

# CBMW NEWS

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## IN THIS ISSUE

Are complementarians divisive? Oxford theologian Alister McGrath apparently thinks so. In a recent article in *Christianity Today*, he contends that the question of women's roles in the church is both secondary and divisive.

He recommends setting the issue aside for the sake of the unity of the evangelical movement.

But is the unity thus achieved a unity worth having?

And is McGrath's claim accurate that the women's issue can be treated in isolation from other doctrines? In the cover article of this issue, Stephen Kovach shows otherwise. He demonstrates how egalitarians have

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Council on Biblical  
MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

# Egalitarians revamp doctrine of the Trinity

BILEZIKIAN, GRENZ AND THE KROEGERS DENY ETERNAL SUBORDINATION OF THE SON

BY STEPHEN D. KOVACH

**F**OR CENTURIES, THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH has affirmed that Scripture teaches the eternal subordination of Jesus to God the Father. In creation as well as in redemption, Jesus functioned as the Father's agent. At the same time he sustained a status equal to the Father in essence and worth. In recent years, however, this historic view of the church has been under attack by so-called "biblical feminists" and egalitarians.

A primary reason for current efforts at redefining this doctrine is the problem created for an egalitarian view of gender roles. Egalitarians believe that any differentiation in role entails corresponding distinctions in worth or value. Hence they must maintain that God the Father and God the Son are eternally equal in roles, excluding any notion of the Son's eternal subordination to the Father. However, if Jesus has been subordinate to the Father from eternity in role, yet equal to the Father in essence and worth, then women can be seen legitimately as taking a different role without loss of equality in their worth or dignity.

Our evaluation of the legitimacy of recent attacks on the doctrine of the Son's subordination will focus on the question of whether the following two charges made by evangelical feminists are valid or not. The first is that this doctrine is a form of the Arian heresy of subordinationism.<sup>1</sup> The second is that the subordination of Christ occurred on earth only for the purpose of redemption, and that Jesus subsequently returned to the equal status and role in heaven he

had maintained from eternity. We will conclude by considering the larger implications of this issue for women's roles in the church.

## *Is the doctrine of the subordination of the Son a heresy?*

Until recently, the doctrine of eternal subordination was questioned by few. From the second century A.D. until today, the orthodox church has held that Scripture teaches the Son's eternal subordination to the Father.<sup>2</sup> Almost all recent systematic theology texts that discuss the issue reflect this reality, including works written by Baptists (A.H. Strong, Gordon R. Lewis, Bruce Demarest), Lutherans (John Theodore Mueller), Anglicans (Edward A. Litton), Arminians (John Miley, Thomas Oden), Reformed theologians (Charles Hodge, Robert L. Dabney, Benjamin B. Warfield, William G. T. Shedd, Louis Berkhof, Wayne Grudem), and charismatics (G. Rodman Williams).<sup>3</sup> In light of this broad consensus, it stands to reason that the recent objections to this doctrine are ideologically motivated. Their egalitarian commitment leads evangelical feminists such as Gilbert Bilezikian to call the doctrine of eternal subordination of the Son a "recent theological innovation" and causes Stanley Grenz to make the bizarre and unsupported assertion that the Father is "dependent on the Son for his deity."<sup>4</sup> Where do these ideas come from? From reading the biblical text or the documents of church history? Arguably, they stem from egalitarian ideology, an example of which is found in the following discussion of the "heresy of subordinationism."

In an article on subordination, evangelical feminists Richard C. and Catherine C. Kroeger claim that the "heresy of subordinationism" is an ascription of inferiority of being, *status*, or *role* to the Son or Holy Spirit within the Trinity.<sup>5</sup>

1. Arius, a senior presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt, at the beginning of the fourth century, A.D., taught that "there was [a time] when he [the Logos] was not," in an effort to rebut the contention of his own bishop, Alexander, expressed in slogans like "always God, always the Son." The Council of Nicea (A.D. 325) condemned Arianism, asserting that Jesus' sonship is eternal. See *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland, 1990), 84-89.

2. Cf. Jack Cottrell, *What the Bible Says About God the Redeemer* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1987), 146.

*see Egalitarians revamp the Trinity... on p. 3*

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

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



# Newsbriefs from the world

□ In an example of how the back door of policy swings wildly in unintentioned ways, students at Oberlin College (Ohio) are attempting to allow men and women to share the same dormitory rooms. Oberlin is known as a progressive educational establishment, being among the first to create coed dorms in the early '70s. But here's the twist: the victims who are seeking redress at Oberlin are heterosexuals who charge that current housing policy discriminates against straight couples, since they already allow homosexual couples to share dorm rooms.

In another policy battle, presbyterian rooted Davidson College (North Carolina), recently revoked InterVarsity Christian Fellowship's campus charter because IVCF had amended its constitution to disqualify practicing homosexuals from holding leadership positions. Displaying more courage and commitment to Biblical standards than many denominations in America, IVCF lost campus funding at Davidson as a result of the decision. (*Campus*, Fall 1996.)

□ Southern Baptists might want to be on the lookout for "Battle for the Minds," a new 73-minute film on the question of women's ordination within the Southern Baptist Convention. Produced and directed by Steven Lipscomb, the film attempts an even-handed overview of the issue, despite the fact that it focuses on Lipscomb's mother's efforts to become a pastor. She is a recent graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where faculty must now affirm biblical teaching that prohibits women serving as pastors. [See *CBMWNEWS* 1/1 (August 1995) for a story on President Mohler's firm stand for biblical truth at Southern Seminary.]

□ In June, *The Charlotte Observer* sent a newsroom typist to the Charlotte Promise Keepers gathering. Not just any newsroom typist, mind you, but Anne Blue Wills, who holds an M.Div. from Yale Divinity School, and is pursuing doctoral studies at Duke University on women's roles in 19th century American Christianity. Her first person story (in editions of June 22, 1996) relates that she felt nervous, suspicious and resentful as she prepared for a "confrontation with Neanderthals" who would be at the Charlotte Motor Speedway. However, she experienced quite a different situation as she relates: "The confrontation never came. I was instead thoroughly charmed. Not superficially, but deeply charmed and reassured by the commitment of these men. It was wonderful to look around at a crowd of men,

many of whom could have been my usually staid father, singing for all they were worth. I could have listened all night as the songs rose up, lifted on what might have been sighs of relief, from the clapping crowd. These fellows outran all the stereotypes."

□ Vanderbilt University Divinity School has received a grant of over \$2.5 million from the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation to study the issues of religion, gender and sexuality. Joseph Hough, dean of the school promised that though the school supports women's ordination and homosexual rights, the programs would not be a "propaganda mill for a particular party line. Instead... it will generate a wide range of public conferences, scholarly debates and publications, all of them supported by 'respectable scholarship'—including that of conservatives opposed to female ordination and homosexual rights" (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 25, 1995). We contacted the school in December 1995 and recently received word from A.J. Levine, the grant administrator, that she is interested in having CBMW's position represented either in conferences or in publications. We'll keep you posted in *CBMWNEWS* on any developments.

□ One aspect of family life where headship becomes practical is the area of family worship. Now there is a new resource for men who wish to lead in this area: *Rediscovering the Lost Treasure of Family Worship*, written by Jerry Marcellino, pastor of Audubon Drive Bible Church in Laurel, Mississippi. Marcellino offers reasons for restoring family worship as well as practical pointers for making it effective. Kent Hughes, pastor of the College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, and CBMW Council member, says of this resource, "With compact eloquence [it] provides the biblical and historical call to family worship. Blessed is the family which hears and practices it." The booklet is now available from Audubon Press at 800/405-3788; or contact by e-mail at: [audubon@teclink.net](mailto:audubon@teclink.net).

□ A reader who is a youth pastor in Switzerland reports that while the state churches and older free churches (Methodists, etc.) have accepted an egalitarian view, some free churches, including the Swiss equivalent of the Evangelical Free Churches, have adopted a complementarian view. He reports that CBMW's book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* was a great help to the church association in this process.

