

Table of Contents

- 2 Editor's Column**
Bruce A. Ware
- 4 Executive Director's Column**
Randy Stinson
- 6 A Call to Family Worship**
Ligon Duncan and Terry Johnson
- 17 What We Shall Be: A Look at Gender and the New Creation**
Mark David Walton
- 29 The Essence of the Veil: The Veil as a Metaphor for Islamic Women**
Susie Hawkins
- 35 Is Evangelical Feminism the New Path to Liberalism? Some Disturbing Warning Signs**
Wayne Grudem
- 85 The Role of Men and Women in the Church: A Sermon on Titus 2:1-8**
Daniel L. Akin
- 91 Cultural Commentary: Do Wife-Beaters Need Better Therapy Groups? Spouse Abuse and the End of Sin**
Russell D. Moore
- 93 Guest Editorial: A Call for Courage on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood**
R. Albert Mohler, Jr.
- 95 Celebrating Biblical Womanhood: Godly Garments**
Nancy Leigh DeMoss
- 98 The State of Marriage in the State of Oregon**
Todd L. Miles
- 101 J. Lee Grady's 25 Tough Questions About Women and the Church: A Review Article**
Rob Lister
- 109 Annotated Bibliography for Gender Related Articles in 2003**
Rob Lister

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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.

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Editor's Column



Bruce A. Ware

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In many ways, these are exciting days for biblical complementarianism.

On the one hand, there are clear indications that upholding biblically faithful teaching on questions of gender is promoting a wide-spread humility before God and his word, along with a growing satisfaction in living according to the patterns that he has established for us, his human creation. In my travels over the past several months, I've had opportunity to speak in many settings on various aspects of "the gender debate," as one might call it, and I have found such warm and enthusiastic reception to the clear and wise teaching of Scripture on roles of men and women. Perhaps as we witness denominations like the Anglican and Episcopal churches demonstrate that failure to uphold biblical teaching on the roles of men and women promotes even larger departures on questions of gender requirements for marriage and ordination, others may become even more resolved to seek to understand and obey Scripture rightly on these questions. We realize now, more than ever, that much is at stake – for our marriages, our families, our churches, and for the culture at large – in just how we interpret and live out biblical teaching on gender matters.

On the other hand, there are clear indications that the case for a complementarian understanding of Scripture is standing the test of time, and that alternate proposals from various strands of egalitarian scholarship are bankrupt and hollow. One example of this bankruptcy is seen in the warm reception among many egalitarians that William Webb's *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*—reviewed by Thomas Schreiner in *JBMW*, 7.1 (Spring 2002) 41-51, and also critiqued by Wayne Grudem in his article in this issue—is having, a book which makes its egalitarian case first by agreeing (essentially) with complementarians in their interpretation of New Testament passages! Only then does he invoke his proposal that this NT teaching, however, is not normative for the church today. Rather, we must look beyond the Bible to know how we are to live today. How dangerous, how deeply sad, and how wrong this proposal is. The encouraging point in this, however, is that complementarian interpretations of Scripture are proving true, as tested over and over again, and we rejoice in the steadfast defenses of clear biblical teaching that many faithful supporters of the complementarian position are giving.

So, both offensively and defensively, we see reason to rejoice that the complementarian understanding of Scripture is

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advancing, despite widespread cultural disdain for this humble, wise, and biblical stance. And, this current issue of *JBMW* will provide readers with a wealth of resources, both offensively and defensively, for understanding and upholding better the richness and glory of these truths. Our issue begins with an instructive and inspiring article by CBMW's Board chairman, J. Ligon Duncan, and Terry Johnson, commending the practice of family worship, headed and led by fathers in their homes. A theology of worship is joined here with responsible male headship in a way that can assist many families to enter into new levels of freedom and joy, in Christ. Mark David Walton then provides us with a look into the age to come, exploring the question of gender identity in the new creation. As one considers the truth that God created man as male and female, it is only natural to inquire whether gender identity continues, and Walton's essay is richly instructive on this matter.

Wayne Grudem, one of complementarianism's best friends and most productive scholars, has just completed a new book, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*, to be released soon from Multnomah Press, in which every major (and minor!) egalitarian argument is addressed and answered. Grudem has done the church an enormous service through this upcoming volume, and it is our privilege here to publish an essay from this book expressing some of the reasons why the gender issue matters so much, both in the academy and in the church.

Susie Hawkins presents an intriguing glimpse into Muslim culture in her article on the meaning of the veil within Islam. The contrast between joyful biblical complementarianism and this picture of the life of women in Islam could not be more stark. Daniel Akin, the newly-elected president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, provides us with a clear and insightful sermon on Titus 2, and following this we offer an array of contemporary cultural essays on some of the most pressing issues of our day. Russell D. Moore, R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Nancy DeMoss, and Todd Miles each contributes wisdom and insight into various facets of the current struggle for biblical faithfulness in matters of gender and sexuality.

Our book review this issue comes from our managing editor, Rob Lister, who offers a very helpful overview and critique of J. Lee Grady's recent *25 Tough Questions about Women and the Church*. This, along with Grady's previous *10 Lies the Church Tells Women*, is leading many into a deeply flawed understanding of the teaching of Scripture. Lister offers some help in showing where this proposal has gone wrong and where the truth may be found. And once again, Lister has compiled the lengthy list of annotated articles on gender issues, this list of articles published in 2003. What a valuable service this is, and our thanks is owed to him.

