciple-making process that is incumbent upon all Christians, both men and women. I would argue that such organizations can still access this text in support of such disciple-making ministries. But when they

Table 6 – Revisions of 2 Timothy 2:2

Text of 2 Timothy 2:2	Marginal Notes
NIV ¹⁹⁸⁴ And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable <i>men</i> who will also be qualified to teach others.	
TNIV ²⁰⁰² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable <i>people</i> ^a who will also be qualified to teach others.	^a 2 Or <i>men</i>
TNIV ²⁰⁰⁵ And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable <i>people</i> who will also be qualified to teach others.	
NIV ²⁰¹¹ And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable <i>people</i> who will also be qualified to teach others.	

do so, they should find that support in a legitimate *implication* of the text, not as Paul's original *meaning*. In context, Paul is addressing the special responsibilities of church leadership who are supposed to be examples to the rest of the flock (1 Tim 4:12; Titus 2:7).

Finally, let me offer a word about how this text has been rendered in the NIV and its revisions since 1984.

Only one word has been changed in this verse from the 1984 NIV to the 2011 revision. "Men" has changed to "people." The initial change occurred in TNIV 2002, and a marginal note was added to give the alternate interpretation from the NIV 1984. In the TNIV 2005 and in the NIV 2011, there is no indication in the notes at all about another possible interpretation of this text. If my interpretation is correct, then *anthrōpōis* should be rendered as "men" in the text of NIV 2011. At the very least, the marginal note that appeared in TNIV 2002 should be restored to show that there is another possible translation of the text.

Why is this verse worth discussing in this review? It is true, after all, that other translations have rendered *anthrōpōis* as people with relatively no push-back from critics (e.g., NET, NLT, NJB). The translators of the NIV clearly see the term with no masculine referent, but that point is disputed in the literature. Why then would the translators favor the word "people" (which can only be understood generically) when "men" leaves open the possibility of both a generic referent or a specifically masculine one? Why leave readers with a translation that has decidedly egalitarian implications (that women may teach men)? I do not think that the translators are pursuing a stealth egalitarian agenda, but I do think that an aversion to generic masculines has caused them to miss the author's specific meaning in this text.

Conclusion

There are many more texts that are worthy of note, but there is not space to comment on all of them in a short review. What we have hoped to show is that the 2011 NIV has only moved

away from *some* of its more controversial gender-neutral renderings. Although many of these revisions offer an improvement over the TNIV, many of the renderings are not without problems themselves. Whatever improvements have been made in the translation of gender language, about 75% of the "inaccuracies" identified by Poythress and Grudem still remain.

How do I evaluate the NIV 2011 and would I recommend it to others? I would argue that the most *accurate* approach to translation is one that seeks an "essentially literal" translation as far as is compatible with good English. There are nuances and implications of language that are retained in such an approach but that can be lost in dynamic equivalence renderings.

Even though the NIV aims to combine both formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence approaches, it too often loses balance in my view. Its pervasive use of gender-neutral language is a case in point. The NIV 2011's aversion to generic masculine forms of expression is unnecessary and can have the deleterious effect of obscuring aspects of the biblical authors' meaning. In my view, this feature alone weighs heavily against the NIV 2011.

Different situations call for different kinds of translations, but an essentially literal translation is still the best for the regular preaching, studying, and reading of the scriptures. Thus, I recommend the NASB as the most accurate version,⁴⁶ and the ESV as the best combination of both accuracy and readability.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the 2011 NIV includes many very helpful improvements over the 1984 NIV. And as a former user of the 1984 NIV, I regard these as an advance over the previous version. Nevertheless, I wish that these improvements could have been introduced without retaining 75% of the TNIV's problematic renderings of gender language. Perhaps Zondervan would consider a future revision that addresses these issues more fully.

ENDNOTES

- ¹William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).
- ²Full Disclosure: Under the influence of pastors from my home church and college church, I eventually developed a preference for formal equivalence translation. Since 1995, therefore, I have been using the New American Standard Bible as my primary text for preaching and personal Bible study.
- ³The CBA's rankings are available online at http://www.cbaonline.org/nm/documents/BSLs/Bible_Translations.pdf.
- ⁴The first attempt was the New International Version Inclusive Language Edition (NIVI) in 1996 (released only in the UK), and the second was Today's New International Version (TNIV) in 2005.
- ⁵Mark L. Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?: The Challenge of Bible Translation & Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998); Glen G. Scorgie, Mark L. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth, eds., *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Vern S. Poythress and W. A. Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God's Words* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000); D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive-Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998); Vern S. Poythress and W. A. Grudem, *The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004); Wayne Grudem and Jerry Thacker, *Why Is My Choice of a Bible Translation So Important?* (Louisville, KY: The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 2005).
- ⁶The Committee on Bible Translation summarizes many improvements in a report released online in late 2010: "Updating the New International Version of the Bible: Notes from the Committee on Bible Translation" (The Committee on Bible Translation, August 2010) [cited 2 May 2011]. Online: <http://www.niv-cbt.org/niv-2011-overview/translators-notes>.
- ⁷For a full list of these and other changes listed by category and verse, see www.cbmw.org.
- ⁸See previous note for a full list of such revisions, including an annotation where each verse has been corrected from the TNIV. However, it should be noted that this total of 933 is probably a bit high, since it includes all the instances where the objectionable gender language of the TNIV has been revised, but in some of those passages one gender-neutral term has just been replaced with another, and some inaccuracy remains.
- ⁹Some welcome improvements listed in the CBT's "Notes" include the following: "Using plurals instead of singulars to deal with generic forms was avoided.... Using second person forms instead of third person forms to deal with generics was avoided" (Ibid., 5).
- ¹⁰Grudem and Thacker, *Why Is My Choice of a Bible Translation So Important?*, 33. The TNIV New Testament appeared in 2002. In response, Vern Poythress and Wayne Grudem published in 2004 *The TNIV and The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy* in which they cataloged 900 examples of gender-related "translation inaccuracies" (Poythress and Grudem, *Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, 73). The TNIV Old Testament appeared in 2005 along with another revision of the TNIV New Testament. In response, Wayne Grudem and Jerry Thacker produced a volume cataloguing some 3,686 "inaccurate translations in the TNIV" Old and New Testaments (Grudem and Thacker, *Why Is My Choice of a Bible Translation So Important?*, 33). Grudem and Thacker identified ten additional problems in the TNIV New Testament and that brought the total number of "inaccuracies" for the NT up to 910 (Ibid., 81-96).
- ¹¹Grudem's number from *Why Is My Choice of a Bible Translation So Important?* is 3,686. The researchers that surveyed these texts for the current study identified new problems but were also unable to confirm some of the others listed in Grudem's book. The net change from Grudem to the current study is +15. These verses comprise about a half of one percent of the total, so the difference is statistically insignificant.
- ¹²We were greatly assisted in this research by an online tool that tracks how the NIV 2011 compares to the NIV 1984 and the TNIV. The creator of this resource is Robert Slowley, a senior software engineer at the European Bioinformatics Institute in Cambridge, U.K. The data from this comparison is available in a table at the following website: http://www.slowley.com/niv2011_comparison.
- ¹³Data concerning "saints" and "Jews" are also contained in this chart even though they are not gender-related terminology. They appear here for the sake of completeness because they were included in Grudem and Thacker's study.
- ¹⁴Thomas R. Schreiner and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005).
- ¹⁵Philip B. Payne, "1 Tim 2.12 and the Use of *oude* to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea," *New Testament Studies* 54, no. 2 (2008): 235-53; Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 385-97.
- ¹⁶Henry Scott Baldwin's important study of *authentēō* identifies "assume authority" as a sub-meaning of "to act independently." See Henry Scott Baldwin, "An Important Word: *Authentēō* in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church*, 45, 47. Baldwin incorrectly says that "assume authority" is a "positive term" (Ibid., 47), as pointed out by Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ*, 385, n. 122.
- ¹⁷Ibid., 393: "What Paul says is this: 'I am not permitting a woman to teach and assume authority over a man,' namely, to take for herself authority to teach a man without authorization from the church. Practically, this excluded women in Ephesus from assuming to themselves authority to teach men in the church. It would not, however, prohibit women with recognized authority from teaching men (e.g., Priscilla)."
- ¹⁸"Notes from the Committee," 7.
- ¹⁹Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11-15' (Ch 12) by Linda L. Belleville," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 10, no. 1 (2005): 43-54.
- ²⁰Payne, "1 Tim 2.12 and the Use of *oude* to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea," 235-36, 247, 252, 253.
- ²¹Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).
- ²²Much of the material in this section is adapted from Grudem and Thacker, *Why Is My Choice of a Bible Translation So Important?* and from personal correspondence with Wayne Grudem.
- ²³MH Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really and Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7," *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001): 76-91. Contra Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 72-78. Linda Belleville also refuted Burer and Wallace's article in Linda Belleville, "*Iouianian... episemoi en tois apostolois*: A Re-examination of Romans 16.7 in Light of Primary Source Materials," *New Testament Studies* 51, no. 2 (2005): 231-49. Burer has responded to both saying, "I have not read anything in any of them that has dissuaded me from the viewpoint Wallace and I advanced in the original article" (Michael Burer, "Reassessing Junia: A Review of Eldon Epp's *Junia: The First*

Woman Apostle,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 13, no. 1 [2008]: 56–59.).

²⁴This is in fact how Thomas Schreiner takes it in his commentary on Romans. See Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 796–97. Schreiner defines “apostle” in this text as *itinerant evangelist* or *missionary*. It does not designate Junia as having the same authority as the twelve, Paul, Barnabas, or James.

²⁵The NASB has “Junias” as a man in Rom 16:7.

²⁶For example, both views are represented in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Crossway, 1991).

²⁷The 2011 NIV does have the following note on Rom 16:1: “The word *deacon* refers here to a Christian designated to serve with the overseers/elders of the church in a variety of ways; similarly in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8,12.” But the note itself is obscure and does not definitively say that the office of “deacon” is not one of governing authority. In any case, the text itself will be what most readers pay attention to, not the footnote.

²⁸See Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University, 1952), 3 [hereafter, BDB]; also Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (trans. M. E. J. Richardson; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1–2.

²⁹Prov 1:8, 10, 15; 2:1; 3:1, 11, 21; 4:3, 10, 20; 5:1, 20; 6:1, 3, 20; 7:1; 19:27; 23:15, 19, 26; 24:13, 21; 27:11; 31:2.

³⁰For recent discussion of the quotation of Ps 8:4 in Heb 2:6, see Craig Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus’: The Relationship Between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2:6 and 2:9 and the Implications for English Translation,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in its Ancient Context* (ed. Richard Bauckham et al.; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 88–99; Barry Joslin, “‘Son of Man’ or ‘Human Beings’?: Translating Hebrews 2:5–9 and a Response to Craig Blomberg,” *JBMW* 14, no. 2 (2009): 41–50.

³¹HALOT, s.v. *’ah*, 5, 6.

³²Poythress and Grudem, *The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, 73–100.

³³E.g., *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁴Poythress and Grudem argue for the continuing usability of generic ‘he.’ Certainly it’s easy enough to find sectors of society where inclusive language has made relatively little impression. For various reasons I move in quite different sectors, and, although I’m relying on what I personally observe rather than on large-scale empirical studies, I cannot help noting that generic ‘he’ is more acceptable in culturally conservative sectors of the country than in culturally liberal sectors. But I have been doing university missions for thirty years, and in such quarters inclusive language dominates. Not to use it is offensive” (D. A. Carson, “The Limits of Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation,” in *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God’s Word to the World, Essays in Honor of Ronald F. Youngblood* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003], 81–82).

³⁵*Ibid.*, 87.

³⁶“Updating the New International Version of the Bible: Notes from the Committee on Bible Translation.”