**IN THIS ISSUE** (*cont. from p. 1*) increasingly revamped the church's age-old doctrine of the Trinity in recent years in order to maintain their own convictions regarding gender roles. But it is not only the doctrine of the Trinity that is "revised" by egalitarians; the nature of Scripture is subtly recast as well. Wayne Grudem furnishes clear proof of this in a thorough critique of a recent essay by Asbury professor David Thompson. And there is more: read about lessons from oncology and dobermans; hairstyle and Roman culture; and 1 Timothy 2:13—a verse egalitarians cannot explain; and stay abreast of recent "gender news" from around the world.

## Egalitarians revamp the Trinity

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But this conclusion is based on a failure to distinguish between a correct and an incorrect understanding of the Son's subordination. Michael Bauman, in his article on the heresy of subordinationism based on the early church controversies, makes a helpful clarification by laying out such a distinction between two views of subordination: the subordination of essence or nature (called "emphatic subordination")<sup>6</sup> and the subordination of mission or status (called "economic subordination").

The council of Nicea (A.D. 325) called the first view (emphatic subordination) pertaining to the relationship between the Father and the Son heretical, because it denied the equality of essence or nature of Jesus to the Father. The latter view of the subordination of the Son to the Father, however, which states that Christ is equal in essence, yet eternally subordinate to the Father *in mission and role*, was officially adopted as the orthodox position of the Church and has continued as the view of the historic church to this day.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore the Kroegers' assertion that subordinationism represents a heresy is not only false but itself contrary to accepted Christian doctrine. It is based upon a dogma of modernity, rooted in Enlightenment thinking, that views a person's worth solely in terms of role and status. If any distinction in role is maintained between two given persons, it is argued, these lack equal value, worth, and dignity.<sup>8</sup>

According to this kind of ideology, any type of subordination, whether voluntary or involuntary, whether for a greater cause or the result of oppression, is wrong, because a person's inherent value is based on that person's status in society, not his or her essence or inherent value as a person

made in the image of God.

Correspondingly, the word "subordination" has taken on the universal connotation of oppression in feminist circles.<sup>9</sup> As has been demonstrated above, however, this negative stereotype fails to recognize that there are different types of subordination, including the kind of subordination where head and subordinate are of equal worth and dignity while one person voluntarily submits to the head for a greater cause. If a particular goal is to be attained in a given community, there will often be a need for certain individuals to subordinate themselves voluntarily to others for the accomplishment of a greater goal. But this does not mean that the person who submits is inferior in value or worth.

If Scripture teaches *both* that Jesus was fully God while occupying a different role than the Father (and the Spirit) from eternity *and* this does not make him inferior to the Father in essence and dignity, the same may be true for women or any other person in a different or "subordinate" role in the church today.

### **The subordination of the Son: temporary self-humiliation or eternal role?**

A second line of argument advanced by evangelical feminists is that the subordination of the Son to the Father was only temporary for the purpose of redemption. After dying on the cross for our sins, Jesus resumed his role of total equality of function and role. However, this evaluation seems to contradict the biblical data that shows the Son served an eternal role as the divine agent of the Father: "There is but one God, the Father, *from whom* all things came and *for whom* we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through whom* all things came and *through whom* we live" (1 Cor. 8:6). It is hard to imagine a better

3. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1907), 340-343; Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 275-79; John Miley, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 Library of Biblical and Theological Literature (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989; reprint of 1892-94 ed.), 237-39; Thomas Oden, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2: The Word of Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1992); John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics* (St Louis: Concordia, 1934), 151-53; Edward Arthur Litton, *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*, ed Philip E. Hughes (London: James Clarke, 1960), 102-03; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1970), 464-67; Robert L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1985), 202-11; Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 53-55; William G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1979), 295-305; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), 88-94; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 250-52; J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988) 93, 316. Explicit denials of the eternal subordination of the Son are found in J. Oliver Buswell, Jr., *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 111-12, and Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 785.

4. Gilbert Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 18, 1994; Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 153; see also Stanley J. Grenz, *Sexual Ethics* (Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1990), 33-37.

5. R.C. and C.C. Kroeger, "Subordinationism," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 1058. See also Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: A Guide for the Study of Female Roles in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 241.

6. Cf. Michael Bauman, "Milton, Subordination and the Two Stage Logos," *Westminster Theological Journal* 48 (1986): 178-182.

7. For further documentation on the historical views of Augustine, Calvin and other theologians in the history of the church relating to the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son, see Stephen D. Kovach, "The Eternal Subordination of the Son: An Apologetic Against Evangelical Feminism," Presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November 18, 1995. Available—see Reprints on p. 15.

8. E.g. Jeannette F. Scholer, "Turning Reality Into Dreams," in *Women, Authority and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 301: "Some claim that it is possible to believe in the full personhood of a woman on the one hand, while limiting her function and status on the other. For me, and most of us..., these terms are inextricably bound... If women are fully human, Christ's death must be fully efficacious for them and, once redeemed, they cannot be limited in status and function in church or society."

9. Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992), always refers to subordination in terms of oppression.

*The Kroegers' assertion that subordinationism represents a heresy is not only false but itself contrary to accepted Christian doctrine*

—STEPHEN KOVACH

## Egalitarians revamp the Trinity

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way of keeping in balance Jesus' equality with the Father and their distinction in role. Moreover, Scripture is clear that this distinction is not merely temporary; Jesus is presented as the *eternal* Son of God, so that his role as divine agent stretches from eternity to eternity. Consider the following biblical passages.

**Eternality of Sonship.** The Bible always refers to Jesus as the Son. He is the "one and only" Son (John 3:16; 3:36) who was "sent" (John 3:17; Gal. 4:4) by God the Father according to the plan of God the Father before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." Since the foundation of the world, the Son has been identified as the Son who as the agent of God the Father performs functions.

**Eternality of Roles.** The functions performed by the Son stretch from creation to the restoration of creation. The Son is sent to perform these functions by the Father. At creation, Jesus served as the divine agent. He is the One "through whom" the universe is made (John 1:3; Col. 1:16) and sustained (Col. 1:18). Jesus also became the divine agent of redemption (Rom. 8:3-4; Gal. 4:4-5). Finally, he will function as the divine agent of God to restore creation and return it into the hands of the Father. 1 Corinthians 15:28 clearly indicates that Jesus will renew his voluntary subordination to the Father after returning to put everything under the Father's feet: "When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all."

We conclude with the biblical passage that perhaps most clearly relates Christ's relationship with God the Father to that of men and women. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul writes: "Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and *the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*" The issue is here framed in terms of headship, a term that has itself been the subject of extensive scholarly debate in recent years. The passage draws a clear connection between Christ's relationship to God and the woman's relationship to man. Moreover, the *kind* of relationship referred to here arguably is one of Christ's (the Son's) *subordination* to God (the Father).

The doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son has been the mainstream position in the history of the Christian church for good reason: such doctrine is clearly

taught by Scripture, and it is not limited to Jesus' time on earth.<sup>10</sup>

### **The revamping of the Trinity and women's roles in the church**

Perhaps this is an area we are not used to hearing about. We are used to defending the deity of the Son, and that is also crucial. But we must remember that the doctrine of the Trinity includes both equality and differences among the members of the Trinity. *Take away equality of being and you no longer have the Son and Spirit as fully divine. Take away differences in role and you no longer have three distinct persons; there is nothing that makes the Son to be the Son rather than the Father, or the Spirit to be the Spirit rather than the Father or the Son. If we abandon eternal differences in role, then we also abandon the Trinity.* This egalitarian innovation in trinitarian doctrine carries a huge price tag.

It has not been the intention of this brief essay to prove that the role of women is different in relation to men pertaining to leadership roles in the church. However, the Son's subordinate yet equal relationship with the Father as part of the Trinity has crucial implications for the relationship between men and women in the church. Most important, if the Son was eternally subordinate to the Father in role yet equal in essence, the same principle may also apply to women's churchly status and roles in ministry. This angers many evangelical and other feminists. In fact, the clear link between trinitarian and gender relationships surrounding the doctrine of the subordination of the Son is a major embarrassment for egalitarians, which may explain why this topic is largely ignored in their writings. Conversely, complementarians should raise this issue in discussion or public debate with egalitarians whenever possible. The issue at hand, however, is not merely an intramural academic dispute promoting "controversies rather than God's work" (1 Tim. 1:4) that Christians are enjoined to avoid in Scripture. The implications of this question for Christian faith and practice are far-reaching indeed.