We hope and pray that this issue of our journal will

assist the reader both offensively and defensively. May we see more clearly the truth and wisdom of God's purpose for men and women, respectively, and may we understand more clearly the errors that must be avoided by all those who long to receive God's "well done" in the end. May God be honored, and may his truth and grace be embraced by his people, for his glory and our good. ■

Executive Director's Column



Randy Stinson

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“Why can’t we all just get along?” was the final question at a recent gender roles debate in which I opposed Alan Padgett from Luther Seminary. It was part of a breakout session at the national convention of the Evangelical Press Association. I know the woman who asked the question meant well. She framed her question in such a way as to emphasize “Christian unity” over “doctrinal unity” with the point that since egalitarians and complementarians can both be Christians, and since committed Christians disagree on the issue, it should not matter which position one holds.

My mind immediately recalled Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus and his constant reminders to hold fast to the Word and to deal decisively with those who undermine sound doctrine. Paul knew that there is a constant fleshly pull that draws human beings to all sorts of arbiters other than the Bible. When we are going through a hardship, we first call a friend instead of turning to the pages of the Psalms. When we doubt God’s provision for us, we turn to our pastor instead of first going to the words of Jesus. When we are angry, we look for one who will justify us instead of looking to the text of Proverbs. In much of evangelicalism today, we would rather give someone another book instead of pointing them to the pages of Scripture where they can read the very words of God.

This fleshly pull has impacted how the current gender discussion is progressing. Over and over, complementarians continue to restate the biblical position and articulate a compelling vision of God’s beautiful design for men and women. Yet much of our time is spent defending God’s design against the seemingly endless onslaught of new interpretations,

new definitions, and new approaches from the egalitarian subset of evangelicalism.

William Webb claims that we need to look outside of the New Testament for a better ethic regarding the roles of men and women. In other words the NT gives us a trajectory to follow that is realized after the NT was written. Kevin Giles claims that we cannot look to the Bible to settle these types of disputes, but that we should look to church history instead. Alan Padgett, at our debate, asserted that not only does the church submit to Christ, but Christ submits to the church by his death for the church. For him, since Christ serves the church, he is submitting to the church. By redefining the word “submit,” Padgett potentially has turned the entire Christian life on its head. How then will we understand the lordship of Christ? To whom is our obedience required? Will we speak of Christ obeying *us*?

These various arguments have at their core a move away from the Scriptures by looking outside of the Bible, looking to history, looking to archaeology, or by redefining words in ways not found in any Greek lexicon. Each argument is an attack on one of the perfections of Scripture: the authority of scripture (look for a better ethic), the sufficiency of Scripture (look to history or archeology), the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture (redefine the words), and the clarity of Scripture (we cannot really know the answer). And when these areas are undermined, ultimately the inerrancy of Scripture is at stake. In 1978 the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* issued this warning:

We are conscious too that great and grave confusion results from ceasing to maintain the total truth of the Bible whose authority one professes to acknowledge. The result of taking this step is that the Bible that God gave loses its authority, and what has authority instead is a Bible reduced in content according to the demands of one's critical reasonings and in principle reducible still further once one has started. This means that at bottom independent reason now has authority, as opposed to Scriptural teaching. If this is not seen and if for the time being basic Evangelical doctrines are still held, persons denying the full truth of Scripture may claim an Evangelical identity while methodologically they have moved away from the Evangelical principle of knowledge to an unstable subjectivism, and will find it hard not to move further.

Many egalitarian leaders continue to profess a high view of Scripture and a trust in the total truthfulness of the Bible while at the same time turning everywhere but the Bible to make their case. Paul's charge to Timothy to "guard the good deposit" is what keeps CBMW in the battle and gives us the great impetus to come alongside pastors of local churches to help them stand firm. There is a lot at stake in this debate. The health of the home, the health of the church, how we understand the Christ/church paradigm, how we understand the place of God's Word in the Christian life, and how we will raise masculine sons and feminine daughters, are all impacted by how we understand the biblical roles of men and women. Paul's admonition to Timothy reminds us to expect that there will be many more arguments and many more bizarre interpretations of Scripture yet to come. It also helps us explain, with broken hearts for God's people, that despite the young woman's highest hopes, we may not all be able to "just get along," when it is our faithfulness to Scripture that is at stake. ■■

A Call to Family Worship¹

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There has been a recent miniboom of interest in the renewal of family religion and family worship in the evangelical community. Perhaps fueled by (a) the sense of cultural assault upon the family, (b) the strong current emphasis on parental involvement in childhood education, and (c) in some quarters a recapturing of a covenantal vision of church and family life, many are open to and desirous of learning what the family as a unit ought to be doing together in the way of daily worshiping of God in the reading, singing and praying of Scripture. And not only is there a new impetus, but many helpful resources are now available that were nonexistent just a few years ago.²

None too soon. The family itself is an endangered species in our culture, and the Christian family is under the severest of strains: the pace of life, the worldliness and materialism of church and society, the self-destructive freedoms in which we love to indulge, the capacity for temptations to access us even in the safety of our own homes through satellite television and the internet, men's loss of the sense of responsibility to take up the duty for spiritual leadership as fathers in the home, the culture of divorce, the culture of day care, and more. Furthermore, there are those who so undervalue the traditional family that they are seeking to redefine it, while at the same time some suggest that a day will come when biotechnology, community, and government programs will pave the way for the obsolescence of the traditional family.