³⁷“The Development and Use of Gender Language in Contemporary English—A Corpus Linguistic Analysis” (Collins Dictionaries, September 2010) [cited 2 May 2011]. Online: <http://www.niv-cbt.org/information/collins-language-study-full-report>.

³⁸“Summary of Collins Corpus Report” (The Committee on Bible Translation) [cited 1 April 2011]. Online: <http://www.niv-cbt.org/information/collins-corpus-report>.

³⁹“Updating the New International Version of the Bible: Notes from the Committee on Bible Translation.”

⁴⁰Carson, “The Limits of Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation.”

⁴¹Poythress and Grudem, *The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, 324.

⁴²Grudem and Thacker, *Why Is My Choice of a Bible Translation So Important?*, 28.

⁴³The forum is titled “Perspectives in Translation: A Discussion of English Bible Versions,” (<http://www.biblegateway.com/perspectives-in-translation>) and was a joint effort of The Gospel Coalition and BibleGateway.com (which is owned by Zondervan).

⁴⁴Craig Blomberg, “How Should We Identify the Teachers in 2 Tim. 2:2? Craig Blomberg,” December 8, 2010 [cited 2 May 2011]. Online: <http://www.biblegateway.com/perspectives-in-translation/2010/12/how-do-we-identify-the-teachers-in-2-tim-22-craig-blomberg>.

⁴⁵William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Word Biblical Commentary; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 550.

⁴⁶This is the English version that I have been using since 1995.

A Word to Husbands (And a Few More for Wives): 1 Peter 3:1–7

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Introduction

Last month, the *Washington Post Magazine* featured a cover story by Ellen McCarthy called “Marriage: What Every Couple Should Know.” The article is about the growing “marriage education movement.” More and more people—in government, in churches, in the military—are realizing that married couples need training on how to be married. So the military is offering weekend courses for couples; classes and seminars are being offered in community centers and churches; and dozens of books are being written.

“At the core,” the writer states, “it’s a movement that would ask of every divorcee: What if the truth was that you didn’t marry the wrong person? What if you just didn’t know how to be married?”

It goes on to share the results of a decade long study that showed that

[A]ll couples—those who are happily married into their rocking chair years and those who divorce before they hit their fifth anniversary—disagree more or less the same amount. [The study] found that [all couples] argue about the same subjects—money, kids, time, and sex chief among them—and that for the average couple, 69 percent of those disagreements will be irreconcilable. A morning bird and a night owl won’t

ever fully eliminate their differences; nor will a spendthrift and a penny pincher. What distinguished satisfied couples from the miserable ones, [they] found, was how creatively and constructively they managed those differences.... If every couple has about the same number of disagreements, people who leave marriage because of irreconcilable differences are likely to find themselves arguing just as much in their next marriage.... What [these researchers] were finding undermined the basic principle driving romantic relationships in America: “That it’s about finding the right person. That if you find your soulmate, everything will be fine.... [T]hat’s the big myth.”

There’s a lot of common sense wisdom there. The myth of the perfect spouse is one that can influence many of us. As Christians we can even put our own spiritual spin on it and think, “It would be easier to obey what God tells me to do as a wife, if I just had a different husband.” Or “I could cherish and be understanding if I were married to a more cherishable and understandable woman.”

We don’t need to wait for a study to know that this is wrong. God’s Word to husbands and wives in 1 Peter 3 isn’t qualified. It doesn’t say, “If your husband deserves it, be submissive.” It doesn’t say,

“If your wife gives you respect, then you honor her.”

God tells us to obey his instruction for marriage and fulfill our role not because of what our spouse deserves but because of our allegiance to Jesus Christ. The unique roles and responsibilities of a wife and husband in a Christian marriage are to be fulfilled “for the Lord’s sake.”

Christians have a greater motivation in marriage than merely surviving or avoiding divorce—our motivation and goal for what we do is to please and honor our Lord.

1 Peter 3:1–7 teaches foundational truths about God’s plan for marriage. We learn from verse 7 that husbands and wives are equal before God as recipients of his grace. “They are heirs with you [or joint heirs] of the grace of life.” This was a radical teaching in the first century and still is in many parts of the world today where women are treated as inferior. God says they are equal in their experience of his grace.

And yet this passage also makes clear that within marriage husbands and wives have different roles. The instruction to each is different. Wives are instructed to be submissive to their husbands. Men are called to be understanding and to honor, but they’re not told to submit to their wives. In marriage husbands have a unique role of leadership which wives are called to support.

Sadly, the biblical teaching of roles within marriage is badly misunderstood, misrepresented, and just plain despised by many people in our culture today. But although authority can be misused, it is not a bad thing. It’s God’s idea. And we are all called to be subject to others in various contexts. Authority and submission are a part of God’s good plan for rightly ordering his creation.

My previous message from 1 Pet 3:1–6 was titled “A Word to Wives.”¹ I planned to focus today’s message on 1 Pet 3:7 and title it “A Word to Husbands.” But as I studied the passage I realized that to most helpfully address husbands, we need to revisit briefly the instruction given to wives. So I guess it should be titled “A Word to Husbands (And a Few More for Wives).”

Instruction to Wives (1 Peter 3:1–6)

I want to start by looking more closely at what we learn from these verses about what “being submissive” involves. Verses 1–6 tell us at least 7 things.

(1) To Your Own Husband

Women are not told to submit to all men. They are only called to submit to their own husband. So this isn’t a statement of male superiority. It’s God’s direction on the ordering of a marriage. It’s also a reminder to single ladies to be very careful when choosing a husband. After you marry this man, God’s Word directs you to be submissive. Don’t marry a man whose leadership you can’t follow.

(2) Winsome Conduct

It seems Peter’s main concern here is that non-Christian husbands would be won to Christ by their wife’s conduct. What this tells us is that being submissive isn’t something degrading or inhuman. It’s winsome and beautiful and its ultimate aim is to draw attention to God. It is, as 1 Pet 2:13 says, “for the Lord’s sake.”

(3) Respectful Conduct

Verse 2 describes being submissive as “respectful conduct.” It’s possible to obey someone while despising them. That’s not what God is calling wives to. They are to esteem and show regard and appreciation for the God-given role of leadership their husband has.

(4) Pure Conduct

The word pure used in verse 2 means embodying Christian virtue. It tells us something about the motivation and intent of being submissive. It is not manipulative or conniving. It is pure and genuine in its motivation.

(5) Overflow of Heart

Verses 3–4 address the fact that being submissive is a matter of the heart. Wives are instructed to give more attention to their inner person than their outward beauty. This is so important because it tells us that the submissiveness God is calling for is not merely a list of rules, it’s not outward compliance—

it's a disposition of the heart. It's an attitude.

(6) *Gentle and Quiet Spirit*

Verse 4 tells us that a “gentle and quiet spirit” is very precious in God’s sight. This description fills out what a submissive heart looks like in practice. Commentator Peter Davids writes, “Gentle in the Greek world was an amiable friendliness that contrasted with roughness, bad temper or brusqueness. In biblical perspective the term indicates a person who does not attack back, for he or she waits on God to judge in the end; knowing God is just, the person can suffer evil without bitterness and vengeance (Num. 12:3; Matt. 5:5; 11:29).” Davids writes that the term “quiet” conveys a “sense of being calm, peaceful, and tranquil as opposed to restless, rebellious, disturbed, or insubordinate.”²

(7) *Based on Hope in God*

Verse 5 says, “This is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands.” Again, the motivation and ultimate grounds for this conduct is not the worthiness of your husband or your own personality or your culture’s ideal of femininity. It is an expression of hoping in and trusting in God. A godly woman submits to her husband because God has told her to do it, because she knows God is judge, and because God will reward her.

What husbands and wives need to remember when we consider this description of being submissive is that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can create both the desire and will for a woman to do this. And we should also note that being submissive isn’t something that can be reduced to a list of rules or prescribed behavior. It is primarily a disposition of the heart that is expressed in words, in tone of voice, in conduct. So you can’t just put submission on like a uniform—it’s something that has to grow out of a heart living for the glory of Christ.

I think Wayne Grudem does a good job of summing all this up with this definition: “Submission is an inner quality of gentleness that affirms the leadership of the husband.” That’s a great definition. It’s an inner quality. It’s an attitude of gentleness that’s not grasping, fighting, and demanding.

And it affirms the leadership of the husband.

The reason that last phrase is so important is because biblical submission in marriage is not unqualified obedience. It was Peter who said in Acts 5:29, “We must obey God rather than men.” In other words if your husband or any other human authority tells you to do something that would mean disobeying God’s Word, you shouldn’t do it.

What that tells us is that being submissive doesn’t mean you’re a robot who blindly follows every command. You’re called to think, to evaluate. It doesn’t mean that when you disagree with your husband you shouldn’t speak up and share your opinion. Loving your husband and being his helper necessarily involves seeking to be a wise counselor and in some cases even confronting him and disagreeing with him. The point is that in all the ways that you can you should seek to affirm and declare your support for your husband’s leadership.

To affirm your husband’s leadership is saying with your words and your behavior, “I support you. I believe you’re called by God to play this role. I am committed to making your plan a success. I’ve got your back. I’m here to be your helper.”

Ladies, I don’t know if you realize what a powerful thing this is. You will never nag your husband into godliness. You will never criticize your husband into being an amazing leader. You will never nit-pick your man into being the man you want him to be.

But your faith and encouragement and support will transform him. Nothing stirs a man’s heart to aspire to be a godly husband like the affirmation of his wife. Nothing.

Have you ever led someone else? A person? A group of people at work or in a small group? Leadership can be a lonely task. Lead any group of people and you become instantly aware of the pressure, the self-doubt, the fact that nobody listens, everybody has opinions and most people are more aware of your mistakes than what you get right.

And it’s only after you’ve led others that you appreciate a good follower. And when you’re leading there’s nothing more powerful than having someone say to you, “I believe you’re the right person for the job. I’m supporting you. I’m here to help

you succeed as a leader.”

Wives, God is saying in this passage, be that kind of follower. Affirm his role. Support his leadership. Try to make leading a joy for him. Stand by him even when he makes mistakes. Do all you can to make his plan work. Don’t sabotage his plan to prove your idea was better. Be a good follower and you will be amazed how God will bless you. God will use your gentle and quiet spirit to shape something in your husband that will amaze you and glorify God.

Instruction to Husbands (1 Peter 3:7)

God tells wives what kind of followers they’re to be. Then, in verse 7, he tells husbands what kind of leaders they’re to be. He tells them to do two things.

(1) Live With Her in an Understanding Way

It’s probably worth pointing out that it does not say, “Husbands, understand your wife.” That will never happen. And it shouldn’t be your goal. This isn’t describing a destination; it’s calling husbands to an ongoing pattern. In an ongoing way we are to seek to understand and better know our wives. The text can also be translated “live considerately” or “according to knowledge.”

Your position of authority is not a license to insensitivity. Your first task as a leader is to understand the woman God has entrusted to your leadership. This involves listening to her. This involves asking questions. This involves studying your wife. And this touches every aspect of your life together—from money and child-raising to the bedroom. Do you listen and really hear her perspective? Can you, without sarcasm, repeat back to her what she’s saying and feeling?

Our tendency as men is to think that good leadership is bold, decisive, and doesn’t ask questions. We think it’s about giving answers.

My friend Caleb works as a salesman. We were talking about this verse recently, and he told me that it reminded him of training he had received in sales. They had taught him a phrase to remember when he visited customers. “Don’t show up and throw up.” The idea is don’t sit down with a

customer and instantly begin to talk and throw up all the facts and reasons why your product is best and why they need it. Instead, listen. Ask questions. Learn what the customer’s needs are.