Thus a recent report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry commissioned by the General Council of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (May 23-28, 1995) comes to the following conclusion: "Jesus is NOT SUBORDINATE to the Father and this kind of argument will not only create a sub-biblical role for women in the church, but will also create modern versions of ancient Christological heresy."<sup>11</sup> One is amazed at the categorical nature of this assertion, struck by the egalitarian authors' awareness of the implications of the Son's subordination to the Father for women's roles in the church, and appalled by the glibness (not to say ignorance) with which they accuse proponents of this doctrine (which, after all, correctly understood, has been the virtually unanimous teaching of the orthodox church for two millennia) of "creating modern versions of ancient Christological heresy."

*The clear link between trinitarian and gender relationships ... is a major embarrassment for egalitarians, which may explain why this topic is largely ignored in their writings.*

10. Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Vol. V (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1982), 207.

11. "Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Women in Ministry," General Council of the Christian and Missionary Alliance (May 23-28, 1995), 50, with reference to the teaching of James Sigountos. Capital letters from the original document.

The implications of the subject at hand are larger still. This is not merely an in-house squabble about refinements in the church's trinitarian understanding. On a larger theological scale, a bona fide attempt is currently underway to dismantle the biblical and historical doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son. This effort is led by liberal feminist theologians who have undertaken a thorough reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity not on the basis of Scripture but subjective human experience. As enunciated by liberal feminist Catherine Mowry LaCugna, Professor of Theology at Notre Dame University, one can only evaluate the Trinity on the basis of our being saved by God through Christ in the power of the Spirit.

LaCugna says that any discussion of the interpersonal relations of the Trinity is metaphysical speculation that must be rejected because it has given rise to "sexist and patriarchal" outcomes such as the church's teaching of the eternal subordination of the Son. Relating the Trinity to our own human experience means that the relationship between the Father, Son, and Spirit has equality, mutuality,

12. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 266-68.

and reciprocity.<sup>12</sup>

This approach, with almost no reference to the biblical text and disdain for church history, does not allow for the notion of truth or revelation outside of personal subjective experience. Alarming, the spirit of this type of recent liberal interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity can be recognized in the evangelical feminist argument to reinterpret the roles of men and women that have been affirmed throughout the history of the Christian church.

It is no coincidence that teachings such as that of an "egalitarian" Trinity take root in our day. In an age when doctrine is frequently surrendered for the sake of personal experience, is it any wonder that some manage to revise the very foundation of our faith almost unnoticed by the larger Christian populace? As a church, we must repent and educate ourselves from Scripture and church history, so that we can take our place firmly within the orthodox stream of biblical Christianity.

Stephen D. Kovach is currently completing his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

## Hairstyle and Roman culture

EXCERPTED WITH PERMISSION FROM "A FOREIGN WORLD: EPHESUS IN THE FIRST CENTURY," BY S. M. BAUGH, IN *WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: A FRESH ANALYSIS OF 1 TIMOTHY 2:9-15*, EDITED BY A. J. KÖSTENBERGER, T. R. SCHREINER, AND H. S. BALDWIN (GRAND RAPIDS: BAKER, 1995), 47-48

**T**HERE WAS AN INCREASING PERMEATION of Roman culture in Ephesus during the first century. Interestingly enough, we may possibly see its effects in 1 Timothy 2 itself. Although Paul's exhortation for women to "adorn themselves with modesty and humility" (*sōphrosunē*) (1 Tim. 2:9) fits the expectations of either Greek or Roman society, the adornment of the hair "with braids and gold or with pearls" (cf. 1 Pet. 3:3) fits a new trend originating in Rome.

Greek hairstyles for women during this period were for the most part simple affairs: hair was parted in the middle, pinned simply in the back or held in place with a scarf or headband. Roman coiffures were similar until the principate. The women of the imperial household originated new styles; by the Trajanic period they had developed into elaborate curls, braids, high wigs, pins, and hair ornaments that were quickly copied by the well-to-do through the empire: "See the tall edifice rise up on her head in serried tiers and storeys!" (Juvenal, *Satire* 6). One can even date representations of women by the increasing complexity of hair fashions.

If Roman styles seem a bit too far away to affect Ephesian fashions, consider that portraits of reigning empresses often appeared on coins minted in Ephesus and

other Asian cities and that they had prominent statues in both public and private places. Portraits of provincial women from the era show that the imperial coiffures were copied in Ephesus and the other cities of Asia.

Paul's injunction regarding elaborate hairstyles reflects the increasing influence of Rome at Ephesus during the third quarter of the first century A.D. And his skeptical response to this trend was due to his judgment that simplicity and modesty in dress befit pious women rather than external extravagance. [For men, Paul's equivalent exhortation was to avoid obsession with "body-sculpting" in gymnasias in place of piety (1 Tim. 4:8).] Furthermore, his reaction to women's imitation of latest hairstyles is understandable since it was quite a new trend, really begun only a decade or so before, and it carried connotations of imperial luxury and the infamous licentiousness of women like Messalina and Poppaea. Today, it is the equivalent of warning Christians away from imitation of styles set by promiscuous pop singers or actresses.

*The spirit of this type of recent liberal interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity can be recognized in the evangelical feminist argument to reinterpret the roles of men and women*

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# Lessons from oncology and dobermans

BY BILL MOUSER

**M**Y GRANDMOTHER OWNED A FEMALE Doberman named “Chee,” acquired from a Florida fire department. Exceptionally playful with children, Chee aggressively “protected” us from our parents if, in the dog’s presence, they threatened to paddle us for our summertime misdeeds.

One summer, Chee had puppies. I followed Grandma out onto the porch soon after the blessed event, and we found Chee in an altogether different mood. She lay coiled tightly in her nest, head lowered like a rattlesnake, her eyes ablaze, dog drool dripping from bared fangs, a constant buzzing growl boiling out of her quivering neck. Grandma made one attempt to remove one of the pups from under Chee’s flank. Chee belched a mighty bark which sent Grandma stumbling backward. After that, Grandma tread gently in Chee’s presence whenever there were puppies about.

This childhood memory flashed back a couple of weeks ago when Barbara and I accompanied Cheska to her first radiation treatment.

The day before, a physician had spent about an hour fashioning a mask for Cheska—a mask which matches exactly every curve, contour, and crease in her face. The finished mask is rigid and covers her head from the tip of her nose to a level even with the back of her head, from the crown of her head down past her chin to her larynx. At its edges, a wide flange rests flush with the table-top. Special bolts fasten the flange to the table. The mask’s purpose is to hold Cheska’s head precisely in the same position for all sixty of the radiation treatments she will receive.

When in place, Cheska’s head is literally bolted, immovably to the table. If one is given to claustrophobia, *this* is the thing which will set it off. At this first treatment, the mask didn’t fit. When pressed flush with every square inch of her face, the flange was a good inch from the table at the bottom of the mask. The technicians fussed with the pillow beneath her head, checked to see that her hair wasn’t bunching under her neck, and fiddled with her collar. Nothing worked.

Cheska, meanwhile, grew increasingly anxious, a trickle of tears escaping each eye, pooling on the table above her ears. Her grip on my hand grew tighter and tighter.

A third technician approached. He rechecked everything, and then did a regrettable thing. “It’s supposed to be snug,” he blithely announced, and he pressed the mask firmly into her face, so the flanges were finally flush with the table. Cheska emitted a gurgling gagging noise and jerked spasmodically on the table as the neck-portion of the mask closed her wind pipe. Simultaneously, Chee became re-incarnate in the person of my wife Barbara.