God has never underestimated the importance of the family. After all, like marriage, he invented it. The family is the original society from which every other society emerges.

This is seen in creation itself as unfolded in the early chapters of Genesis. Redemptive history and the covenant of grace both indicate the essential role of family in God's program. Founded by a divine directive and regulated by divine ordinances, it is the normal school in which faith in God and obedience to his law are taught. Its suitability for this function is seen in its unique features: (1) it is small and close: no bureaucratic barriers impede the recognition of need and the application of discipline, no administrative distance prevents the identification of patterns or allows for idealistic assessments and solutions; (2) authority is displayed, but its harshness is tempered with parental affection; (3) ideally two parents, two parties, complement one another and are vested with joint authority; (4) mutual accountability and divine, transcendent authority are illustrated in every relationship.

In the family, God illustrates the fundamental principles of his universal moral government, but family life also reflects the principles of grace. The principle of representation is manifest in paternal spiritual headship, the principle of mediation in suffering and toil is seen in maternal child-birthing and child-rearing, and the mighty power of love is ideally manifest not only in the parental relations but in their wise and firm, but warm and gracious parenting.

So, the family is a special kind of household, ideally consisting of husband and wife, and desirably children. It is the oldest and most basic of God's institutions for mankind. It is designed by God to be a spiritual entity and to provide for the training up of children into mature adult character. Moses spoke of the very process of its perpetuation in Gen 2:23-24:

“The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” The reference to leaving and cleaving points to the formation of a new family unit out of the union of husband and wife. This does not mean that singleness, single-parenthood, or childlessness must always bear reproach, but it does mean that single-parent families and childless marriages are the exception to the rule.

The family has a built-in, divinely given authority structure. The husband is spiritual head of the home, and the parents are leaders to the children. This headship and leadership is to express itself in ministry, not tyranny, and thus must be loving and selfless. In the wake of the fall, this basic creational order was reaffirmed (Gen 3:16). One of Abraham’s fundamental responsibilities in the covenant was to “command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice” (Gen 18:19). Even pagan cultures have an appreciation of the divine, natural family order (Esther 1:20, 22). The family order of creation and the role distinctions that flow from it were confirmed in the new covenant, and Paul called Christians to live deliberately in their light:

“But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ” (1 Cor 11:3).

“Man . . . is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man” (1 Cor 11:7).

“Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22).

“Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (Col 3:18).

“An overseer [or elder] must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Tim 3:4-5).

Peter joined Paul in these affirmations and directives: “In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands. . . . Just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear (1 Pet 3:1, 6). Egalitarianism of all sorts (whether it involves the abdication of husbandly, paternal, or parental responsibility and authority) undermines family religion and the cultivation of godliness in the home, and only the biblical view (often today called “complementarian”) can sustain a truly Christian discipleship.

Just how seriously God takes the family can be seen by looking at his law. Four of the ten commandments are directly related to the family. The fourth commandment requires the head of the household to lead the family in Sabbath-keeping. The fifth commandment requires children to respect and submit to their parents. The seventh commandment protects the family from sexual infidelity (whether it is expressed in a spouse being unfaithful to the family itself or someone else’s endangering the family core by intrusion). The tenth commandment protects the family from those who would, in virtue of their coveting, take its necessary property or disrupt its relations. God is clearly concerned to throw around the family every moral/legal protection he can find.

Why? Because the family is God’s divinely appointed “small group” discipleship program. The family is the first place that God has appointed for teaching and learning about God and godliness. Children are to be instructed (Gen 18:18-19, Deut 4:9, 6:6-8, 11:18-21, Prov 22:6, Eph 6:4), guided in the way of life (Prov 1:8, 6:20), and disciplined both directly and correctively (Prov 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14, 29:15, 17). Family worship is important (Ex 12:3, Josh 24:15) and in the New Testament the household was the basic unit of Christian commitment (Acts 11:14, 16:15, 31-33, 1 Cor 1:16). Indeed, a man’s performance as spiritual head of his family was a major factor in assessing his fitness for church office (1 Tim 3:4-5, 12, Titus 1:6). Nothing can replace or substitute for the family’s failings in these functions.

Our goal in evangelical churches ought to be (1) for every family unit to become a discipleship group; (2) for every husband and father to become an active, self-denying, spiritual leader in his home; (3) for our congregations to have as many families functioning as “family-based growth groups” as there are families; and (4) for family religion to be the fountain of healthy, robust, corporate worship, as well as worship in all of life.

Covenantal Responsibilities of Parents

As Christian parents we can do significant things to promote the spiritual health and growth of our covenant children. In Deut 6:4-9, Moses said:

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them

on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

These words remind us of two things. First, though salvation is of God and though the Spirit works when and how and with whom he wishes, Christian parents have covenantal responsibilities toward their children that God is pleased to use as means of those covenant children's spiritual birth and growth. Second, it is in the natural rhythm and activity of life that parents teach most and best. It is not primarily through church or paraministry youth programs but rather through parental life infused with Christ, grace and Scripture—and normal opportunities looked for and taken—that we principally edify our children.

Among those means and opportunities are the following: First, we ought to give serious consideration to the spiritual condition and spiritual needs of our children. Do we care more for their bodies than their souls? Do we think about how they look, whether they are physically healthy, what their career ought to be, whether they are running with the “first and best,” how popular they are—and neglect a concern to see Christ formed in them, to see them denying themselves and taking up the cross?