Caleb said he realized that too often he made the “show up and throw up” mistake with his wife. When she had a problem or a question he went instantly to solving her problem, finding a solution, telling her what to do. But that didn’t serve her. He wasn’t seeking to understand. He was just trying to fix things and move on. He needed to listen. He needed to ask questions. He needed to live with his wife in an understanding way.

I was greatly convicted by Caleb’s testimony. Too often, my desire to fix problems is really an expression of selfishness. Let me share a few examples of what we need to work to understand about our wives.

- The unique aspects of who she is as a person (her strengths, weaknesses, goals, fears, interests)
- Her daily schedule
- Her daily burdens and cares
- How and when she likes to communicate
- What words and actions express love to her
- What pleases her in the marriage bed
- How your personal strengths and weaknesses affect her
- How your decisions affect her

This is an incomplete list. I’d encourage you to add to it yourself. Better yet, ask your wife to list the things she’d like you to understand about her.

Husbands, what is keeping you from living with your wife in an understanding way? Is it pride? Is it laziness? Is it a wrong definition of leadership? Is it the assumption that you already understand her completely? Repent of whatever it is that is keeping you from obeying God’s Word.

(2) Show Her Honor

Verse 7 says husbands are to “show honor to the woman as the weaker vessel.” The word “vessel” is used in Scripture to describe a person as a

creature. Men and women are both “vessels” created by God. And generally speaking women are often not as physically strong as men. This isn’t a statement of male superiority; it’s an acknowledgment that generally speaking women are more easily exploited by men. What God is saying here is a radical reverse of the way our world works. He says to husbands, “Don’t use your physical strength as justification to mistreat your wife—instead, show her honor.”

Some commentators believe that the phrase “weaker vessel” is referring not only to physical strength, but to the fact that in God’s plan for marriage a wife is called to be “weaker”—that is, submitted to her husband. Either way, the point is the same. A husband is not to use his position of authority to mistreat or manipulate his wife. His role of authority is to be spent honoring his wife.

What does it mean to honor? It means to consider someone significant. It means to esteem them and appreciate them.

Husbands, if you think your role as leader means you can belittle your wife privately or publicly, you’re wrong. And you’re disobeying God. God’s word calls you to honor your wife in your words, in your praise of her, in your encouragement. You should have an inclination to bless her with gifts. To lavish her with praise. To express your gratefulness and appreciation.

Ask your wife, “Do you feel honored by the way I treat you? Do I honor you before others through my words and actions? Do I honor you in front of our kids?”

Now I realize that some husbands might be wondering, “What do I do if my wife isn’t submissive?” The temptation for husbands is to use power, authority, and even physical strength to enforce submission. But nowhere in Scripture are husbands told to force their wives to obey. Men, never use your wife’s lack of submission as an excuse for anger, violence, or abuse. The only thing you can do in this situation is to gently appeal to your wife from the authority of God’s Word. And regardless of your wife’s actions, you are called to live with her in an understanding way and to show her honor.

Peter points husbands to the example of the

Savior in 1 Pet 2:22–24. Through the cross of Christ we are dead to the sinful patterns of abuse and coercion. We are called to live to righteousness. And we are called to suffer like Jesus. If your wife doesn’t submit to you, entrust yourself to God. Don’t revile in return. When you suffer, don’t threaten in return. Trust God and fulfill your calling as a godly husband no matter what.

Peter closes with two compelling reasons why husbands should live in an understanding way and honor their wives. The first is that husbands and wives are equal recipients of the grace of eternal life. The day of Christ’s return is to inform our behavior as husbands: we must never treat our wives as inferior or as our servants. They are joint heirs of God’s grace. Any authority that we have as husbands has been delegated to us by Jesus Christ. And in heaven, when marriage is no more, that authority will cease.

The second reason is “so that your prayers aren’t hindered.” This is a sobering statement. Men, read this and let the full implications sink in. How you treat your wife affects your relationship and communication with God. If you abuse the authority that God has delegated and entrusted to you, then your fellowship with God will be hindered. God isn’t listening to you if you’re not listening to your wife.

I close with a poem by Lena Lathrop called “A Woman’s Question” that gives a challenging reminder of the high calling of a husband:

“A Woman’s Question” by Lena Lathrop

Do you know you have asked for the costliest
thing
Ever made by the Hand above?
A woman’s heart, and a woman’s life –
And a woman’s wonderful love.

Do you know you have asked for this priceless
thing
As a child might ask for a toy?
Demanding what others have died to win,
With the reckless dash of a boy.

You have written my lesson of duty out,

Manlike, you have questioned me.
Now stand at the bars of my woman's soul
Until I shall question thee.

You require your mutton shall always be hot,
Your socks and your shirt be whole;
I require your heart be true as God's stars
And as pure as His heaven your soul.

You require a cook for your mutton and beef,
I require a far greater thing;
A seamstress you're wanting for socks and shirts –
I look for a man and a king.

A king for the beautiful realm called Home,
And a man that His Maker, God,
Shall look upon as He did on the first
And say: "It is very good."

I am fair and young, but the rose may fade
From this soft young cheek one day;
Will you love me then 'mid the falling leaves,
As you did 'mong the blossoms of May?

Is your heart an ocean so strong and true,
I may launch my all on its tide?
A loving woman finds heaven or hell
On the day she is made a bride.

I require all things that are grand and true,
All things that a man should be;
If you give this all, I would stake my life
To be all you demand of me.

If you cannot be this, a laundress and cook
You can hire and little to pay;
But a woman's heart and a woman's life
Are not to be won that way.

A woman's heart and a woman's love are precious things. They are precious in the sight of God. Men, let us never treat them lightly. Let's live with our precious wives in an understanding way and honor them as God would have us.

ENDNOTES

¹This previous sermon, "A Word to Wives: 1 Peter 3:1–6," appeared in the Fall 2010 issue of *JBMW*.

²Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter* (New International Commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 119.

Liberation as Gender Confusion

A Review of Kristina LaCelle-Peterson, *Liberating Tradition: Women's Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

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Summary of the Book's Argument

Kristina LaCelle-Peterson uses a wide-angle lens to depict and analyze how Christian women view and should view their identity and vocation. She sets out four parts: (1) identity and body image, (2) Christian marriage, (3) the roles of women in church history, and (4) the use of gendered language for God. The author clearly enunciates her point of reference: "This book will assume that Scripture is normative in the Christian life and Christian community, and will therefore look to the biblical material for direction regarding each of the issues raised" (13).

Part 1 describes the identity of Eve at creation as Adam's full equal, sharing his substance, his calling, and the image of God. Since the Hebrew term applied to Eve and translated "helper" is most often applied to Jehovah, the author reasons that this is clearly "not the helper as subordinate or unequal partner that many have associated with the term (à la daddy's little helper, or Santa's elves)" (34–35). The author believes that Adam and Eve lived together in undifferentiated equality, with no hierarchical roles in either their pre- or post-Fall states.

Old Testament women played a variety of roles: they conversed with God, sacrificed to protect men, fell prey to abuse, exercised power (sometimes wickedly), and acted as redeemers and prophets. Baffled by the morally confusing Old Testament pictures of women, LaCelle-Peterson moves with relief to the New Testament, whose depiction of

women is "much brighter," because Jesus models "a whole new basis on which human beings can interact: sacrificial love." Here she examines the respect and honor that Jesus gave women, as he recognized the importance of their discipleship, designated them as the first witnesses of the resurrection, and poured out his Spirit on them in the Pentecost event.

As she moves into the apostolic letters, LaCelle-Peterson brings few if any original insights to the much-discussed passages such as those dealing with Phoebe, Junia, and Priscilla. Having decided on her preferred interpretation of key texts, she uses the weight of her arguments that women fully share in church leadership as the predominant principle for interpreting other Pauline passages, such as 1 Cor 14:34–35 and 1 Tim 2:8–15. To those who interpret these passages in a complementarian way, she would answer that *they* are using other Scriptures to slant the interpretation of certain Pauline texts. To the very real conundrum of Paul's statements in 1 Corinthians 11 (where women pray and prophesy in the church) and that of 1 Corinthians 14 (which states that women are to be silent in the church), she cites a variety of possible interpretations, including the one that says Paul did not write the passage in chapter 14. If he *did*, she concludes, they are certainly not to be enshrined in all churches everywhere, since they were written to a church where goddess worship was rampant.¹ The final chapter of Part 1 deals with the influence of

culture (both secular and Christian) on women's understanding of body image.

Part 2, on marriage, begins with the statement that "Scripture does not require any one particular family arrangement" (98). Though we can get a good "starting point" by referring to the creation story, "the most significant thing that we learn about [human beings] is something they have in common, and this something, their being image-bearers, sets them apart from the rest of creation" (99). The author concludes her discussion of Genesis 1 and 2 by saying, "The model in which the man's dreams and aspirations fill center stage, and in which the woman tries to fit her life in and around his, is called into question by the very passage so often used to claim its legitimacy" (99). After examining examples of Old and New Testament marriages, LaCelle-Peterson argues that the Christian love with which Jesus treats women precludes the traditional view of marriage, which allows a husband to say, "We are going to do things my way, because I am the head of the house" (106). She recommends a truly "counter-cultural" approach to marriage that would reject the "hierarchical model ... in favor of a love relationship shaped by Jesus' definition and demonstration of love" (107).

The remainder of Part 2 examines the wide variety of cultural expressions of marriage, and challenges "traditional marriage"—the idea that the man leaves the home to work, whereas the woman should stay home. Evangelicals, she argues, love the Victorian model of marriage because they think it: establishes "the boundary between [evangelicals] and 'the world'" (123); protects the man's sexual morality; puts the more rational human in charge; provides a protective cocoon for the woman; protects the church from sliding into androgyny; and maintains social differences that protect sexual difference.

The "irrational fear of androgyny" that the author assigns to evangelical "gender essentialists" leads Christian women to accept "unjust social treatment." Here the author shares her own frustration: "I was simply tired of being asked to embrace some sort of subjection to men in order to prove I was glad God made me female" (127). She

quotes Lewis Smedes, who says, "Femaleness is an adjective to personhood. To assign persons roles that they as individuals do not personally choose to accept, and to do this on the basis of gender, is to make sexuality basic and personhood secondary" (128).²

This argument leads LaCelle-Peterson to consider how marriages can better respect the needs of each partner rather than subjugating the woman to the man. Christians can construct marriages full of respect for each other, bereft of power plays and male chauvinism, conducive to the exercise of the spiritual gifts of both men and women. The "hierarchical" approach leads to self-abnegation (or even the self-abdication) of the woman, who buries her own usefulness in the name of Christian submission.

The benefits of true mutuality are freedom to love more fully, deeper communication, greater justice, and a wider use of gifts. As for raising children, Christian women are misled, argues the author, into thinking that mothering is the highest calling, that staying home is necessary for godly mothering, and that the husband's career should always take precedence over a woman's calling. Though certain social pressures militate against true egalitarian parenting, the author encourages couples to overcome such pressures.

Part 3 seeks to make "visible" the many women in the church's history who have contributed to the work of God. Women have been officially recognized as bishops, apostles, prophets, theology teachers, presbyters, and deacons. They have also been martyrs and have been highly involved in the mystical movements. The author states that "among church historians, it is now commonplace to observe that women were involved at every level of church leadership early on" in the church's history (154). As partial evidence of this, she calls on the Gnostic gospels, what she calls "noncanonical Christian literature" and cites the *Gospel of Mary*, for example, to show that Mary Magdalene held high honor in the early church. "This extrabiblical material may not be technically historical," says the author, "but it suggests the central role that Mary played in the early days of the church, and shows

how the memory of her significance was carried into the second century” (156).

Women continued in important roles through the Middle Ages, into the Reformation, and on into modern evangelicalism. The chapters citing interesting historical examples of Christian women in positions of leadership touch only lightly on the theological contexts in which these women served.