Barbara’s “bark” was more than enough to make all three technicians and me jump backward from the table. And then I remembered Chee. Really. “If we’re going to do

*Editor’s note: Bill Mouser is the Executive Director of the International Council for Gender Studies. He and his wife Barbara have four daughters. Cheska, their third, is eight years old, and was diagnosed with a pontine glioma brain tumor in January of 1996. She continues to suffer through chemotherapy and alternative therapies, yet the cancer continues to affect her speech, gait and vision. Cheska has matured through the suffering, and God’s grace has been evident. Please intercede for her healing and for the Mouser family.*

this sixty times, you’re going to get it right the *first* time,” Barbara snarled. In a flash, the offending technician snatched up the mask and retreated to a far corner of the room, entreating the others to find him a pair of scissors.

In seconds, he had snipped the offending, shrunken neck-portion of the mask away. When he tried to fit it again to Cheska’s face, you’d have thought he were handling nitroglycerin. And, ever since, the technicians have tiptoed around Barbara as I saw Grandma tiptoe around Chee when she had her pups.

I’ve reflected on this little drama frequently over the past couple of weeks, because my reactions in the situation and Barbara’s were so different. The trial we’ve encountered has shown me new facets to masculinity and femininity “under fire” that I wouldn’t have appreciated otherwise. Let me share them with you.

The differences between Barbara’s behavior and my relative “passivity” emerge from the “hard-wiring” God built into us as either masculine or feminine creatures. Those familiar with the Bible-based model of sexuality developed by the International Council for Gender Studies will recognize in Barbara a mother in which the “lifegiver” aspect of her femininity is provoked. In my case, the “savior” aspect of masculinity was deferring to other, more competent savior-figures.

Let’s see if I can explain, without lapsing into jargon. The savior-aspect of masculinity is what makes men want to fight evil. It’s aroused whenever a Beloved is threatened by an enemy or a calamity. Men, as saviors, have an impulse to engage the evil, overcome the calamity, or otherwise take action to rescue the Beloved, even in the face of personal loss. It’s this dimension of masculinity which draws men into “savior” professions—police work, soldiering, doctoring, advocacy work of all kinds.

Untutored and undisciplined, this aspect of masculinity can lead men into very foolish behavior. I recall a friend who attended the C-section birth of his child. The doctor thought Dick would not get queasy at the sight of blood, since he’d attended an earlier “natural” birth where blood was evident. Though the doctor was right about the queasiness, he failed to anticipate another reaction Dick might have. The sight of his wife being sliced open was simply too much for Dick’s “savior-circuits” to bear. Rather

*The trial we’ve encountered has shown me new facets to masculinity and femininity “under fire” that I wouldn’t have appreciated otherwise.*

—BILL MOUSER

than remain in his corner of the room, he suddenly had a lot to say to the doctor whom he perceived to be a threat to his wife and unborn child. The physician had to stop and diplomatically eject Dick from the operating room before the C-section could proceed.

When confronted with a calamity obviously beyond the scope of a savior's rescue, a man may feel intense frustration. Last week I received a note from a policeman, who candidly acknowledged his frustration about wanting to *do something* yet finding nothing to do, as he followed Cheska's progress in the prayer updates. I understand his frustration. I've felt it myself. It's probably aggravated in his case, because as a policeman he is accustomed to finding a great many things to do, which lead to tracking down and incarcerating evil-doers.

But with an inoperable brain tumor, what can he do? And, what can I do? Yes, we can pray; yes, we will pray. But prayer *seems* so passive. What's wanted is some feat to perform, some project to undertake, something *to do* which will contribute to Cheska's relief.

In that treatment room, my attention was focused on the other saviors—the technicians and their efforts to launch an X-ray assault on the renegade cells which are inexorably destroying my child's brain. To be sure, I had Cheska's hand clasped tightly in my own; my head was close to hers, murmuring encouragements and comforts. But my goal, at that moment, was to clear the path for other saviors to do the things which I cannot do. Coaching and comforting Cheska was a means to an end—to permit that treatment (and subsequent ones) to go forward without complication from Cheska herself.

This is why, I think, men—particularly male physicians—are sometimes perceived as cold, detached, and aloof to human suffering. In any given case, a male physician may indeed be an uncaring, insensitive jerk. But that is not always so. Men, more easily than women, disengage their emotional circuitry when confronting an obstacle to be overcome. It's a typical (and, I think, an essential) dynamic in the savior-aspect of their manhood.

When a physician performed an angioplasty on me last September, I didn't want him to be overcome with pity for me as he literally gave me a heart-attack by inflating a balloon in one of my coronary arteries. He asked me what I was feeling, and between gasps of pain, I told him that I felt like someone were pulling all my teeth at once with giant pliers. My own vision grew red with pain, but I certainly didn't want *his* vision to cloud for the same reason. His matter-of-fact grunt of approval (!) with my agony was the best reaction from him I could hope for.

Satisfied with his rescue on that artery, he moved to another one and gave me a second heart attack, exactly as painful as the one which had sent me to him in the first place. His "aloofness" was part of what made him a successful "heart-savior" for me.

So, back to Cheska, Barbara, and me in the treatment room—am I saying that Barbara is uncaring about the efforts to rescue Cheska? Not at all. Rather, her attention

was focused in another direction—upon Cheska herself and the impact the rescue was having on her at the moment.

Women are lifegivers. As ones who nurture and bring forth life, they share a special partnership with nature and God Himself. The lifegiver in women is what makes their environments distinctively adorned, nested, fitted for comfort. As lifegivers, women's antennae are tuned into others' comfort. Are they happy? Are they comfortable? Are they at ease? Does this or that promote their well-being? Exaggerate the lifegiver dynamics and you produce *The Great Earth Mother*—all apple pie and apron strings. Eliminate this aspect in a woman, and you get... well, many ugly varieties of truncated femininity. Put a lifegiver in a treatment room, where her child is fearful, anxious, and choked by an insensitive technician and you're apt to get Chee the Doberman.

Who did Cheska need most at that fearful moment? She'd have fared well with either of us there, but I'm glad she had us both. In the aftermath, Barbara's "bark" has probably made the technicians extra sensitive to Cheska's peace of mind.

A threatened lifegiver can also soften a tendency in masculine saviors toward overkill. When Joab was preparing to destroy an entire city in pursuit of the rebel Sheba (2 Sam. 20:1-2, 14-15), it was a *wise woman* who admonished Joab's "kill a fly with a cannon" attitude (2 Sam. 20:17-20). She didn't try to argue for Sheba's life; rather she narrowed Joab's focus on the offender alone, in the interests of sparing the lives of many in the city (2 Sam. 20:21-22).

In this respect, it's noteworthy that on Cheska's second treatment, another technician (not the offending one) cut away the mask around Cheska's nose, to ensure she had no sense of suffocation while wearing it. I wonder if he'd have done so if Barbara hadn't "barked" at a strategic moment. And, as I've asked Cheska how she feels about the treatments, she assures me that she feels no fear or discomfort with the procedure at all.

So Cheska needs precisely the fullness of all aspects of her father's manhood and the fullness of all aspects of her mother's womanhood in order to flourish in this crisis or in any situation in life. All children need such care and models if they are to mature as godly men and women.

*For more information on the International Council on Gender Studies and their study materials on the Five Aspects of Man and the Five Aspects of Woman, please contact:*

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*Women are lifegivers. As ones who nurture and bring forth life, they share a special partnership with nature and God Himself. The lifegiver in women is what makes their environments distinctively adorned, nested, fitted for comfort. As lifegivers, women's antennae are tuned into others' comfort.*

# Asbury professor advocates egalitarianism but undermines Biblical authority

A CRITIQUE OF DAVID THOMPSON'S "TRAJECTORY" HERMENEUTIC

BY WAYNE GRUEDEM

A RECENT ARTICLE BY ASBURY SEMINARY PROFESSOR David L. Thompson ("Women, Men, Slaves and the Bible: Hermeneutical Inquiries," *Christian Scholar's Review* 25/3 [March, 1996]: 326-49) argues that Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5 teach male headship in marriage, but those teachings need not be our standards today. Thompson says the Biblical authors were moving in a "trajectory" toward egalitarianism, even though they didn't quite get there by the time the books of the Bible were completed.