Second, we ought to use baptisms as an occasion to call our children to faith. Whether we are credobaptist or paedobaptist, baptisms provide us with a unique opportunity to talk with our own children about what it means to be united to Christ. The Westminster Larger Catechism says:

“Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, wherein Christ has ordained the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to be a sign and seal of ingrafting into himself, of remission of sins by his blood, and regeneration by his Spirit; of adoption, and resurrection unto everlasting life; and whereby the parties baptized are solemnly admitted into the visible church, and enter into an open and professed engagement to be wholly and only the Lord's” (Q. 165).

I cannot see anything in that statement that credobaptists and paedobaptists would not agree on, but what a rich spiritual discussion could start in a conversation with our children back home after the administration of baptism during a church service!

Third, we ought to instruct our children in the great issues of salvation. We should talk with them about the content of sermons. We should ask them about Scriptures that they have memorized in Sunday School. We should aim to see how far they understand and to know and learn their souls.

Fourth, we ought to correct and restrain our children from that which is prejudicial to their spiritual vitality. There should be a sweet but firm display parental authority in the

home. We ought not to indulge them or to allow them to trample us. They should “fear you with delight.” Challenge straying teenagers. Do not be cute with them about their sin.

Fifth, we ought to challenge our children to embrace the promises of God, and to embrace Christ by faith. We should exhort them in the things of the Lord (1 Chron 28:9; 1 John 3:23). Plunder the Scriptures for charges and challenges, exhortations and spiritual commands for your children. A godly mother, just a week away from her death, asked her spiritually straying son to read to her Jesus' words from John 14:2 “I go to prepare a place for you.” She afterward assured her son of her firm hope that Jesus had indeed prepared her a place and then said to him: “I want to ask you a question: Will you meet me there?” What a powerful way to bring home the truth of the ultimate, life and death matters of trust in Christ and our eternal destiny.

Sixth, we ought to be disciples ourselves. We must love God if we want our children to love God. We must be disciples if we want our children to be disciples (Ps 34:1, 4, 11). Along with this, we must remember that we are examples (for good or ill) in our life, priorities, and choices. Our children will see what is important to us. Is God important to us? his worship? the Lord's Day? the Bible? the Christian life? Or is our life taken up with trivialities, focused only secular labor without a distinctively Christian worldview and the pursuit of pleasure or just escape from pain? Our children will see what is really important to us, and it will either contradict or confirm our words about Christ and Christianity to them.

Seventh, we ought to pray for our children. We should pray for their salvation, for their spiritual growth, for their future spouses—and pray with them, as well as for them.

Promoting Family Religion

When all is said and done though, some of the profoundest things we can repeatedly do to promote a heart for God in our children are also the simplest things.

First, sit together at church. Go to church every week (even on vacation), fifty-two weeks a year, year after year, and sit together. That is it. I guarantee it will have a profoundly beneficial spiritual impact. The family ought to be in corporate worship faithfully and in it together. Children can get with their friends after the services, but in church, the family ought to be prime. Do not underestimate the power of the ordinary means of grace in the life of the family.

Second, work to have a Lord's Day. Live as if Sunday is the Lord's, not yours. View it as the “market day of the soul.” Don't let the day become cluttered up. Avoid unnecessary labor and travel. Anticipate it with enthusiasm rather than bemoaning it. Make going to church the high point of the week. Let your

children know you love it. Do special things with them on that day that you do no other (e.g., Dad: cook them breakfast, wake them in a special way, spend relational time with them in the afternoon, read them spiritual books and stories, make ice cream sundaes for them after the evening service and the like).

Third, attend evening worship. If we believe the whole day is the Lord's day, then it ought to be framed with worship. Morning and evening worship in the Reformed tradition is the single most powerful and effective total congregational discipleship program in the history of Christianity. I have never known a family that was faithful in Sunday evening attendance in an evangelical church, that, when the great crises of life came, did not weather the storm and walk in faith, and persevere.

Fourth, memorize the catechisms. It is a proven method. It is simple. It is content rich. It teaches our children the language of Zion, as well as the precious doctrines of the Bible. It increases memory ability and capacity for thinking.

Fifth, worship together as a family at home. Praise, pray, and read the Bible together as a family at home. Why should we do family worship? (1) Because we are stewards to God of our children, whom he has graciously given to us. Ps 127:3 tells us how we are to view them "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD." How will we account to him of the soul-care that we are to give these precious trusts? (2) Because God has commanded us to train our children up in the Lord in the home. As we have already seen in Deut 6:7, God says, "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." (3) Because the home is the seedbed of piety and religion for the church (1 Tim 3:4-5, 12).

The Nature and Content of Family Worship

What should be in family worship? There is no reason to make it complicated, and you really need nothing more than a Bible and a good hymnbook to lead in it. "Song, scripture, supplication" says Jerry Marcellino—that is what should be in family worship.³ That is, the three basic components of family worship are singing, Scripture reading, and prayer, led by the father or head of the household.

"Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God" go the lyrics on one stirring old hymn (Isaac Watts' "Come, We That Love the Lord"). An old proverb says "As we sing, so we believe." So singing is an important component of both family and corporate worship. Do not let this intimidate you if you are not musical. Sing children's songs with the young and favorite hymns with older children (but do not underestimate how young children can pick up hymns, even hard ones – my two-year-old sings "Angels we have heard on high," with its tricky

Latin refrain, flawlessly and on pitch!). If you cannot sing get a tape to help lead your children in singing. Do not forget to sing psalms with them too.