Part 4 challenges the present-day church to change our current male-oriented language to include women in everyday church services, hymns and sermons. Our language for God should not give the impression that God is “male.” Since, argues the author, the Bible itself uses female imagery for God, we need to do the same.

The final image of the book, borrowed from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, encourages Christians to break through the glass ceiling that Charlie so feared, in order to “stop playing roles and learn to know and be known.” If we were to remember how God used women—to prophesy on the day of Pentecost; to serve as evangelists and apostles; to receive and use the gifts of the Spirit—we, too, could move “up and out” into a more biblical Christian life, with men and women serving together in the kingdom of Christ.

Critique

I share with the author her commitment to the Scriptures as normative in the Christian life and community. I hope and pray, therefore, that my comments will bolster confidence in God’s Word, as it is expressed in creation, in his written Word, and in his Word-in-the-Flesh, Jesus. My critique will not follow the sections of the book in order, but will address five overarching areas of concern.

(1) *Use of Historical Precedent*

LaCelle-Peterson has searched the pages of Scripture and church history to prove that women have held positions of leadership. About women’s role in the church through history, she concludes, “Given the recent scholarship about women’s official positions in the church, we can see what was invisible before: that women functioned in all sorts of officially recognized roles” (166). She implies

that we need to follow their example. About Old Testament women she says, “Why would stories of women leaders and co-laborers with men in the drama of salvation be included in Scripture if we are not supposed to gain something from their examples?” (55). But example is a witless counselor.

Perhaps this section was written to disprove the “prominent evangelical speaker” who declared that because women have never held leadership positions in church history (151) they should not begin now. Against this faulty argument, LaCelle-Peterson expresses her own—equally faulty: because women *have* held positions of leadership in church history, they ought still so to do. If “Scripture is normative in the Christian life and Christian community,” and we ought to bring our lives into conformity with its principles and commands, then the many pages used to show what Christian women *have done* fail to prove what they *ought* to do. Ironically, the author appeals to tradition and example, while elsewhere admonishing us with all urgency to break with traditions that she herself deems pernicious. Example cannot be our master, for we all do “what is right in our own eyes.” I do not mean that the Scriptures never recommend individuals to serve as examples, but we must use discernment in this determination, applying sane hermeneutical principles in order to draw the right lessons from examples offered.

(2) *The Strawman Complementarian Couple*

A second troubling aspect of the book is its failure to examine and understand a well-reasoned complementarian approach to the male/female distinctions and roles in marriage and the church. The pages of *Liberating Tradition* abound with arguments against a strawman complementarian position. The author is surprised that “many evangelicals practice mutually respectful and loving marriage” (123). Her surprise would not have been so great had she taken the complementarian position seriously. Instead, she caricatures it as teaching the following:

- Women are inferior, second-class beings (20, 21, 32, 34 etc.)
- Man is to dominate his wife, and she is to be passive (37)
- God subordinates women to keep order in the universe (37)
- Eve should be blamed for the Fall (38)
- “Hierarchical” marriage allows a husband to impose his will on his wife (106)
- The husband is the “arbiter of the gifts of the family, deciding whose gifts matter and whose are to be buried” (113)
- The husband is the “boss” and uses power to keep his wife in submission, forcing her to give in on every decision (130)
- The man is always strong and the woman is “constantly weak and needing to be taken care of” (136)

This list is far from exhaustive. One searches the index and footnotes in vain for positive quotes from complementarian scholars, those with whom she would claim to have affinity, insofar as she says that the Bible is her standard. The book makes no attempt to interact fairly or carefully with the many excellent resources written on this subject by Bible-believing scholars.

(3) *Biblical Confusion*

This brings me to a critique of the author’s use of Scripture. Her book contains many Scriptural references, and she clearly states her desire to examine all issues by its light, but her hermeneutical approach has little biblical/theological continuity. Jesus gives us the grid for interpreting Scripture. Of him it is said that “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). Every passage of the Bible tells us about Jesus, including those baffling Old Testament stories that LaCelle-Peterson cannot fathom. Why, she asks, were Old Testament examples of women given to us, if not to serve as examples in some way?

Old Testament Examples

Biblical characters are not always presented as clearly positive or negative examples. We must ask why the character’s story is in the book and why the book is in God’s revelation of salvation in Christ. Take the story of Deborah, for example. Why is Deborah in the story? And why is Judges in the Bible? God gives Deborah a message for Barak, who is too frightened to obey God’s call to fight Sisera’s army. There is irony in the fact that a woman must stir up the man to courage; that a woman is the one who accomplishes victory over Sisera; that Barak says to Deborah what Moses said to God Himself: “Unless you go up with me, I will not go up.” Reflection shows us that the whole theme of Judges is “who will go up for us?” and that no leader can be the true hero. In fact, all the judges (with the possible exception of Othniel) are unconventional (a woman, a handicapped man, a philanderer, a child born out of wedlock, etc.). “Boys, be just like Samson!” is not a good moral for a Sunday School class. Gideon, Barak, Samson, and Jephthah are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as examples of *faith in God*, who mercifully provides for his people, in spite of their corruption, fear, unbelief, and disobedience and their insistence on doing “what is right in their own eyes.”³ Deborah’s faith is real, but her situation as judge is not necessarily paradigmatic. She rejoices when the “princes of Israel” finally kick into action. The mega-narrative of God’s plan of salvation through the coming Messiah must inform our understanding of all issues in Scripture.⁴

The Gospel Importance of Male/Female Distinctions in Marriage

The very *first* thing the Bible reveals to us about human beings is that they are created in God’s image, male and female. Some of the Bible’s last words are: “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’” How can we dismiss this overarching marriage structure that informs not only our daily practice of our sexuality, but which is the image God chose to show us the love of Christ for the church? Can marriage and sexuality be considered a secondary issue, unrelated to the gospel message? Is it not integral in the calling of the first Adam that he

become one flesh with his bride, just as it is integral to the Last Adam that he become unified forever with his bride the church? As one pastor put it,

According to Paul, the first glimpse of the gospel was in pre-Fall creation itself—woven into the perfect, unwarped-by-sin creational structures of one man / one woman / one flesh. That creational structure of one man living with one woman in a one-flesh lifetime commitment is a living, breathing, dancing, pulsating, multiplying image of how Jesus Christ loves and binds himself to his people. And now the boundaries on the way we live as sexual beings begin to look a lot less arbitrary and a lot more purposeful and serious.⁵

God prepared human marriage to reflect the beauty and intimacy of his love for his bride. It underlines the separateness of the “other” while showing the glory of communion and intimacy. It is his living picture of the gospel. One man, one woman, one flesh, says Jesus—as it was created to be. LaCelle-Peterson assumes that because we find no ideal couple throughout the pages of the Bible that there is no ideal model! But God created the model that no human couple has ever lived out, the model to which both Jesus and Paul point when discussing marriage. Could we expect an ideal couple, once Adam and Eve stepped into the bleak world of selfishness and sin? Only the husband-love of God is pure. He is pictured, throughout the pages of the Scripture as *the* faithful husband (see Hosea, Song of Solomon, Isaiah 62, Jeremiah 2, Ezekiel 16, John 3, Ephesians 4, and the final chapters of Revelation, to name but a few.)

Marriage is not only a theoretical announcement of the gospel. In living out our Christian marriages, structured as God intended them to be, we announce the gospel to the world. The apostles underline the importance of such living. Paul and Peter variously instruct wives to be active in the home (Titus 2:5); to bear children (1 Tim 5:14); to love, respect and be in submission to their husbands (1 Cor 11:3, Eph 5:23–24,33; Col 3:18; Titus 2:4–5; 1 Pet 3:1, 5); to refrain from teaching men

or taking authority over them in the church (1 Tim 2:12); to teach other women and children (Titus 2:3, 2 Tim 1:5 by inference). Paul’s late-life instructions to Timothy and Titus are full of practical instructions and soaked in an insistence on sound doctrine. They offer not only excellent examples for us to follow, but those examples are set before us specifically as normative for the church. They are programmatic for these young pastors (who will follow the powerful apostle) and are applicable for all the churches, in whose name Paul so often speaks.⁶ Ephesians 5 offers the model of marriage that LaCelle-Peterson says is absent in the Bible. This is puzzling, to say the least, if she claims that the Bible should inform our behavior. Turning Paul’s image in Ephesians 5 into a mutual submission model, as she does, refuses to honor the Bible’s clear teaching. Husbands and wives who obey that teaching not only glean many benefits in their own lives, but also keep God’s name and his gospel from being slandered.⁷

Women are not alone in the godly exercise of submission. All of us are called to submit to authority: children to parents, employees to their bosses, the church to Christ, Jesus to his Father, and citizens to their political leaders. When infused with the powerful love of Christ, all created authority structures become places of refuge, stability, and blessing. God’s model of marriage does not allow a man to lord it over his wife. Christians should be the first to protect women from abuse, to recognize their honor as image-bearers of the most High, and to fight against any and all injustice against them, whether in the culture or in the church. Christians champion selfless, humble love in one-man, one-woman marriage, thus exhibiting the eternal love relationship that the Head of the church establishes with his bride.

(4) *Language for God*

LaCelle-Peterson’s final chapter urges the church to use the feminine metaphors for God that we find in the Bible, such as Jesus’ image of a hen gathering her chicks under her wing, or the Old Testament references to God birthing creation. In her discussion of metaphor and language, the

author implies that language serves us by allowing us to experience a mosaic of the face of God. If we patch together all the metaphors in the Bible, we will have a fuller experience of God's person. However, God spoke the world into existence and created human beings who communicate in language. God also chose to reveal himself in language and such revelation is sufficient for us to know Him truly. Not all the expressions God chose to reveal about his nature and character are metaphorical images into which we pour our own experiences.

There *are* similes and metaphors in Scripture, some of which use feminine imagery to depict God's love or character. Jesus is *like* a hen (simile). God *is* a Rock (metaphor). However, when the Bible says that God is our Savior and Creator, or that Jesus is our Lord, King and Redeemer, these are not metaphors. They describe the real, absolute nature of our God. The word "Father" is on Jesus' lips constantly and he teaches his disciples to call God Father. He never tells them to call God "Mother." Paul says that all "fatherhood" on earth is from the heavenly Father.⁸ These are not metaphorical statements, unless one argues that *all* language is necessarily metaphorical, since it cannot describe the entirety of God's nature—a direction LaCelle-Peterson seems to seek. But let us give the metaphor its due. Metaphors of God as a birthing mother, or as God with breasts⁹ *emphasize the differences* between the roles of men and women rather than blurring them. Women give birth. Women have breasts. These metaphors do not play down the differences between men and women, but rather appeal to the common sense differences we all know to be true. So citing them does no good for LaCelle-Peterson's argument that gender distinctions should be downplayed or eliminated.

The author's admirable motivation in emphasizing the feminine metaphors is to make women feel included in worship and the church. She is concerned that women think they are excluded from such verses as, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the council of the ungodly." In fact, the culture has been so soaked in feminist thinking, that I believe LaCelle-Peterson is correct. But how should we resolve such misconceptions? Should we

substitute the word "one" for "man"? Such a simplistic solution may destroy not only the grammatical elegance of the representative male pronoun, but, more importantly, the Christological and prophetic nature of the passage.