What I have written here is a critique of Thompson's view. I will try to show why Thompson's approach undermines Biblical authority, puts him outside the main Protestant confessions of faith on the doctrine of Scripture, and poses one of the most serious threats to the authority of Scripture that I have seen in the evangelical world for many years. The article is relevant for readers of *CBMW NEWS* because Thompson takes his position precisely in working out an egalitarian (or evangelical feminist) position on men and women in marriage and the church, and because his position is likely to be followed by others.

## 1. The claim that we can humbly and prayerfully develop doctrine that improves on or corrects some doctrinal views taught by the New Testament authors

Thompson agrees that Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 teach male headship (p. 330) but tells us that we can go beyond that today: He says the Biblical authors were moving in a "trajectory" toward an egalitarian [that is, evangelical feminist] position but they didn't quite get there by the time of "the last entry in the biblical conversation" (p. 339). We can accept the target they were moving toward and affirm an egalitarian position today (p. 339) even if it isn't explicitly taught in Scripture. Here are his words:

[Paul] radically reforms notions of male-dominance but stands within the hierarchical model. Paul's culture-specific pastoral care safeguarded the culturally distinctive roles of men and women.... Paul's inspired instruction was...faithful to the tradition...but also in tension with it and short of the conclusion to which it would ultimately lead.

Sensing the direction of the canonical dialogue and prayerfully struggling with it, God's people conclude that they will most faithfully honor his Word by accepting the target already anticipated in Scripture and toward which the Scriptural trajectory was heading rather than the last entry in the Biblical conversation....the canonical conversation at this point closed without final resolution. But the trajectory was clearly set toward egalitarian relationships (pp. 338-339).

Using this procedure, Thompson can say that Paul's teaching on male headship in Ephesians 5 is not the final position the church should adopt today, because it fell short of the "target...toward which the Scriptural trajectory was heading." We must discern that target (namely, totally egalitarian marriage) and use it, rather than Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, as our standard.

I should add that Thompson does not indicate in his article any attitude of disrespect or flippancy toward Scripture. He argues that his position is in fact derived from Scripture and dependent on Scripture. He says that this idea of following a "trajectory" of thought is just what the New Testament writers themselves did in developing their ideas regarding circumcision; therefore, we can imitate this Biblical pattern and develop "trajectories" of thought that follow developments within the New Testament and at times may even go beyond the New Testament's teachings.

## Response

This procedure simply denies the final authority of Scripture for us today. On the procedure that Thompson advocates, our standard then is no longer Scripture but *whatever position we think the biblical authors would have come to if they had had a few more years to think about it before they wrote the Bible*. This position is an outright denial of the final authority of Scripture, and would be contradictory to most evangelical doctrinal statements today.

For example, the statement of faith of the Evangelical

Free Church of America, under which I teach at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, says, "We believe the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, to be the inspired Word of God, without error in the original writings, *the complete revelation of His will* for the salvation of men, and *the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life*" (Article 1, italics added). The italicized sections exclude the idea that Thompson advocates, the idea that the doctrinal statements of the New Testament were not the final statement of God's will for us, but that we can follow "trajectories" that lead beyond the New Testament and lead us to conclusions that differ with New Testament teachings.

Thompson also contradicts the Westminster Confession of Faith, which says,

The *whole counsel of God* concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.

(Chap. 3, Para. 6, italics added).

He also contradicts the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, which say,

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that *whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith*

(Article VI, italics added).

When Thompson admits that male headship is taught in Ephesians 5, but then advocates an egalitarian position which contradicts that idea of male headship, then he is saying that our later reflection can lead us to adopt positions which contradict the explicit teaching of Ephesians 5. This puts Thompson in disagreement with the Chicago Statement on Biblical

WAYNE GRUEDEM



Inerrancy, which says,

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive. *We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.*

(Article V, italics added)

Now Thompson may respond that in following the "trajectory" of Scriptural development to a conclusion beyond what Scripture says he is simply doing the same thing the church did earlier regarding circumcision and slavery (this is a major focus of his article). But here he fails to take into account two crucial differences:

(1) Abolishing the circumcision requirement is just one of dozens of changes from the Old Testament to the New Testament, similar to the abolishing of sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood and dietary laws. These changes are all recorded in the New Testament, which is part of Scripture. *But these changes don't give us warrant to make a "transition" from the New Testament to some other rules that render New Testament teachings obsolete, or contradict them!*

(2) The abolition of slavery was a development of the *implications of Old Testament and New Testament teachings*, somewhat like the development of the doctrine of the Trinity or the Chalcedonian doctrine of the divine and human natures of Christ. These developments used the material that was already there in Scripture, but *they never nullified any teaching of the Old or New Testaments* when properly understood in its context. (The New Testament regulates slavery and gives principles that led to its dissolution, but the New Testament never commands its preservation as an institution.) The precedents of abolition and other developments of the implications of Scripture never give us warrant to adopt views that *modify or nullify* any Biblical teaching, which is what Thompson does with the commands on male leadership in marriage and the church.

What Thompson has done in his argument about doctrinal "trajectories" that go beyond Scripture is take a position similar to Roman Catholic theology, which finds its authority not only in Scripture but also in the later doctrinal development of the church. But this position falls outside the bounds of Protestant convictions since the Reformation, and it contradicts the major Protestant creeds which say that Scripture is our *final* authority. The Reformation principle *sola Scriptura* ("Scripture alone") was formulated to guard against the kind of procedure Thompson advocates, because the Reformers knew that once our authority becomes "Scripture plus some later developments" rather than "Scripture alone," the unique governing authority of Scripture in our lives is lost.

In fact, Thompson's procedure with Scripture is very similar to what many activist justices have done with our U.S. Constitution. They "discover" in the Constitution legal principles that were never written there (such as abortion rights and homosexual rights and the right to physician-assisted suicide), not because any words in the Constitution actually say those things, but because (so they

reason) this is how they think the basic ideals of the constitution would apply today. The result is that the judge's own opinions on what is right for society, rather than the Constitution itself, become our ultimate law.

In a similar way, Thompson's principle here is incredibly dangerous, because it makes our ultimate standard to be not the teachings of the Bible itself, but the theologian's own ideas on ethical standards the Bible was "moving toward" but didn't quite reach. Claiming to be based on the Bible, this procedure is in fact a significant undermining of Biblical authority.

## ***2. The claim that there may be unusual times when we can carefully and cautiously differ with a New Testament author's interpretation of an Old Testament text***

Thompson gives no interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, the most clear and direct text in the whole Bible about women and church government. He just says it is hard to interpret (it poses "particularly complex problems hermeneutically," p. 346), and, anyway, we might be able to reexamine Genesis 2 and disagree with Paul's interpretation of it:

We should take caution in immediately assuming that Paul's reading of Genesis 2 must, without further inquiry, be ours (p. 347).

Then he says that we should read the Genesis 2 account ourselves and understand it "on its own terms," and that our understanding of it can then be the "arbiter" of Paul's understanding:

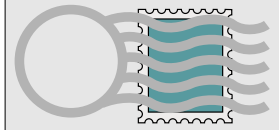
It is entirely possible that at this point the creation account, understood on its own terms, must be the arbiter of the more specifically confined reading given by Paul (p. 347).

## ***Response***

This procedure also denies the complete authority of Scripture for us today. Of course Paul's use of Genesis 2 is a problem for egalitarians today, because Genesis 2 shows male headship in marriage before there was any sin in the world. Therefore it shows male headship as part of the way God created us as men and women. And then (to make things worse for the egalitarian position!), Paul *quotes* from Genesis 2 to establish male headship in the church (1 Tim. 2:11-14). This means that Paul sees male headship in the church as rooted in the way God created men and women from the beginning.