God's word written is at the heart of all Christian worship: private, family, or corporate. Follow a Bible reading plan (many good ones are available, such as Robert Murray M'Cheyne's kept in print by the Banner of Truth Trust). But do not hesitate to utilize solid Bible story books for the very young. Venture into some Scripture memory work. Test your children's knowledge of Bible facts (they may surprise you). But above all, be committed to reading God's word aloud to them.

"Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies" (Westminster Shorter Catechism A. 98). So make sure your family prayer reflects that well-rounded balance of adoration of God, confession of sin, thanksgiving for God's favor and intercession for ourselves and others. Use Scripture as your guide to prayer and lead your family to the throne of grace.

A whole host of practical questions and problems come to mind once we determine to begin family worship. How long should it last? It should be regularly brief, as little as 10 minutes when the children are very young. Gradually, it will run a little longer as they grow older and conversations strike up. Do not kill it by trying to go too long. Pace yourself. Regularity and repetition is the key. When should we do family worship? When it works – morning/breakfast, supertime, or bedtime are the three most common times. What about the obstacles to starting and continuing family worship? Fair question. There are many:

- *A late start:* you have already been married for many years or a parent for many years, and you have never done it before. If this is your situation, be prepared for it to begin with all the ease of pulling teeth without anesthesia. Pray for the grace of perseverance, and do not begrudge your family the jarring sense of change.
- *An unsupportive wife:* your wife does not think it is important or is critical of what you are trying to do or is uncooperative. Woo her to the habit. Indulge her all you can. Refuse to speak sharply to her about her unsupportiveness. Explain it to her. Enlist the prayers and encouragement of your pastors and elders, but make every effort not to shame her outside the family circle.
- *A lazy father:* your husband is indolent and unconcerned, but you really desire family worship. Pray for him in your private devotions. Ask God to change his heart and to make you the most attractive

and nonaggressive advocate for the importance of family worship he will ever meet. Talk to him kindly and respectfully. Explain your desires. Make it easy for him to do. Offer to help him choose passages, hymns, and Scripture prayers. Do not nag. Encourage him to get involved in a male Christian discipleship friendship with a pastor or elder who will help him take up his fatherly and husbandly role. Place a Bible and a hymnal within easy reach of the family dinner table.

- *A resistant audience:* your children are older, unused to the practice, and resistant to it. They hate it, complain about it every day, discourage you no end. Keep it short, explain why you are doing it, and do it anyway.
- *An uncooperative schedule:* your schedule is crazy, husband traveling, kids piled up with activities. Meet consistently and flexibly. Let the wife lead while you are away, but take an interest in planning for it and in talking about it when the husband is back. Call home long distance and do a conference call at family worship time.

There are dozens of potential hindrances: lack of discipline, lack of sense of the importance of family worship, lack of experience of family worship in one's own upbringing, and more. But above all, the enemy is idealism. You have this picture of a Puritan family sitting around the table attentively and reverently reading the whole book of 1 Chronicles at a sitting, singing half the Psalter from memory, and praying for ninety minutes, and then you look around your table and your wife is rolling her eyes, your two-year old is throwing leftover spaghetti around the kitchen, your eight-year old is making faces at her sister, and your teenager would rather do calculus. Do not let the gap between the ideal and the reality stop you! Those inattentive children will grow up and thank you for persevering, and the memories of a father who loved them enough to make that kind of an effort will etch a permanent affection in their hearts.

We have seen at least five pillars for family religion in this essay: corporate worship, morning and evening, together as a family; Lord's Day observance; catechism; spiritual conversation in the normal course of family life and parental example; and family worship. The following is an eloquent and personal plea for this vision by Terry Johnson, the coauthor of this essay.⁴

Family-Based Renewal of Congregational Christianity⁵

When I was a young boy, I walked to my public

elementary school every school day for seven years. After school, I rode my bike to the ball park for my Little League games. Every Sunday we walked a few blocks to church. The recreation park was a little further away than the ball park and a little closer than the school. Scout Hall was behind the school, so we also rode our bikes, or walked to Boy Scout meetings. Life was simple for us kids and our parents. In the suburbs of Los Angeles, the epitome of the commuter city, we lived life within a mile radius of our home. We even walked to the doctor's office.

Most people used to live this way. Before the automobile, everything had to be within walking distance, or at least horse-and-buggy distance. Communities had to develop accordingly. Each neighborhood had its local grocer, clothier, druggist, school, church, and so on. People knew their neighbors because they could not be avoided. One was constantly rubbing shoulders with them as one worked, worshiped, played, ate, and lived in the same area.

I like our cars. I can hardly imagine life without them. But as I was driving to school, work, the store, and a ball game the other day, I kept wondering, Is this really a better way of life? Our city, Savannah, Georgia, like every other community in America, now sprawls. We have big malls, big parks, big hospitals, big medical practices, nice roads in every direction, and nice air conditioned cars in which to drive. But is this a more humanly satisfying way to live?

While driving through town one evening, I noted the remarkable differences between poor and middle-class neighborhoods. The poor neighborhoods are older, more rundown, and yet abuzz with life. Some folks are sitting out on their porches, rocking and talking. Others are walking on the sidewalks. Still others are congregating on a street corner or at a storefront. What do you see in the middle-class neighborhoods? Nothing. Not a soul. Why not? Air-conditioning. In the poor neighborhoods the deprived have no air-conditioning, but do have community. The affluent neighborhoods have air-conditioning, but consequently everyone stays inside, and minimal human interaction takes place. Who then is truly deprived? From air-conditioned offices to air-conditioned cars to air-conditioned houses, the socially impoverished move about, while the economically impoverished, though sweltering, enjoy a rich community experience.