In an attempt to "destroy God" (more on this later), radical feminists knew they first had to take down language. Fortunately all their suggestions have not held (such as "ze" to replace "he" and "she," or "hir" to replace "him" and "her"). But they *have* succeeded in forcing us to say "him or her" constantly and to make most pronouns plural, in order to avoid confusion and offense.¹⁰ Would it not be better to teach women what a privilege it is to be considered a "son of God," than to destroy the richness of the Bible's understanding of the rights of the firstborn son? God uses those rights as a picture of the inheritance of our older brother, Jesus, who purchased for all of us—men and women—the right to be co-heirs with him. To think that a woman is incapable of understanding such a principle is an insult to her intelligence. So let's be careful and gracious in our language, but guard it from desecration by a culture soaked in anti-patriarchal principles. We must not mold the Bible's language to fit our culture. Instead, we ourselves must be molded by the true Patriarchal gospel, given to us by our Father in heaven, and lived out in the flesh of a man Christ Jesus, who is incarnated for eternity in the recognizable male body in which he was born. This is no insult to women, since all of us, men and women, are the bride of Christ who will be received as perfect, dressed in the beauty of his holiness and seated at the banquet table of the Wedding of all time.

(5) Theological Naïveté: Monism, Androgyny, and Feminism

LaCelle-Peterson cites "evangelical essentialists" (biblical complementarians) only negatively while sustaining and supporting her arguments by egalitarians such as Rebecca Groothuis, Catherine Kroeger, and Stanley Grenz. She cites others who are so far afield theologically that they might well be classified as pagans: Virginia Mollenkott, Mary Daly, Sallie McFague, Elizabeth Johnson, and

Rosemary Radford Ruether (not to speak of the Gnostic gospel writers). Had this radical cohort been quoted in order to refute their anti-biblical theories of God and man, the reader would have more confidence in LaCelle-Peterson's commitment to the Scriptures.

Perhaps she truly does not understand the implications of what she argues. Her analysis of current social trends in gender and sexuality is peculiarly naïve. Why is she enamored with McFague's "body of God" theology, which is pure monism? Why is she intrigued by Mary Daly, who admires the Hindu goddess Kali, who became a witch and who encourages women to be "sinarticulate"? Why quote with such enthusiasm Virginia Mollenkott, a self-described "evangelical lesbian feminist" who believes that there are some fourteen sexual identities our enlightened society must embrace, and that homosexuals are "God's ambassadors" to bring about a "gender-liberated new world"?¹¹ The feminist movement was not born from a simple desire to treat women with respect. The engine of the feminist train entered pagan territory long ago, as is evidenced by the 1973 statement of Mary Daly, who said that feminism should reach "outward and inward toward the God beyond and beneath the gods who have stolen our identity."¹² Feminism's goal, according to Naomi Goldenberg is this: "We women will bring an end to God."¹³ She goes on to say,

The feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and Yahweh. Yet very few of the women and men now working for sexual equality within Christianity and Judaism realize the extent of their heresy.¹⁴

Liberating Tradition seems heavily influenced by these hardcore, pagan "anti-Patriarchs" and their plea for independence from God Himself. The Creator/creature distinction is at stake in this battle of gender and sexuality. LaCelle-Peterson says we overplay distinctions, and she admires Goldenberg, Daly, Mollenkott and company, who have taken the feminist scythe to God-created distinctions in order to clear a path to the throne of the ultimate

tyrant, the Heavenly Patriarch. God the Father will survive their attacks and remain on his throne to judge those who disdain the distinctions he has placed in this world as a sign of His transcendence.

The culture's heavy pressure to eliminate all created distinctions: (male/female, human/animal, right/wrong, God/the world) comes from a monistic system where there is no "Other." Yet both creation and the gospel begin with "otherness." Instead of seeking to destroy difference, we Christians should bask in it! We are most "like God" not when we prefer our own utopian notions to his structures, but when we absorb his principles and, by the power of his Spirit exhibit them in our lives. Those principles begin with God's absolute transcendence and carry on with the "set apartness" that makes creation holy—separations between night and day, land and water, fish and birds, and between male and female.

The author separates our humanity from our sexuality, but God created us in His image, *male* and *female*, a distinction God declared holy. Gender essentialist? Yes, indeed. We are not persons first, with a frosting of sexuality. We are male or female persons, and though in heaven human marriage will no longer be necessary, our recognizable human bodies will never cease to exist.

Conclusion

Freedom is not breaking "up and out" of God's seemingly restrictive glass ceiling. God "sits above the circle of the earth" (Isa 40:22). He alone lives in the land of "up and out," yet He sent Jesus, our Bridegroom to rescue, protect, cherish, lead, and serve his glorious, beloved bride, the church. It is that ultimate relationship of selfless love that all Christian men and women seek to embody—wives lovingly submitting to their husbands in the power of the Lord Jesus, and husbands depending on Jesus' love to wash their wives in the pure water of the Word, and to serve and love them for a lifetime. Since its early days, the church has never fought a culture as soaked as is ours in pagan thinking and pansexual chaos. If ever we needed a clear witness to God's transcendent Fatherhood and to male/female distinctions, it is now.

ENDNOTES

¹Scholarly articles have debated the influence of goddess worship in the Ephesian church. If such an influence were strong, the teaching in Ephesians would be even *more* appropriate for our own culture, in which goddess worship is back with a vengeance.

²Lewis Smedes, *Sex for Christians: The Limits and Liberties of Sexual Living* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 24.

³Even the priests have fallen away: the grandson of Aaron (Phinehas) turns a blind eye to violent homosexual gang rapists in his hometown, while the grandson of Moses (Jonathan) happily sets up an alternative, polytheistic worship system for a renegade tribe.

⁴Nowhere in the Scriptures do we read of God commanding that women be placed in leadership. Moses elects elders to help him judge; God chooses male kings; male judges are elsewhere specifically chosen; Jesus appoints male apostles; the apostles appoint male leaders to oversee diaconal concerns; and Paul specifically forbids women to take authority over or to teach men.

⁵Theodore Hamilton, "Creation Sexuality, or Sex as Prophecy" (unpublished paper presented at a Think Tank entitled *The Sexual Body: Epicenter of the Worldview Battle*, Escondido, CA on February 4, 2009).

⁶Rom 16:4, 16; 1 Cor 7:17; 11:16; 14:33f; 16:1, 19; 2 Cor 8:1, 18f, 23f; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Gal 1:2, 22; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 1:4. Given how confident Paul is in his apostolic mission, and in stating things for, from, and to "the churches," we need to treat seriously any instructions he gives. He was certainly aware of his foundational role as the "last apostle." When Paul states what ought and what ought not to be done in the church, we should not quickly rush to a decision that he is merely tidying up local issues that have no relevance to the church for all time.

⁷See my article, "Women against Public Blasphemy," *The Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 8–18.

⁸Ephesians 3:14–15: "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family (fatherhood) in heaven and on earth is named." (The "reason" seems to refer to Ephesians 2:20–21, which speaks of the unity of the body under the headship of Christ.)

⁹The interpretation suggested for El-Shaddai in this book.

¹⁰Translation decisions are complex and each language has its own difficulties. The feminist attack on language has made little inroads into the French language, for example. (Not much gets past the "Académie Française"!.) No French male is distressed to be included among "toutes les personnes" in the room. "Personne" is feminine in gender, but would refer to all people in the room, males included. La Celle-Peterson might prefer living in France—except that the default pronoun for a group of men and women is still the masculine pronoun.

¹¹Virginia Mollenkott, *Sensuous Spirituality: Out from Fundamentalism* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 166.

¹²Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 29.

¹³Naomi Goldenberg, *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (Boston: Beacon, 1979), 3.

¹⁴Ibid., 4.

The Big Picture of Marriage

A Review of John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence*.
Wheaton: Crossway, 2009.

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It is hard to imagine selecting a more enjoyable or more encouraging book to review on the topic of marriage and family than that of John Piper's recent gift to the church, *This Momentary Marriage*. In it, Piper blends his characteristically careful handling of the biblical text and riveting God-ward focus with the practical insights of forty years of marriage and raising a family. And, of course, as we have come to expect from Piper, the personal application is every bit as penetrating as the biblical exposition is sure-footed. Consequently, this book stands out noticeably from the many books on marriage published every year.

My purpose in this review is not to summarize *This Momentary Marriage* exhaustively (the goal of each chapter is readily discernible in each chapter's title). Rather, my more focused aim is simply to commend the book to JBMW's readers, by pointing out its beautifully God-centered thesis and then providing three brief soundings of Piper's treatment of various aspects of marriage in light of this overarching vision. The primary thesis of *This Momentary Marriage* is that marriage, in this life, is an impermanent shadow pointing to the far grander reality of the relationship between Christ and his church that will last forever. As Piper himself eloquently puts it, while commenting on Mark 12:25, in the introductory chapter,

There is no human marriage after death. The shadow of covenant-keeping between husband and wife gives way to the reality of covenant-keeping between Christ and his glorified Church. Noth-

ing is lost. The music of every pleasure is transposed into an infinitely higher key (14–15).

Or, again, as he says in a chapter entitled "Staying Married is Not Mainly About Staying in Love,"

The ultimate thing we can say about marriage is that it exists for God's glory. That is, it exists to display God. Now we see how: Marriage is patterned after Christ's covenant relationship to his redeemed people, the church. And therefore, the highest meaning and the most ultimate purpose of marriage is to put the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display. That is why marriage exists. If you are married, that is why you are married. If you hope to be, that should be your dream (25).

This is the God exalting message that is then carefully woven throughout the remaining chapters of the book as Piper displays how the supremacy of God governs everything concerning marriage, from lifelong covenant commitment, to roles of headship and submission, to singleness, to sex, to procreation, to parenting, and even to the question of divorce and remarriage. Invariably, each of these individual chapters is excellent in its own right, but each one is also enhanced on account of the fact that Piper has well connected them to this big picture.

Sounding #1

Shortly after laying the main theological foundation for the book, Piper supplies four chapters (chs. 5–8), focused prominently on Eph 5:21–33 and 1 Pet 3:1–7, that are primarily aimed at addressing matters of a husband’s leadership and a wife’s support and submission in marriage. Not surprisingly, these chapters exhibit a mature and balanced complementarian vision of marriage. In chapter 5, Piper thoughtfully details “what headship and submission are *not*” (68, italics his), before turning to a biblical *exposition* of a husband’s headship in chapter 6, followed by a probing *application* of a husband’s headship in chapter 7, and an examination of a wife’s godly submission—again contrasted with what this is not—in chapter 8.

Here, we may zero in profitably on just one facet of Piper’s application of a husband’s call to leadership, in chapter 7. In this chapter, Piper broadly defines headship as “*the divine calling of a husband to take primary responsibility for Christlike, servant leadership, protection, and provision in the home*” (84, italics his). After supplying further biblical rationale for understanding the biblical concept of “headship” to entail leadership, Piper expounds on the *physical* and *spiritual* senses in which a husband is called both to *provide* for and to *protect* his family. In his exhortation to husbands to take the lead in giving spiritual protection to their families, Piper applies Eph 4:26–27—“Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil”—as one example of how a husband may give such spiritual protection by exercising initiative in matters of relational reconciliation, following the pattern of Jesus’ greater initiative in reconciling sinners to the Father. He explains,

I don’t mean that wives should never say they are sorry. But in the relation between Christ and his church, who took the initiative to make all things new? Who left the comfort and security of his throne of justice to put mercy to work at Calvary? Who came back to Peter first after three denials? Who has returned to you again and again forgiving you and offering his fellowship afresh? Jesus, the

Leader, the great initiative-taker.

So, husbands, your headship means: Go *ahead*. Take the lead. It does not matter if it is her fault. That didn’t stop Christ. Who will break the icy silence first? Who will choke out the words, “I’m sorry, I want it to be better”? . . . She might beat you to it. Sometimes that’s okay. But woe to you if you think that since it’s her fault, she’s obliged to say the first reconciling word. Headship is not easy. It is the hardest, most humbling work in the world. Protect your family. Strive, as much as it lies within you, to make peace before the sun goes down (91, italics his).