But now Thompson has provided egalitarians with a new way to evade the force of that argument: With much caution, with careful study, with prayer, he says we should study Genesis 2 as 20th century interpreters. We should understand Genesis 2 "on its own terms." And when we understand the passage well enough, our understanding might (at times) enable us to reject Paul's interpretation. We can use Genesis 2 as the "arbiter" (or judge) of Paul's interpretation.

But note what has happened here. *We* are interpreting Genesis 2. And though Thompson may claim that *Genesis*



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## Trajectory hermeneutic

*continued from page 9*

2 is the judge of Paul's interpretation, the actual result (in the article) is that *Thompson's interpretation of Genesis 2* becomes the judge by which Paul's interpretation is pushed aside. In actual practice, Thompson's argument means that our interpretation can correct Paul's interpretation of Genesis 2—and, by implication, Paul's interpretation of other Old Testament passages as well.

This procedure is the second way that Thompson denies the complete authority of Scripture. I believe, in harmony with most evangelicals everywhere, that every word of Scripture is true and authoritative—including the words in which New Testament authors interpret the Old Testament. *If the Bible is the word of God, then these interpretations are not just Paul's interpretations; they are also God's interpretations of his own Word.*

There might be times when I cannot understand every interpretation of the Old Testament that is given by New Testament authors, but that does not give me the right to disagree with their interpretations. If I believe the Bible to be the very words of God, then I must believe that neither Paul nor any other Scriptural author made mistakes in their interpretation of the Old Testament, or gave us interpretations of the Old Testament which we can reject in favor of better ones of our own.

Of course I agree that we can see *more* in an Old Testament text than the New Testament author said—but I do not agree that we can say the New Testament author was incorrect in his understanding or interpretation or application.

The Bible is clear in its own claims to complete truthfulness:

*Every word of God proves true (Prov. 30:5)*

*All Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16)*

*The words of the Lord are words that are pure, silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times (Ps. 12:6).*

Let me say again that I don't think Thompson intends the consequences that flow from his principles. It is entirely possible that he just intended to propose a new solution to the dispute over Biblical manhood and womanhood. But the consequences of Thompson's proposals are serious indeed.

In allowing for the possibility of correcting the New Testament authors' interpretations of the Old Testament, Thompson again puts himself outside the bounds of Protestant orthodox confessions of faith. For example, once again I quote the Evangelical Free Church statement of faith, under which I teach at Trinity, which says, "We believe the Scriptures, *both Old and New Testaments*, to be the inspired Word of God, *without error in the original writings*, the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men, and the Divine and final authority for all Christian faith and life" (Article 1).

Finally, regarding Thompson's treatment of 1 Timothy 2, in which he doesn't explain it but just says it is hard to interpret, I must disagree. It is not hard to interpret "I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man" (1 Tim. 2:12, in a context which deals with Bible teaching in the assembled congregation), *unless someone comes with a bias against what it says*. Then, as with any text where one will not accept what it says, it is impossible to interpret fairly and get the result you want.

### 3. The claim that we will misinterpret Scripture when we try to solve this problem solely by interpreting individual verses of Scripture

Thompson says that we can't solve the question of male and female roles in marriage and the church "solely on the basis of the interpretation of individual biblical texts in their contexts" (p. 327). He says,

attempts either to support or to deny egalitarian relationships between men and women solely on the basis of the interpretation of individual biblical texts in their contexts lead inevitably to eisegesis—to reading the interpreter's agenda into the text (p. 327).

His solution again is to use his "trajectory hermeneutic"—a system of interpretation that tries to see the "trajectories" of development in Scripture, and then tries to discover the direction in which the Biblical development was moving. This large scale system then gives us a framework in which he says we can manage the interpretation of the individual verses. Thompson says,

*Having done one's interpretation*, one places these texts, understood in their contexts, within the canonical dialogue and seeks to discern the direction in which that dialogue moved (p. 332).

On questions of manhood and womanhood, Thompson then supports egalitarianism by "discerning the direction of the canonical dialogue...and reaching a conclusion to which that dialogue did not come but to which it clearly points" (p. 327).

### Response

Thompson's procedure in practice will prevent Christians from quoting a specific verse to answer problems in the church today. Instead of a verse we would now need a system—a whole hermeneutical framework. Therefore, if I say, "Ephesians 5:23 teaches wives, 'be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord,'" someone following Thompson's position will say, "But what is your overall hermeneutical framework in which you manage the tension between Ephesians 5:23 and the egalitarian verses in the Bible? Unless you demonstrate such a framework, you are *inevitably* reading your own agenda into this individual verse."

If I say, "1 Timothy 2:12 says women are not to teach or have authority over men," in a context of the assembled church," someone following Thompson's position will say, "But what is your overall hermeneutical framework in which you manage the tension between 1 Timothy 2:12

and the egalitarian verses in the Bible? Unless you demonstrate such a framework, you are *inevitably* reading your own agenda into this individual verse.”

This approach encourages a thoroughgoing skepticism about anyone's ability to play fair with the text of Scripture in any controversial area. Therefore it short-circuits the ability of any one verse to speak directly and decisively to any situation today. If we bring up one verse, or ten verses, and support our interpretation with detailed grammatical and historical arguments, Thompson's theory will still tell us that we are just doing “eisegesis”—we are “reading the interpreter's agenda [that is, our agenda] into the text” (p. 327). He doesn't say that we *might* do this, or that *some interpreters* do this, but that *everyone* does it—it happens “inevitably” (p. 327).

Up to this point, if we wanted to correct someone's doctrine, we simply had to quote a verse that showed it to be wrong. The burden of proof was then on the erring person to provide an explanation for that verse or change his view. But with Thompson's system, one verse isn't enough. Nor are a whole collection of “individual biblical texts in their contexts” (p. 327). Now the burden of proof would be on us—to correct someone's doctrine we would need to provide a large system of interpretation showing that Scripture was developing toward one goal or another.

Thompson's approach would thus change doctrinal and ethical discussions from “verse against verse” to “system against system.” The process would become so complex that only scholars would be able to participate, and the “targets” at the end of those “trajectories” that scholars would discover (toward which they would claim the Bible was aiming, but didn't reach) would multiply by the hundreds. Arguing a whole system against another is notoriously difficult, so hardly anyone would be able to convince anyone else. The ability of the Bible to speak with authority through specific verses to controversial situations in the church would be lost.

By contrast to Thompson, think of Jesus quoting specific verses. Or think of Paul and Peter and James quoting specific verses. They argued from *verses*, not from *hermeneutical systems*. They did not think that attempts to solve controversies by quoting individual verses would “lead inevitably to eisegesis” (as Thompson says, p. 327). They thought that many controversies could be settled “solely on the basis of the interpretation of individual biblical texts in their contexts.” And so should we.

#### 4. The claim that broad themes of Scripture can overrule specific verses

Fourth, Thompson claims that we can draw conclusions from the broad themes of Scripture and these themes can overrule the specific verses. He says, “Foundational theological claims in Scripture... could well imply conclusions ultimately at odds with specific legal, narrative, and pastoral instructions, and could take priority over them on given issues” (p. 349).

On this basis, Thompson is free to establish egalitarian-

ism by an appeal to what he says are broad and foundational theological claims in Scripture, such as “creation, human sin, Incarnation, salvation, and standing in Christ” (p. 349).

#### Response

Of course we should combine the teachings of individual verses of Scripture to discover broad themes, and of course we should attempt to interpret individual verses in a way that is consistent with those broad themes that we derived from many other verses. But Thompson is saying more than that. He is saying that some broad themes may be “at odds with” individual “legal, narrative, and pastoral instructions”—in other words, that the broad themes can overrule specific verses.

This method (“the broad themes overrule the specific verses”) undermines Biblical authority because it implies that some specific verses may be incorrect. In fact, this is the method used by all liberals in interpreting Scripture, and it lets them pick any “theme” they want (such as the love of God, for example) and pour their own ideas into it (such as the idea that a loving God will never condemn anyone to hell). They refuse to be corrected by any specific verse about God's judgment or wrath because that verse doesn't fit with how they see “the broad theme of God's love in Scripture.” In a similar way, Thompson's method cuts people loose from the controls of specific verses and leads quickly to churches that are “tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14).