We are technologically superior to previous generations. But are we losing too much in the process? First we walked, then galloped, then rode on rails together. Now we drive, largely with the window up, and go home to hermetically sealed homes, only coming out to take out the trash or grab the newspaper. Once we entertained ourselves at home by reading books aloud. In the 1920s families gathered around the radio. In the 1950s, they gathered around the T.V. Now there is a T.V.

in each room. Computers only make it worse. Once the home was a castle, a place of refuge for the family. When behind its doors, the family conducted its affairs without interruption and without outside influence. Now one can hardly eat a meal or conduct family worship without the phone ringing. Sacrosanct family time is violated daily. Friends and strangers alike barge right into the middle of the family's most private and intimate moments via technology. Again my question is, Is this progress? When does life slow down enough so that we can talk? When do we enjoy our neighborhoods? Where do we experience community? In the last hundred years we have gone from life on a porch with family and neighbors to life in isolation in front of a cathode tube. Is the quality of life improving? Is ours a richer human experience? Frankly, I do not believe it anymore. Call it romanticism. Call it naïveté. Call me a Luddite. We have wonderful toys today. But they have cost us too much. Growing prosperity and technological advancement do not necessarily or automatically mark human progress.

I have labored this point because I believe the church has largely failed to recognize the death of family and community or to compensate for it. Rather than reaffirm traditional practices that build family life and stimulate community, it tends to baptize secular trends that do the opposite. The small neighborhood church gives way to the large commuter church. The friendly country parson is replaced by the suburban CEO/pastor. Older practices such as the family altar and the family pew receive token attention, while new programs are devised that divide families and segregate the ages. In many ways we have become too clever for our own good. We are just as guilty of "chronological snobbery," as C. S. Lewis calls it, as the rest of society. Tried and proven ways of transmitting the heart and soul of the Christian faith to others have been abandoned in favor of exciting, entertaining, novel, but ineffectual alternatives. We pride ourselves in being modern. We look down our noses at previous generations. We have a love affair with the novel and the new. Educational, political, social, and religious fads sweep over us again and again, first possessing the field and all right-thinking people, and then in a matter of months, fleeing to the curiosity shelf in our cultural museums, replaced by yet another untested novelty. The time has come to admit our error and pause to look back, before we again look ahead.

What we hope to demonstrate in the pages ahead is that by returning to the practices of previous generations we may be able to revitalize the family and the church of today. The "ancient paths" of Sunday worship, Sabbath observance, family worship, and catechizing are where spiritual vitality for the future will be found.

The Family Pew

What then is the first key to a Christian family's spiritual health? Though you may not have anticipated our answer, the key is not new. It is not novel. It will not reveal long hidden mysteries, disclose any secret formulas, provide any new techniques, or require lengthy or costly counseling.

What is it? The first and primary key to your family's spiritual health is a commitment to the weekly public worship services of the church. The most important single commitment you must make to ensure your family's spiritual well-being is to regular, consistent attendance at public worship.

Sound far-fetched? I will say it even stronger. I have yet to meet a person for whom it could not be said that all of his problems—personal, marital, familial, or vocational—would not be solved by such a commitment. I do not believe that the person for whom this is not true exists. By saying so, I do not minimize the seriousness of the problems that people face. Rather, I maximize our confidence in the power of the gospel. So I will say it again: we do not know of anyone of whom it could not be said, if only he were in worship week in and week out, fifty-two weeks a year, year after year, his problems would be basically solved.

That public worship is not generally recognized as playing this central role in spiritual development demonstrates the degree to which modern individualism has rotted the core out of our commitment to Christ. How is it, after all, that we receive the benefits of the death of Christ? How is his grace communicated to us? Does it just drop out of heaven? Or are there means? Yes, there are means. What are they? The Shorter Catechism identifies the primary means as follows:

Q. 88. What are the outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?

A. The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

The three primary means are the word ("especially the preaching of the Word," says the Shorter Catechism Q. 89), the sacraments, and prayer. Now ask yourself, where are these three primary means normally operative? Where is the word preached? Where are the sacraments administered? And as for prayer, yes, one can pray in one's closet, but do not forget the special promise of Jesus concerning prayers offered where "two or three have gathered in My name"—no doubt, given the context of church discipline in Matthew 18, a reference to organized public worship (Matt 18:15–20). Jesus said, "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done

for them by My Father who is in heaven” (Matt 18:19). There is a unique efficacy in such public prayers.

When we gather in public worship, we are ushered into the presence of Christ. He is among us (Matt 18:20). We do in worship what we were created to do—offer to God intelligent praise. We become more truly human at that point than at any other of human existence. Just as a boy is more aware of his identity as a son in the presence of his father, or as a husband is more aware of his identity as provider and protector in the presence of his wife, so we are most aware of who we are and what we were created to do as human beings at that point at which we bow in worship before our Creator and Redeemer. We are humbled as we offer to him our praise and adoration. We are cleansed as we confess our sins. We are built up, torn down, and rebuilt again as we submit to instruction by his word (Eph 4:11-16). We are fed and united to the whole body of Christ by the sacraments. Through the bread and cup we enjoy *koinonia* with Christ and one another (1 Cor 10:16). We access His strength through “all prayer and petition” (Eph 6:18) and are thereby enabled to fight the spiritual battles of life.