In this summons to spiritual protection, then, we see a Christian husband’s servant headship at work, not only in the form of theological principles and definitions, but, just as importantly, in action.

Sounding #2

Following the chapters on headship and submission, Piper spends two chapters (chs. 9–10) addressing matters of singleness, in which he demonstrates that the primary God-ward meaning of marriage is also the primary God-ward meaning of, even lifelong, singleness as well. In the first of these two chapters, Piper shows scripturally that the blessings of an earthly marriage and family—as wonderful as they may be—are subordinate to the blessings of being part of God’s family of faith (111). And, thus, we are reminded that those Christian singles who do not receive the former blessings are not at a loss for blessings from God, for the ones they do receive as sons and daughters of the heavenly father are, indeed, the better blessings (113). Additionally, Piper points out at least four truths about Christ that may be more readily displayed in lives of those Christians called to singleness (113–14). His point, of course, is not, that either the state of marriage or celibacy is intrinsically superior to the other, but that both have their unique challenges and their unique ways of bearing witness to the glory of God (120).

Sounding #3

To take one final sounding, we will briefly consider Piper's analysis of the purpose of procreation in chapter 12. Once again, Piper's application of a God-ward focus to this topic provides for a compelling exposition. Here, Piper begins by acknowledging that one, obviously, common purpose that God intends for marriage is to have children. And yet, marriage is not ultimately or finally about simply producing children. Rather, as it concerns children, marriage is ultimately about "making children followers of Jesus" (141). As Piper explains a couple of pages earlier, "God's purpose in making marriage the place to have children was never merely to fill the earth with people, but to fill the earth with worshippers of the true God" (139). This, in turn, means "that couples who cannot conceive because of infertility can still aim to make children followers of Jesus" (138). Once again, readers are encouraged with the reminder that, in childbearing, as with all aspects of our marriages, marriage takes its main meaning in pointing beyond itself.

Conclusion

Though these soundings are merely samples of Piper's work in *This Momentary Marriage*, they are, nevertheless, representative of the biblical counsel that drenches every chapter of this book. In my judgment, John Piper has succeeded in his aim to dignify the meaning of marriage (and singleness) in all of its joys and challenges, by connecting the meaning of our "momentary marriages" to the glory of the fulfillment of those marriages in the reality of the eternal marriage between Christ and his bride. In terms of readership, *This Momentary Marriage* is written at a widely accessible level, so lay-folk, and not just pastors, will find it imminently readable. Along similar lines, another nice feature of the book is that most of its fifteen main chapters come in at ten pages or less. So, married couples could easily adapt this book as a complement, for devotional purposes, to their regular Bible reading. I am also of the opinion that *This Momentary Marriage* would make a great tool for a discipleship class on marriage. Beyond that, I can think of no higher way to commend the book than to mention

that, henceforth, I plan to incorporate it as required reading for couples that I lead through pre-marital counseling.

Historically Engaging but Not Theologically Neutral

A Review of Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*.
Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009.

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Lynn Cohick is associate professor of New Testament at Wheaton College and is coauthor of *The New Testament in Antiquity* (along with Gary M. Burge and Gene L. Green). Because of the various analyses concerning New Testament women, in *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, Cohick seeks to offer, as much as possible, an unbiased description of what women were like and what they did during the time of the New Testament. Her goal is not to present “a theological argument that debates important issues concerning women in the contemporary church” but “to provide an engaging and accurate reconstruction of ancient women’s way of life” (21). In order to accomplish this task, Cohick acknowledges that the data we have about women during Second Temple Judaism must be interpreted correctly. For example, when men write about women we must take into account the “ancient author’s polemics or ulterior motives in describing women” (21). Nevertheless, Cohick is confident that an accurate portrayal of women can be discovered, and thus she does not embrace an extreme hermeneutics of suspicion, which views all texts written by men “to be irredeemably andocentric, patriarchal, and misogynistic” (22).

The goal of Cohick’s book is simply “to tell the story of the average women” (23). She seeks to accomplish this by considering women and their familial relationships (as daughters, ch 1; in marriage, ch 2; as wives, ch 3; and as mothers, ch 4) as well as what women did (in religion, chs 5–6; in work, ch 7; as slaves and prostitutes, ch 8; and as

benefactors, ch 9). Cohick considers women from various strata of society by examining not only extant literature but also by analyzing legal documents (such as marriage contracts), inscriptions, and art. She readily acknowledges that this book is not a book on women in the New Testament but is rather a prolegomena to the study of women in the New Testament. Cohick admits, however, that she hopes “to correct the misconceptions about women’s lives that have crept into our modern imagination, such as the notion that first-century AD women were cloistered in their homes” (24).

Although Cohick should be commended for her knowledge and grasp of primary sources (as well as the secondary literature), one wonders how possible it is to present a coherent picture of women that is based on various sources that span about 400 years (from c. 300 BC to c. AD 100) and represent three major ethnic and religious groups (Roman, Greek, and Jewish). Nevertheless, Cohick at least partially achieves her goal to offer a descriptive historical picture of women’s lives in the Hellenistic and early Roman period, relating her study to the women mentioned in the New Testament.

Some of her conclusions have important consequences for the study of the New Testament. For example, many scholars now affirm the existence of a “new woman” in the Roman Empire based on the decrees of Augustus that addressed the lack of children produced by Roman citizens and promiscuity of women. These decrees are viewed as countering a new paradigm of behavior among women

that spawned an ancient sexual revolution in which wealthy women were dressing with provocative clothes and hairstyles and seeking the sexual freedoms that were formally only given to men. Such a view is espoused by Bruce Winter in *Roman Wives, Roman Widows: The Appearance of New Women and the Pauline Communities* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). These “new women,” it is argued, were blatantly disregarding ancient social customs of modesty and were actively flaunting their new found liberty. In response to this cultural dismissal, then, Augustus issues various decrees seeking to keep such women in check.

Cohick, however, asserts that such a reading of the evidence is incorrect. She maintains that Augustus had other political motives for issuing the decrees and that much of what is found in the literature regarding women is an overstated polemic against such women. Cohick concludes,

The existence of the “new woman,” who was sexually promiscuous and upset the balance of propriety in Rome and beyond, is more a poetic fiction and a political smear than a historical reality. There is no evidence of increased female immorality under Augustus.... Rather, male authors used the charge of female sexual misconduct as a weapon against political enemies. The charges of female immorality need not reflect actual misconduct in most cases, but rather reveal the increased presence of women in the political arena (75).

If Cohick is correct, then those who base their interpretation of Scripture on this so-called “new woman” are prone to force this unwarranted stereotype on certain texts. For example, in his recent commentary on 1–2 Timothy, Philip Towner assumes the reality of this “new woman” when he offers his commentary on key texts such as 1 Tim 2:9–15 (*The Letters to Timothy*, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006]).

Cohick also challenges the status-quo on texts such as the Samaritan woman in John 4. Although many commentators and expositors assume that the woman’s presence at the well at noon was proof that

she was a social outcast because of her immorality, according to Cohick, this assertion is unfounded. She further notes that simply because the woman was married five times does not necessarily indicate promiscuity. She could have been widowed several times (given the high death rate) and/or divorced several times. This thesis is supported by the fact that others in the village were willing to listen to her testimony about Jesus (which would not be the case if she was shunned as an immoral outcast). Cohick summarizes, “The Samaritan woman has been harshly treated by centuries of commentators who have labeled her a promiscuous vixen bent on seducing unsuspecting men.... [I]t seems unlikely that the Samaritan woman was involved in a series of divorces that she initiated” (128).

My main concern with Cohick’s work is when she interacts with the New Testament texts dealing with women. She sometimes strays from her commitment to be objective and consistently interprets the passages in ways that lean heavily toward egalitarianism. For example, she assumes that Phoebe was a deacon (which she interprets as “emissary”) in the church at Cenchreae (190, 301) and that Lydia was a leader of the church in Philippi (190, 307). In another place, she affirms the position that Junia was counted as one of the apostles, which suggests that she was “an authoritative figure in the community” (216). Furthermore, she calls Prisca (or Priscilla) “the teacher” simply because she is mentioned as instructing Apollos with her husband (224). In other words, whenever possible, Cohick seems to opt for the interpretation that gives women the greatest amount of authority in the early church. In her conclusion, Cohick remarks, “I hope I encouraged the reader’s imagination to think beyond the stylized snapshots of ancient women sequestered in cramped homes, barefoot and pregnant” (324). She later adds that “we have to appreciate that women held both official and unofficial titles and positions of power” (325). Thus, at times one wonders how theologically neutral Cohick remains since she is constantly seeking to demonstrate how much authority women in the early church possessed.

Although I disagree with some of Cohick’s conclusions (assumptions?) that women held for-

mal offices in the early church, her work as a whole is carefully researched and skillfully presented. She brings to light what life was like for women in the ancient world which helps us better understand the cultural milieu of the New Testament world. It seems to me, however, that at times she fails to remain theologically neutral in her task of presenting a descriptive analysis of the women mentioned in the New Testament.

Hoping for More Girls to Go Wise

A Review of Mary Kassian, *Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild*. Chicago: Moody, 2010.

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If we were asked to think of a “wild woman,” a person, or type of person, would typically quickly come to mind. We can all think of her right? She is usually the girl we don’t hang out with because of her bad reputation. She is the girl flirting with the boys in school, dressing provocatively, or hanging out at clubs every weekend. But she certainly isn’t in our homes or churches. She couldn’t be, could she? Mary Kassian, author of *Girls Gone Wise in a World Gone Wild*, begs to differ. By holding up the mirror of God’s Word she sets out to show that all women are the wild woman at heart, and need a new heart to make them into the woman God wants them to be (11).

Kassian’s book contrasts the wild woman in Proverbs 7 with the wise woman that God sets forth in his Word. Kassian sees wildness creeping into the church and into our homes, and her burden is for women to follow God wholeheartedly (19). The book is divided into twenty chapters, which serve as the points of contrast between the wild and wise woman. There are three general themes permeating these chapters, which highlight Kassian’s heart and mission.

To be a wise woman means getting a new heart. Kassian says, “A woman who attends to her heart will attend to her ways” (33). For Kassian, the entire book is built on this premise—the heart reveals our treasure and our desires. She shows that if a woman’s heart is captured by Jesus, then she will walk according to his ways. If her heart is captured by the world and its pull, then she will walk in the ways of the world. According to Kassian, the heart must be transformed first before any of the following points about wise living can be fulfilled.

To be a wise woman means understanding what God says about womanhood. This isn’t the entire point of the book, but it is where she is going ultimately. Kassian is decidedly complementarian. Feminism’s lure has been influencing women since the Garden, and to be a wise woman means to understand who God created you to be. She walks through the entire biblical history of gender starting with creation in her chapter on roles (119–34). Understanding gender helps us know how to live. The wise woman understands that God created her with boundaries, and these are good and wise limitations. She says, “The fact that woman was created within boundaries of a household also implies that women are to have a unique responsibility in the home. This is consistent with the idea that a woman metaphorically keeps her feet (and heart) centered in the home, rather than outside it. For the woman, nurturing her relationships and keeping her household in order takes priority over other types of work” (133).

To be a wise woman means to be countercultural. From boundaries, to entitlement, to dating, to sex, to honesty, to our tongue, to our view of possessions, to dependability, living wisely according to God’s standards means looking a lot different than the world. It means going against the grain. Every chapter is filled with the cultural norm countered with the biblical mandate. In this society, there is nothing more countercultural than the biblical design for sexuality. In the chapter on sexual conduct (135–51), she shows how God designed sex for our good within the confines of marriage. She says, “The problem is not that we value sex too much—but that we don’t value it enough” (136). We settle

for lust and seduction rather than the true beauty of marital sexual fidelity. Too many Christians have left discussions of sexuality to a simple “True Love Waits” ceremony, without ever unpacking why God designed sex to be between a husband and a wife. Kassian does not leave it at “just say no.” She clearly teaches how God created us and why he has given us boundaries. As Kassian argues, marital sex displays God’s glory (144). Anything outside of these parameters brings dishonor on the gospel.