#### 5. The claim that the direction a passage moves against its culture can overrule things specifically taught in the passage

It is instructive to see how Thompson's claims of “development” and “trajectory” among biblical texts even includes the teachings of Genesis 2. Thompson says nothing indicating that he sees Genesis 2 as a statement of the way Adam and Eve lived when God created them, or as a description of the relationship between man and woman in an ideal world without sin. In fact, Thompson sees Genesis 2 as a noteworthy but incomplete correction of the patriarchal society at the time of Moses (around 1440 or 1290 B.C.):

The ancient Near East context of the Genesis creation accounts was a world in which male headship and female subordination were non-issues. The theological warfare waged in the creation accounts *assumes* male domination and patriarchal society... Read against this environment, hints of male domination in Genesis 2 are not striking. What astounds one rather is the amazing *lack* of male domination there... In its context of patriarchal society and assumed male domination, Genesis 1-3 must be seen *as moving strikingly in the direction of the liberation of women and the minimization of male domination* (p. 333, italics in original).

Thompson admits that Genesis 2 shows male headship in marriage, but he claims it does not emphasize it. These are his words (I will use his word “hierarchical” in order to

*continued next page*

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***If church leaders exchange the authority of what Scripture says for the authority of their own ideas about improvements on New Testament teachings... then we have become subject to the ideas of men and not to the Word of God***

—WAYNE GRUDEM

fairly summarize his argument, but it is a pejorative term which neither I nor CBMW would use to characterize our position; see *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, p. xiv.):

It is in light of this foundation [Genesis 1] that the assumed but amazingly subdued note of hierarchy in chapter 2 is to be read in preparation for the tragedy of chapter 3. This... amounts to an implicit commendation of non-hierarchical relationships and casts serious question on the idea of hierarchical relationships as mandated by the creator [*sic*] (p. 346).

To summarize Thompson's argument:

(a) Genesis 2 shows hierarchy [male headship] as part of creation, but does not emphasize it as much as we would expect in the patriarchal ancient world. Moreover, Genesis 2 must be understood in light of the foundational egalitarian perspective of Genesis 1.

(b) This shows that "Genesis 1-3 must be seen as moving strikingly in the direction of the liberation of women and the minimization of male domination" (p. 333).

(c) It also shows that Genesis 1-3 approves non-hierarchical relationships, and it casts serious question on the idea that hierarchy in marriage was part of creation.

#### **Response**

I do not think evangelicals should agree with Thompson here. We must insist, with Bible-believing Christians throughout history, that Genesis 2 represents real events at the time of creation, not just the theological agenda of the later human author. And if we understand Genesis 1-2 as reporting the historical situation of Adam and Eve before there was sin, then we must reject Thompson's claim that these chapters were simply a partial egalitarian correction of an ancient Near Eastern culture. *We must instead affirm both Genesis 1 and 2 as a real historical portrayal of the ideal relationship between man and woman in a world where there is no sin, and therefore as a pattern for marriage for all time.* In fact, both Jesus (Matt. 19:5) and Paul (Eph. 5:31) viewed Genesis 2 as showing God's ideal pattern for marriage, not just a partial correction of patriarchal culture at the time of Moses. Therefore we must reject Thompson's claim that Genesis 1 makes foundational claims that can

nullify the ideal example of male headship in Genesis 2.

#### **Conclusion**

I have thought for some time that the question of the authority of Scripture would surface sooner or later in this controversy over men's and women's roles in the home and the church. It has clearly surfaced here. Any one of Thompson's five positions mentioned above would be sufficient to keep a candidate from being ordained in most evangelical churches, and would also prevent a candidate from being called as a pastor in most evangelical churches, and rightly so.

If church leaders exchange the authority of *what Scripture says* for the authority of *their own ideas* about improvements on New Testament teachings after the New Testament was written, or about corrections to Paul's interpretation of the Old Testament, or about trajectories of Scripture that prevent individual verses from answering doctrinal controversies, or about broad themes of Scripture that override specific verses, or about the way a passage differs from its culture being able to nullify that passage's specific teachings, then we have become subject to the ideas of men and not to the Word of God.

But I also realize that egalitarians are quickly running out of facts and careful arguments from Scripture to support their position. Their proposed interpretations of key texts of Scripture may have had an initial plausibility ten or fifteen years ago, but they have not been supported by additional investigation that digs deeper into the lexical, grammatical, and contextual data relevant for interpretation, because time and again such additional investigation has supported the complementarian view more strongly. (See, for example, the recent book, *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, edited by Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin [Baker, 1995].)

So perhaps it is not surprising that some interpreters will now find various ways to deny the final authority of Scripture in advancing new theories to support their egalitarian views on women in marriage and the church. This is not just "a difference in interpretation." This is a difference in what we accept as our final authority.

### ***Inclusive language on the college campus***

**A** faculty task force at the University of Wisconsin has prepared "A Guide to Bias-Free Communications," which tells school personnel how to avoid terms that "demean or exclude people on the basis of gender, race, ethnic group, religion, age, ability/disability, or sexual orientation."

Thus, "man-to-man defense" is now "one-on-one defense"; "layman's terms" have become "ordinary terms"; "boy-friends/girlfriends" are now "friends, guests, partners"; and the Founding Fathers are to be known as "Founders."

In the quest for political correctness and inclusivism, there are consequences for research and truth, since "incorrectness," while to be avoided in one's own words, is to be purged from those of others as well. "If a direct quote offends or inappropriately excludes women or men... consider eliminating, paraphrasing, or replacing the quote," says the guide.

—Reported by Jeff Lyon in the *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1995

# 1 Timothy 2:13—a simple, straightforward verse that egalitarians cannot explain

**I**N 1 TIMOTHY 2:13 PAUL GIVES THE ORDER OF CREATION as a reason why women should not “teach or have authority over men” in the assembled church. Here is his reasoning:

<sup>12</sup> I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent.

<sup>13</sup> For Adam was formed first, then Eve... (RSV)

How do egalitarians explain verse 13, which anchors Paul’s instructions not in current culture but in God’s original creation of man and woman? In the recent book *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*,<sup>1</sup> CBMW Council member Thomas Schreiner tells us how several prominent egalitarians explain the verse. Judge for yourselves whether you think their explanations are satisfactory:

...Mary Evans says that the relevance of verse 13 for verse 12 is unclear, and that verse 13 merely introduces the next verse about Eve.<sup>2</sup> Gordon Fee asserts that the verse is not central to Paul’s argument.<sup>3</sup> Timothy Harris says that the verse “is difficult to understand on any reading.”<sup>4</sup> Craig Keener thinks that the argument here is hard to fathom.<sup>5</sup> David Scholer protests that the text is

unclear, and that Paul cites selectively from Genesis.<sup>6</sup> Steve Motyer says that logic and justice are nullified if the historic position of verses 13-14 is accepted.<sup>7</sup>

Schreiner then adds his own comment:

It seems that unclarity is in the eye of the beholder, for the thrust of the verse has been deemed quite clear in the history of the church. The creation of Adam first gives a reason why men should be the authoritative teachers in the church. James Hurley notes that the reasoning would not be obscure to people of Paul’s time for they were quite familiar with primogeniture [leadership by the firstborn son in each generation]. Even progressives acknowledge that role differences were very common in ancient societies. The original readers would have understood Paul, then, to defend such role differences, and he does so on the basis of the created order. In other words, Paul thinks such differences are good and proper and not the result of sin or the fall.<sup>8</sup>

What do you think? Is verse 13 hard to understand? Or are egalitarians unwilling to accept what it says?

1. *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, edited by Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas Schreiner and H. Scott Baldwin (Baker, 1995).

2. Mary J. Evans, *Woman in the Bible* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1983), 104.

3. Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991), 58.

4. Timothy J. Harris, “Why Did Paul Mention Eve’s Deception? A Critique of P. W. Barnett’s Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2,” *Evangelical Quarterly* 62 (1990), 343.

5. Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 116.