The public worship services of the church are our lifeline. There we are both purged and fed. There we make soul-saving contact with Christ through His word, sacraments, prayer, and the fellowship of His people. That contact, over the long haul, will change us. It will make us into the kind of people who are able to solve our own problems with the strength that the gospel provides.

The opposite view, that we can prosper spiritually on our own—apart from the public ordinances of the church and the public gatherings of the saints—is foolhardy. No, it is worse than that. It is worldliness—worldly individualism, worldly pride, worldly self-sufficiency.

The metaphor of the church as a body is employed by the New Testament to represent both our union with Christ and mutual dependence: “The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’” (1 Cor 12:21). We need each other: “We who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” (Rom 12:5). We need each other’s gifts (Eph 4:11-16; 1 Cor 12-14; Rom 12). We need each other’s graces (as in the many “one anothers” found throughout the New Testament: love one another, be kind to one another, bear one another’s burdens, etc.) We need each other’s fellowship. So we are warned, “Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together.” The writer to the Hebrews sees the public assembly as the primary place in which the mutual stimulation to “love and good deeds” takes place: “Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near” (Heb 10:24-25).

How does this commitment to public worship relate to the family’s spiritual well being? The effect upon parents is clear enough. Spiritually nourished parents make for better families. But the family pew has more in mind than sanctifying parents. When your children are brought with you into public worship, they too are sanctified. Your children, from their earliest years, will be ushered along with you into the presence of God. They will be brought under the means of grace and will experience the fellowship of God’s people week after week as they mature through childhood. Beyond this, they will sit by you Sunday after Sunday, watching you publicly humble yourself before God and submit to His word. Among their earliest and warmest memories will be those of holding their parents’ hands during church, sitting close to their sides, following along in the hymnal, placing money in the offering plate, and bowing their heads in prayer. Do not underestimate the cumulative effect of this witness upon covenant children. It is considerable, even incalculable.

The key to your own and your family’s spiritual health is remarkably simple. Though there is considerable hype to the contrary, it involves no pilgrimages to sacred places. It requires no week-long or weekend retreats, seminars, or special programs. It depends on no special techniques or novel methodologies. You will not have to spend yet another night out. You will not need to add more meetings to an already frantic schedule. The key is to be found in the regular, ordinary, weekly worship services of the church.

The Lord’s Day

Let’s explore this further. As we have noted, many well-meaning but misinformed leaders in the Christian world would have you running hither, thither, and yon to find the magic formula for spiritual growth. They would have you out every night attending meetings for prayer, study, and fellowship. They thrust before you countless tapes, study books, and methods, techniques, seminars, retreat, and programs, each promising to provide the key to your spiritual well-being and happiness. Our response is—It is not that complicated. Whatever is of fundamental importance for the Christian life has been known in every era and is reproducible in every culture. If a thing is true and necessary, it can be understood and practiced in a primitive, grass-hut civilization, an igloo, and in modern America. This is not to say that the toys of modernity cannot help. We make profitable use of the tapes, videos, telephones, fax machines, and computers. We access the modern means of transportation. But we should not lose sight of the greater reality that all that we need to thrive spiritually may be found down the block at our local evangelical church through its regular ministry and worship. In its failure to recognize this, the church today is little better than the world in unnecessarily contributing to the frenetic pace of modern life.

What can we do? Slow down. Stay home. Quit running mindlessly all over town. Limit yourself. And do this: Commit yourself to the Lord's Day in the Lord's House and little else outside of the home will be necessary for the cultivation of a thriving spiritual life. The Puritans referred to the Lord's Day as "the market day of the soul." Six days a week one buys and sells for the sake of one's body. Sunday however we are to "trade" in spiritual commodities for the sake of our souls. All secular affairs are to be set aside. All Christians, "after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering of their common affairs beforehand," are to "not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts, about their worldly employments and recreations," but also are to be engaged "the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy" (Westminster Confession of Faith, 21.8). The key to consistent attendance at public worship (of which we have spoken above as the key to your spiritual well-being) is a commitment to observing the Christian Sabbath. Or to state it negatively, you will never be able to become consistent about attending public worship until you are convinced that Sunday is not just the Lord's morning, but the Lord's Day.

When the writers of the Westminster Confession created a single chapter entitled "Of Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day," they knew what they were doing. We are the first generation of American Protestants to have forgotten the benefits of the Sabbath command. Prior to the middle of this century, all American Protestant denominations, whether Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, or Episcopalian, were sabbatarian. This was true for over 350 years dating from the establishment of the Jamestown colony in 1607 until the mid-1960s. For generations it was understood that the Sabbath was made for man, for man's benefit (Mark 2:27-28). But once again we have become too clever for our own good. We have crammed our schedules full of activity seven days a week. We have lost our Sabbath rest in the process. What have we given up? Hughes Old writes: "Any attempt at recovering a Reformed spirituality would do well carefully to study the best of the Puritan literature on the observance of the Lord's Day."⁶ How is this so? What is the point?