Girls Gone Wise is an excellent resource for young, college-age women attempting to navigate the rough waters of the world. It includes a strong Bible-saturated critique of wildness, coupled with a biblical vision for God’s design for women. Each chapter includes downloadable study questions from Kassian’s “Girls Gone Wise” website, so this book can be studied personally or in a group setting. But the message of the book is really for every woman—young and old alike.

We are so easily pulled by the world, and often we don’t even realize our tendency towards wildness. Kassian is a breath of fresh air in the polluted and filthy environment in which we find ourselves. She ends with a powerful admonition: “Will you join the quiet counterrevolution of women who are committed to living according to God’s design?” It is a hard task, but not an impossible one. God is big enough to change hearts and lead women in the movement. Kassian is one of many women who is speaking solid, biblical truth about what it means to be a female created in God’s image. And in this crazy world, that is a wild idea.

Needed: Men

A Review of Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men*
Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2010.

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“Needed: Men.” This statement appears on the back cover of the book, and it summarizes the urgency and need for what Richard Phillips has written. We are certainly in desperate need of men—real men. But where are we to turn for the definition of a real man? As Jerry Bridges writes in the foreword to this book, “The truth is that the Bible gives us God’s picture of a real man, and it doesn’t fit any of our stereotypes” (xi). That is abundantly true. If we rely on the portrayals of manhood in the popular culture or the things we heard about manhood in the high school locker-room, we will be doomed to a depressing and destructive future. But if we turn our attention to what God’s Word says about manhood, which Richard Phillips gives us great assistance in doing, then a very meaningful and edifying vision emerges before us.

The chief strength of this book is that it is relentlessly biblical. We are not presented merely with a man’s ideas about manhood, but rather we are pointed to the design of our Creator. An added strength is that it is immensely practical (even including discussion questions at the back of the book). It helps that Phillips is a seasoned pastor, a husband, and a father of five children. It is also an asset that before entering the ministry he worked as a tank officer in the U.S. Army and an assistant professor of leadership at West Point. He is well-qualified to write this book, and the content he delivers deserves to be heard. With all of his experience and expertise, however, Phillips does not assume the role of master-teacher. He is humble and transparent and acknowledges that he

is still on this journey himself. The combination of biblical faithfulness and insightful application in *Masculine Mandate* makes it a very useful tool for teaching men what it means to be a man.

The book is built around the foundational statement of Gen 2:15. Here we find the masculine mandate. “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (ESV). Phillips’ endeavor, then, is to specify the various ways in which this mandate applies in the lives of men. In what ways are men *to work* and *to keep* in the diverse spheres of their lives? The book focuses on five areas: employment, marriage, children, friendship, and the church.

Genesis 2

The book begins with a look at Genesis 2 and its answers to the following questions. *Who* is man? He is a spiritual creature made in God’s image. *Where* does God place man? In the garden. On this point, Phillips critiques John Eldredge’s interpretation of Genesis 2. In the popular book *Wild at Heart*, Eldredge asserts that Adam was created outside the garden, which he bases on the statement in Gen 2:8 that God “put the man” in the garden. From this Eldredge concludes that the “core of a man’s heart is undomesticated” (quoted by Phillips, 7). Phillips contrasts Eldredge’s point with the point of Genesis 2. “If God intends men to be wild at heart, how strange that he placed man in the garden, where his life would be shaped not by self-centered identity quests but by covenantal bonds and blessings” (7).

The next question is *what*, and the answer is that men are to be lords and servants. And finally, the *how* question brings us to the foundational mandate of working and keeping (Gen 2:15). *Working* has the emphasis here of cultivating and tending. *Keeping* essentially refers to guarding and protecting. The book then turns to the application of this mandate to the following areas of life.

Employment

“Nobody respects a man who doesn’t work. It’s just as simple as that. It’s OK for a man to be dumb or ugly or even a little unpleasant, so long as he works hard. But nothing is worse than a guy who won’t work” (17). This quote gives you a taste of the clarity and candor of this book. Phillips tells it like it is. And in a world where being a “stay-at-home-dad” is becoming less of an anomaly, we need people to speak out about these things clearly and biblically.

An essential component of manhood is work. Men are to work hard in order to provide for their families. Phillips helps us to understand the duty of work, and he also helps us to appreciate the blessing of work. After all, it was not work itself that resulted from the Fall. Work existed before the Fall, and work will continue in heaven. The Fall, however, made work difficult. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to work *hard*. There is much pastoral wisdom in these pages as Phillips helps men assess if they are underemployed or overemployed and if their particular line of work is pleasing to God and of service to others.

Marriage

“It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18). On this point, Phillips draws out a much needed application for single men. He observes that many young men avoid marriage like the plague, an attitude directly at odds with the divine design expressed in Gen 2:18.

As a result of a male culture that fears marriage, men in their twenties and thirties slide into sexual sin (marriage, after all, is God’s provision for lust; see 1 Cor 7:9) and cultivate antisocial behaviors

that perpetuate emotional and social immaturity. Today, when God looks on single males and says, ‘Not good,’ He undoubtedly has in mind a long list of truly ‘unfit helpers,’ among them the pornography, video games, sports obsessions, and empty pizza boxes that are intrinsic to so many young adult male lives, even among Christians (60).

This is a timely word for our society and for our churches.

The chapter entitled “Marriage Cursed and Redeemed” is helpful in explaining the nature of the curse on the woman and upon the man. For the woman, sin introduced pain in childbearing and conflict in the marriage relationship. For her part, this conflict is owing to her “desire” for her husband, referring to a desire to control and master him. Phillips observes the continuing effect of this curse. “What is the common thread of nearly every article in nearly every women’s magazine? Whether the subject is sexual performance, dieting, cooking, or sewing, there is a focus on possessing and controlling a man” (72).

The curse on the man has to do with his work. The very activities that clearly define manhood and womanhood become painful activities as a result of the Fall. For the woman, childbearing becomes painful and her role as helper is warped into a desire to dominate. For the man, his work becomes toilsome and thus draws his attention away from his wife and family. “This is why most marital counseling sessions are some variation on this theme: Wife—‘You don’t pay any attention to me.’ Husband—‘You are too demanding and nag too much’” (73).

Praise be to God, there is redemption beyond the curse! “God’s curses on the relationship were the poison for which God alone was the antidote” (74). The pain and conflict that results from sin ought to impress upon us our need for Christ. It is only because of His sacrifice that we can find hope that these tragic realities can be overcome.

To understand the masculine mandate in relation to marriage, we must think again in terms of working and keeping. In terms of working / nur-

turing, a husband must learn to live with his wife in an understanding way (1 Pet 3:7). He must pay attention to her and show her honor. He must nourish and cherish her. In terms of keeping / protecting, a husband must be willing to give himself up for his wife as Christ did for the church (Eph 5:25). Phillips applies this in a convicting way with the observation that this protection and sacrifice begins with the husband protecting his wife from *his own sin* (87).

Children

Another important aspect of manhood is fatherhood. Phillips breaks this down into two parts. The *discipling* of children is an act of working / nurturing, and the *disciplining* of children is the complementary task of keeping / protecting. To nurture his children, a father must aim at their hearts, which means he must be willing to give them his own heart. Four simple strategies for doing this are offered: Read (God's Word), Pray, Work (schoolwork, chores, etc.), Play. The overarching purpose in all of this is that our children will know Jesus. "The ultimate reason we desire our children to give us their hearts is so that we can guide their hearts to Jesus" (105).

Our masculine mandate as fathers also requires disciplining our children, which will involve both physical and verbal reproof. Phillips offers a candid discussion of spanking in this section which will be helpful to any father of young children. He writes, "I realize that our society increasingly teaches that spanking is immoral and harmful. Frankly, this view is nuts, and it is hateful to our children" (112). Broadly speaking, our task of keeping involves protecting our children from internal threats (by correcting them) and external threats (by guarding them from harmful activities, influences and relationships). Again, this section of the book is filled with practical wisdom and clear points of application.

Friends

A brief chapter is devoted to the sphere of life that involves a man's friendships. The friendship between Jonathan and David provides a help-

ful illustration. "Jonathan's example with David shows us that a godly friend ministers primarily to the faith of his brothers in Christ, seeking to build up their trembling hearts and protect them from the dangers of unbelief and fear" (127). In this way, Phillips identifies the working and keeping aspects of the masculine mandate as it relates to male friendships.

Church

Male-only leadership in the church is clearly emphasized in this section of the book. But lest one think this is demeaning to women, Phillips points out the beauty of God's design. "In healthy churches overseen by vigilant men, women can devote themselves to spreading the spiritual beauty for which they are designed and to nurturing the loving community and relationships in which they are intended to specialize" (140).

Men are *to work* and build up the church through serving and teaching. Certain men will be called and equipped and ordained as elders and deacons. But every man in the church should pursue opportunities to serve. Men must also embrace the *keeping* aspect of our mandate through upholding godliness in the church and protecting the doctrine of the church.

In conclusion, this is a book that should be read and commended by those who are seeking to uphold a complementarian vision of manhood and womanhood. Here is a robust affirmation of God's design for manhood and a helpful guide in how men should live out this calling. May God use this book to motivate men, sanctify marriages and families, and strengthen local churches.

Subduing or Subdued? “Manly Dominion” in (Biblical) Perspective

A Review of Mark Chanski, *Manly Dominion: In a Passive-Purple-Four-Ball World*.
Merrick, NY: Calvary, 2004.

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There’s a sickness plaguing too many men in the church today, Mark Chanski believes. In *Manly Dominion*, Chanski not only diagnoses the illness, but he also presents a cure.

Chanski, pastor of Reformed Baptist Church of Holland, Michigan, uses a billiards metaphor to assess the situation. Many men, he observes, act more like billiard balls than those actually playing the game. “Instead of aggressively dominating and pushing around our environment and circumstances,” he writes, “we passively permit ourselves to be dominated and pushed around” (13).

Chanski’s central point to men, then, is clear: don’t get knocked around by life, as if something were happening *to you*. Instead, Chanski urges, take dominion over your life, actively pursuing your God-given tasks to God’s glory.

The author divides the book into seven sections, the first of which examines “Manly Dominion in Scriptural Perspective,” and the following six apply the biblical material to different areas of men’s lives: “Vocational Laboring,” “Decision-making,” “Spiritual Living,” “Husbanding,” “Child Rearing,” and “Romance Managing” (8–9).

In his section on the Bible, Chanski notes that man is designed of God to take “subjugation,” “dominion,” and “possession” over his surroundings. In our sin, however, we appeal to our genes, our emotions, or our circumstances as excuses for a passive approach to life. Chanski provides examples

from Testaments Old and New of men and women who refused to be pushed around, instead taking dominion over the tasks God had given them. Jesus Christ is “our ideal model for manly dominion” (43).

Man is designed to work, Chanski asserts, and men must be about deciding early on—through Scripture and God’s providence—what their work will be. His chapter on “Hard Working” helpfully dispels the notion that so-called “secular” work done as unto Christ is, in the eyes of God, any less valued than the “sacred” work of vocational ministry. “The Bible teaches no such ‘sacred vs. secular’ dichotomy when it comes to human endeavoring,” Chanski writes (72).

In dealing with making decisions, Chanski deconstructs unbiblical notions of discerning God’s will. One need not necessarily concur with Chanski’s cessationism to agree that “a hyper-spiritual, unbiblical view of decision making” can lead either to passivity or to impetuosity (84). In place of this and other common temptations to making unwise choices, Chanski advocates a biblically formed mind, wise counsel, prayer, and follow through in making wise decisions.