6. David Scholler [sic], “1 Timothy 2:9-15,” *Daughters of Sarah* 6 (1980), 208-13.

7. Steve Motyer, “Expounding 1 Timothy 2:8-15,” *Vox Evangelica* 24 (1994): 92. Note a new example on page 9 of this issue of CBMWNEWS: David Thompson says this verse poses “particularly complex problems hermeneutically.”

8. Thomas Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, p. 136. Schreiner interacts with other egalitarian explanations on pages 134-140 of this chapter. Our purpose here is simply to note how many egalitarians who are otherwise skilled Bible interpreters apparently have no explanation for this very simple, straightforward verse.

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Dear Friends,

Would you like to become a partner with us in promoting biblical manhood and womanhood?

We have kept the subscription price for CBMWNEWS very low to encourage subscribers, but the \$10 per year that you pay really doesn’t cover our production costs for the start-up years of this journal. And our CBMW office gets calls and letters daily asking for literature and information. Can you help us pay the substantial printing, postage, and office bills for this ministry?

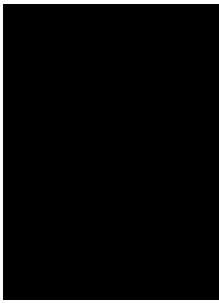
We received hundreds of orders for the Köstenberger-Schreiner-Baldwin book, and we are thankful for that. But we sold that book at the bare-bones price of \$2.00 and very few orders included any additional gifts for CBMW. Our contributions that we depend on to pay monthly operational costs are lagging behind our expenses this year.

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Paul wrote, “Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit” (Phil. 4:17). This means that when you contribute to a ministry such as CBMW (or any other Christian church or ministry), God sees it and counts you a partner and fellow-worker in that ministry, and will reward you (either now or in eternity) for the part you played in advancing the work of the Kingdom through that ministry. So, with Paul, I can also say to you that “I seek the fruit (of CBMW’s ministry) which increases to your credit.”

Wayne Grudem, Ph.D.  
President, CBMW



ANDREAS  
KÖSTENBERGER

***Are you interested in contributing to CBMWNEWS?***

A special note to those among our readers who have interest in contributing to **CBMW NEWS**: if you are able to submit quality reviews of books or seminal articles dealing with gender issues; if you can furnish us with pre-publication copies of new books or articles of your own; if you have written short articles (800-1500 words in length) or longer articles that can be excerpted in **CBMWNEWS** and made available in their entirety to our readers; if you are a man or woman who is able to discern the times in which we live and to write in clear and largely non-technical language—please send your material to:

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## From the editor: "I was just thinking..."

**W**E COMPLEMENTARIANS HAVE AN IMAGE PROBLEM. WE MAY DENY IT, BUT MANY PERCEIVE us as anti-women, patriarchal, defensive, dogmatic, closed-minded, intolerant, and out-of-touch. Egalitarians, on the other hand, present themselves as fresh, new, exciting, open-minded, cutting-edge, and tolerant. And to make matters worse, we are partly to blame for the negative stereotypes. There has been too much of a focus on what women should not do and not enough on what they should. An inordinate amount of our energy has centered merely on rebutting our opponents' views and not enough effort has been directed toward developing a positive and constructive agenda for women's and men's ministries in the church.

Who are people going to believe when they are presented with an attractively packaged product that is qualitatively inferior and a poorly presented product whose quality is superior? Sadly enough, many will choose the former. (Of course, in this fallen world even perfect packaging of the quality product will not ensure that people will buy it. But we must try.)

Republicans recently faced a similar problem. They found that Americans were largely embracing the values they stood for but that they were turned off by their "cut-and-slash" rhetoric. What they needed was not a new product; they needed an image changeover. So in an effort to align the truth regarding their political values with how people viewed them, Republicans had working mothers and African-American football stars-turned-congressmen address their convention, arguing that it was only that party that could be trusted to restore the American dream.

We must take a critical look at our own movement. The next stage of CBMW's endeavor must involve making a winnable case for our complementarian vision of biblical manhood and womanhood: we must be more constructive and, yes, more legitimately inclusive without the loss of a solid scholarly and scriptural basis. Let me know what you think. I'm looking forward to working with you to make our vision of biblical manhood and womanhood a reality.

—Andreas Köstenberger

### From the President—Prayer partners needed for CBMW!

***Has God given you a special heart for intercessory prayer?***

***Has God put on your heart a special desire to help the work of CBMW?***

If you answered yes to both of those questions, perhaps God is calling you to become a member of CBMW's "Prayer Partners"—people who are willing to receive notices about specific, timely prayer concerns and to intercede before God for these needs.

I am convinced that nothing of lasting value can be done by CBMW unless God directs, empowers and blesses it. And I believe that God seldom gives such special empowering and blessing until his people ask him specifically for it. In short, without much prayer, the work of CBMW will fail. Therefore I would love to know that a team of behind-the-scenes intercessors is praying specifically for CBMW's work.

*"You do not have, because you do not ask."*

JAMES 4:2

*"I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears."*

PSALM 34:4

*"O taste and see that the LORD is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!"*

PSALM 34:8

If you would like to be a part of CBMW's team of "Prayer Partners," please send me your name, address, phone number, and (if possible) fax number and/or E-mail address. Perhaps you could also tell something about yourself and why you care about the work of CBMW. Write directly to me at our new address:

Wayne Grudem • CBMW, P.O. Box 7337, Libertyville, IL 60048

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If in the future your circumstances change and you think you should discontinue your involvement, just let me know and I'll take you off the list at once. The list will not be used for any other purpose than to send notices about prayer needs and answers to prayer.

—Wayne Grudem  
President, CBMW

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MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

### The Danvers Statement AFFIRMATIONS

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

- Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
- Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.
- Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin.
- The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women.
  - 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.
- 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. Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community.
- 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.
  - 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.
- 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.
- In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries. Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
- 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.
- 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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A man must insist that his children honor those whom he honors, and first on this list should be his wife and their mother... When a man honors his wife... he is doing two things. He is teaching his children respect for their mother, and in addition, he is instilling in them a high respect for the other half of the [fifth] commandment. They learn to respect him. He does this by giving—not demanding. He does this by serving—not grasping. A man who insists on respect and honor for his wife is clearly an honorable man himself.

Douglas Wilson, in *World*, September 7, 1996, p. 26

Nowadays it is best to be wary of movements with large blazing truths in hand and the firm conviction that petty, pesky, literal truth therefore almost doesn't matter. Our century has seen a lot of this argument—that dishonesty or indifference to truth is justified by one's commitment to a cause.

John Leo, *US News and World Report*, August 7, 1995

On behalf of the women that you men represent—sisters, moms, wives and daughters—I ask your forgiveness for not showing you the respect you deserve. I ask your forgiveness for the demeaning and belittling words that we have uttered. I apologize for the ways we coddled and smothered you with our protectiveness, thereby emasculating you. It has been done in ignorance. Understand that 'mothering' comes naturally to us. It is our God-designed makeup. We simply have misappropriated our calling.

Holly Phillips, wife of Promise Keepers President Randy Phillips, in remarks given at conferences and reported in *New Man*, January-February, 1996, p. 87

Fatherhood and motherhood require something more than choosing to have a child. They require self-discipline, continuing respect for another adult, the ability to honor promises and binding obligations, in a word, a measure of sacrifice. Societies that view future generations as

their own highest realization have always understood as much and have accordingly honored heterosexual marriage and responsible fatherhood and motherhood as sacred norms. Today we are learning, to our children's incalculable cost, that societies that regard self-realization and an illusory personal liberation as their highest realization demonize fatherhood and motherhood as illegitimate fetters on individual happiness and fulfillment.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese in *The Wilson Quarterly*, Autumn, 1996, p. 142

One of two things must be true if women can actually become priestesses: Either God the Father made a mistake and has now changed His mind. Or Jesus who was God incarnate did not do the will of the Father [when he chose only males as apostles]. The first is nonsense. The second amounts to a denial that Jesus was the incarnate God.

Sheldon Vanauken, in *Under the Mercy*, p. 185

## Council on Biblical

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