As to spiritual life, Chanski asserts the need for men to maintain personal spiritual devotions as well as the leading of family devotions. He explains his own experience in leading family worship even as he avoids stringent prescription. Chanski encourages men to be faithful in their church involvement,

asking, “Why is it that we’d be *religiously careful* to make sure that our child doesn’t miss any soccer practices or games, but *sloppily careless* in permitting ourselves to miss frequent church services?” (150). He includes a chapter with a gospel presentation, should anyone reading not yet know Christ.

Chanski argues that husbands are to understand their role theologically under the rubric of their authority, their task to rule and subdue, and their mandate to serve—Christ Jesus being “the model husband” (174). He encourages men to take the initiative in talking with their wives, even if the men are given more toward solitude than conversation. A husband is to set the relational tone of the family, assume responsibility for his family’s course, and lead the way in crucifying sin.

Fathers must understand the sinful nature of their children, Chanski argues, and raise them with discipline. “If parents *passively* sit back and let their children *have their own way*,” he writes, “they won’t *ascend* to be noble; they’ll *descend* to be very evil” (211). He provides a number of principles in disciplining children, and notes, “Many parents have found that the principled use of the rod functions as an amazingly effective tool for evangelism” (221).

In the final section, Chanski argues that fathers’ giving of their daughters in marriage is no outdated tradition, but is rooted in Scripture and pre-dates the giving of the law (Matt 24:38). Therefore, no matter how out of place it seems in contemporary culture, it is a father’s duty to oversee his daughter’s courting and eventual marriage.

Chanski has written a work helpful to Christian men at nearly every stage of life—and though his book applies primarily to men, it’s often applicable to the lives of women, as well (see also the review of Chanski’s *Womanly Dominion* by Courtney Reissig in *JBMW* 15, no. 2 [Fall 2010]).

The author writes from the perspective of a pastor, roots his assertions in Scripture, and employs a “wealth of useful examples” (to use the language from Jay Adams’s endorsement of the book)—from the young boy who successfully lobbies for playground space for soccer (25) to the masculine beekeeper who restrains a bull by actually *grabbing* its horns (62).

Each of the chapters is fairly short, with statements often forceful, and blunt. Given the book’s being divided into seven sections, it may be ideal for a men’s group to read through the book together, one section at a time. This is the way I’ve been led through the book, more than once—and it works well.

Throughout the book Chanski provides a helpful balance between divine sovereignty and man’s responsibility. His is no “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps” type of masculinity, nor does he advocate the evasion of God-given responsibility to subdue and rule—an evasion stretching as far back to Adam in Eden, and is (sinfully) common to man.

Though much of the book is applied to men who are husbands and fathers, men and boys not yet at that point in their lives will benefit from this book as well. In fact, this book might be especially helpful for those who are thinking through how they will properly husband and father even before they reach that stage.

Perhaps a future revised edition of *Manly Dominion* could include an eighth section, one on male friendship and fellowship. Chapters on, for instance, mentorship and discipleship would strengthen the book.

I believe a friend once noted that the book’s introduction could be understood to equate the country of Afghanistan with a nest of rattlesnakes, and President Bush’s response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 to the “valiant man” Benaiah (2 Sam 23:20). It would be unfortunate if these opening pages deterred anyone from reading on.

An emphasis on the eschaton may also buttress the book, and provide further impetus for taking dominion in this life for greater reigning authority with Christ in the next—a teaching especially emphasized in the work of Russell Moore.

Mark Chanski’s *Manly Dominion* is a helpful book, a convicting one—and highly recommended for all men who desire greater faithfulness to Jesus Christ, the only man who ever put all things under his feet, the only man who truly took dominion.

Considering the Egalitarian Stumbling Block: A Review of Recent NT Commentaries

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A number of new evangelical Bible commentaries were published in Fall 2010—several on New Testament books that address biblical manhood and womanhood. These include commentaries from Clinton Arnold (Talbot School of Theology) and Frank Thielman (Beeson Divinity School) on Ephesians, and Thomas Schreiner (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) on Galatians. Bible students, preachers, and teachers will want to take note of these new works. My concern in this brief review is with how these scholars handle the gender-related texts of Eph 5:21–33 and Gal 3:28.

Clinton E. Arnold's commentary on Ephesians appears in the new Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (ZECNT) series. As I write this, only four volumes have appeared in print, but the series has been well-received so far. Notable features of the series (that precede the actual verse-by-verse comments on each passage) include a consideration of each pericope's literary context, a concise statement of the main idea of the text, a brief structural assessment of how clauses relate, a visual thought-flow diagram of the passage, and an exegetical outline. Such elements help one see the forest of the biblical author's argument for the trees of the individual verses.

In considering Eph 5:21–33, Arnold offers the following description of the “main idea” of the passage:

Paul projects a vision in this passage for a distinctively Christian marriage. He bases his instructions for each spouse not on what is appropriate in Roman culture, but on lessons that can be derived from

the nature of the relationship between the church and Christ. Husbands are called to love their wives in the way Christ loved the church, and wives are called to recognize and follow the leadership their husbands provide (364–65).

Though there are some similarities between this passage and contemporary Greek and Roman “household codes,” Arnold contends that much in Eph 5:21–33 is “strikingly different and, indeed, countercultural” (370). His excursus on “The Role of Wives in Roman-Era Ephesus and Western Asia Minor” highlights the radical diversity of trends affecting men and women in the surrounding society. He concludes the brief essay by saying, “Paul’s remarks to husbands and wives are *counter to every cultural pattern* represented in that society. His vision for marriage is not a concession to any cultural pattern, but substantially challenges them all. His plan is rooted in the creation design and profoundly informed by the relationship that Christ has with his church” (379, emphasis in original). In addition, Arnold offers two other relevant excurses: “God’s Covenant Relationship with His People Depicted as a Marriage” and “Why It Is Legitimate to Apply the Teaching of This Passage to Marriages Today”—the latter critiquing the subjective “redemptive-movement hermeneutic” of William Webb.

Arnold understands Paul as calling for “mutual submission” in the passage, but does not interpret this in an egalitarian fashion that obliterates gender roles. He contends that wives are instructed to yield voluntarily to their husbands’ leadership and that

the husband's role as "head" refers to his distinct role as leader in the marriage. He also presents a substantial section on application that deals with the responsibilities of wives and husbands to one another and discusses a husband's role as leader. If a husband leads his wife into sin or abuses her, Arnold rightly affirms that a wife should resist him. Though he refers readers to Steven Tracy's six principles for determining when a wife should resist her husband (*Trinity Journal* 29 [2008]), Arnold *does* helpfully highlight the potential danger of Tracy's counsel for a wife to resist her husband's leadership when it "violates her conscience" (403)—a very subjective principle that fails to account well for the human heart's proclivity to sin (for a penetrating critique of Tracy's *Trinity Journal* article, see Heath Lambert's review in *JBMW* 15, no. 1 [2010]: 285–312).

Arnold's exegesis is sound, and he rightly sees the theology of the passage: "[Paul's] marriage ethic is thoroughly rooted in Christology" (399). The relationship between Christ and the church is no mere model or illustration for Christian marriage. Rather, Paul views marriage as a typology of Christ and his bride (396). "Marriage itself points to the union, closeness, and intimacy of Christ and the church" (410).

Frank Thielman's commentary on Ephesians is in the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series (BECNT)—a series with some excellent volumes, though I much prefer the layout and features of the new ZECNT. Given the lack of excurses and extended application that are present in Arnold's volume, Thielman's discussion of 5:21–33 is shorter but still insightful. Like Arnold, Thielman's comments are based on careful exegesis of the Greek text.

Thielman understands 5:21 similar to Arnold, though he doesn't speak of it as "mutual submission"—a phrase frequently used by egalitarians to deny any notion of distinct gender roles in the passage. While those addressed in the passage are to be "submitting to one another," the submission of each "is not the same type in each instance" (374). The wife is to submit to her own husband as an expression of her commitment to

the Lord (375–76), and the husband is to sacrificially love and care for his wife (381–82). Thielman argues that the readers would clearly have understood Paul's description of the husband as the "head" to have overtones of authority. However, the husband's authority is qualified by and patterned after Christ's headship over his church (377–78). Thielman's discussion of the meaning of the wife submitting "in everything" is helpful. He insists that Paul would not have intended the phrase to be taken literally but would assume his readers understood that it needed to be qualified. As with Arnold, Thielman points out that, though some Greco-Roman authors encourage love and tenderness toward wives, Paul's idea "that the husband should expend his life in the care of his wife ... is unusual" (382).

Though Arnold's commentary is more comprehensive (and I would consider it my preference of the two), Thielman handles the text well. Having said this, it is unclear how exactly he would handle other NT passages on gender. In a footnote he says 1 Cor 14:34 and 1 Tim 2:11 "require women to be silent and submissive in the context of corporate worship" and that, in both cases, the requirements are related to creation concerns. Still, he contends, "All these comments, however, are closely related to specific pastoral problems in the communities to which they were directed" (375–76, n. 8) (cf. my brief observation of Thielman's comments on 1 Tim 2:12 in his *Theology of the New Testament* in my review of T. R. Schreiner's *New Testament Theology* in *JBMW* 14, no. 2 [2009]: 74). But in spite of this ambiguous statement, Thielman presents a clear, complementarian interpretation of Eph 5:21–33.

Thomas R. Schreiner's new commentary on Galatians also appears in the ZECNT series. Though Galatians does not, of course, directly address the question of gender roles, it includes the text that egalitarian scholar Paul Jewett once called "the Magna Carta of Humanity"—Gal 3:28. Schreiner reminds that, even though Gal 3:28 proclaims a fundamental unity among God's people, yet "[e]quality as members of Abraham's family does not rule out all social distinctions" (258). While men and women are equal members of the

family of Abraham, the social implications one draws from their unity in Christ “must also include what Paul wrote elsewhere,” including texts that affirm distinct roles for men and women in marriage and ministry (259).

While addressing the application of the theology of Gal 3:26–29, Schreiner further considers the matter. The “central issue” of Gal 3:28, he argues, “is who belongs to Abraham’s family.” If Paul were saying that being male or female “is insignificant in any sense,” then “homosexuality would not be proscribed as sin.” Yet, some egalitarians still claim it is philosophically impossible for men and women to be equal in Christ and have different roles. But Schreiner, following Luther, warns “of letting Aristotle or any other philosopher reign over the biblical text.” Furthermore, given that Christ is equal to the Father “in essence, dignity, and value” and yet submitted himself to him (1 Cor 15:28), “to say that a different role requires a lesser dignity flies in the face of Trinitarian teaching.” In conclusion, Schreiner insists that men must repent if they have demeaned women or slighted their gifts. “But we must also avoid wrenching texts out of context and reading a program out of them that was never intended by the author” (261). Schreiner’s comment is a reminder that the biggest stumbling block to the egalitarian endeavor is the biblical text itself.

The church has much to be thankful for in the writing and teaching ministries of Arnold, Thielman, and Schreiner. May pastors and teachers, informed by the faithful exegesis in these three commentaries, boldly and winsomely proclaim the whole counsel of God.

THE DANVERS STATEMENT

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

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18).

2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen. 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor. 11:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:12-14).

3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen. 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor. 11:7-9).

4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen. 3:1-7, 12, 16).

- In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.

- In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.

5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal. 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.

- In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph. 5:21-33; Col. 3:18-19; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

- In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:2-16; 1 Tim. 2:11-15).

7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission—domestic, religious, or civil—ever

implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan. 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim. 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Rather, biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor. 12:7-21).

10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.



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