Essentially it comes down to this. If you are not convinced that the whole of Sunday is the Lord's and not yours, you will not be consistent. You will inevitably allow other matters to interfere. Things will come up. But, if you are convinced that Sunday is the "market day of the soul," then it changes everything. The question of the Sunday services is settled—you will be there morning and evening. That the issue is dead, so to speak, has a wonderfully therapeutic effect. It is like the divorce laws in the pre-no-fault days. Because it was tough to get out of marriage, one tended to work it out and in the process find marital happiness. Eliminating options helps. Because Sunday worship is an inflexible given, everything else has to accommodate it. The fourth commandment tends

thereby to cast its influence over the rest of the week. Life has to be organized around one's Sunday obligations. Shopping, travel, business, yard work, housework, recreation—all must be finished by Saturday evening. Sunday must be cleared of all secular obligations. The blessed consequence is not only that one is free to worship twice on the Lord's Day, but one also enjoys guilt-free, refreshing rest from the concerns and labors of life. I find myself regularly falling asleep about three o'clock in the afternoon with chills of gratitude and pleasure for the rest of the Christian Sabbath. Amazingly, even for preachers for whom Sunday is the busiest day of the week, it is also the most restful.

One can understand why the prophets sometimes speak of the abandonment of the whole of Old Testament religion as "profaning the Sabbath" (Ezek 20:21; 22:8; 23:38). There is a subtlety to Sabbath observance. Because it excludes secular activity, its "holy rest" comes to dominate all of life. The family's week must be organized around its inactivity. Consequently, it can function as a plumb-line, a litmus test for measuring your commitment to God. Will you submit to the lordship of Christ in this tangible way, this way that forces you to organize your life, to prepare, to complete your secular affairs, and devote half of "your" weekend to the things of God? Will you desist "from your own ways, / from seeking your own pleasure, / and speaking your own word" (Isa 58:13)? If you will, you will find time for all the things that really count—time for your soul, time for rest, time for the family, and time throughout the week for everything else.

Family Worship

Now we come to the heart of our concern. During the nineteenth century, as Sunday schools began to be introduced in North America, resistance was encountered in a number of traditional Presbyterian churches. Their argument? That as the Sunday school was established, it would result in parental neglect of their responsibility for the spiritual training of their children. Were they right? Cause and effect would be difficult to determine. But if they were, it would be an example of the law of unintended consequences that is typical of the modern world. Our intentions are wonderful. We mean to improve life by the creation of labor-saving devices, the development of new methods, and the provision of supplementary resources. But are we careful to examine the net effect of our innovations? Do they, in the long run, really help? If the consequence of the proliferation of Christian meetings has been the neglect of daily family worship, then the net spiritual effect of those meetings has been negative.

Let us assume for a moment that we all understand that the Bible commands that we conduct daily worship in homes. This was certainly the conviction of previous generations. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches

that worship is to be conducted “in private families daily” (21.6), and the Church of Scotland included in its editions of the Westminster Standards a Directory for Family Worship, its General Assembly even mandating disciplinary action against heads of households who neglected “this necessary duty.” Indeed, many of our Reformed ancestors believed in and practiced family worship *twice* daily (following the pattern of the morning and evening sacrifice). Family worship, they all assumed, was vital to the spiritual development of both parents and children.

But today, one does not hear much about family worship. No, instead we seem to have replaced it with small-group activities. These are the key, we hear again and again, to spiritual growth. Everyone needs to be in a small group. Or, it might be said, everyone needs to be in a discipleship group. Perhaps even, one needs to be involved in both. Maybe one needs to be involved in both, plus the church’s prayer meeting, plus visitation, plus the choir, plus committee meetings, and so on. You see my point already, I assume. Protestantism has become all but silent on the issue of family worship, a near universal practice in the recent past, and replaced it with meetings that take us out of the home and away from the family. Not only have we given up a proven method of transmitting the faith to the next generation, one that has a built-in format for Bible study, prayer, and singing, but we have done so for alternatives that add to our already hectic pace of life and take us away from our spouses, children, and neighbors.

I like small-group Bible studies. I will get more involved with them at a later stage in life, when my children are not so young and my wife and I are able to attend them together. But in the meantime we have a discipleship group, and if you are a parent with children at home, so do you. Everyday little eyes are watching. Sooner than we realize, they become aware of discrepancies between what we say and what we do. The family, in this respect, is the truest of all proving grounds for authentic Christianity. Parents either practice what they preach or become the surest means yet devised by man or devil of sending their children to hell. Daily family worship forces the issues of Christian piety before the family every twenty-four hours. It forces parents in the roles of preachers, evangelists, worship leaders, intercessors, and pastors. Who is adequate for this? No one, or course. He who would attempt to be so must necessarily be forced to his knees. Children growing up with the daily experience of seeing their parents humbled in worship, focusing on spiritual things, submitting to the authority of the word, catechizing and otherwise instructing their children will not easily turn from Christ. Our children should grow up with the voices of their fathers pleading for their souls in prayer ringing in their ears, leading to their salvation, or else haunting them for the rest of their lives.

If your children are in your home for eighteen years, you have 5,630 occasions (figuring a six-day week) for family worship. If you learn a new psalm or hymn each month, they

will be exposed to 216 in those eighteen years. If you read a chapter a day, you will complete the Bible four-and-a-half times in eighteen years. Every day (if you follow our format) they will affirm a creed or recite the law. Every day they will confess their sins and plead for mercy. Every day they will intercede on behalf of others. Think in terms of the long view. What is the cumulative impact of just fifteen minutes of this each day, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, for eighteen years? At the rate of six days a week (excluding Sunday), one spends an hour-and-a-half a week in family worship (about the length of a home Bible study), 78 hours a year (about the length of the meeting hours of seven weekend retreats), 1,404 hours over the course of eighteen years (about the length of the assembly hours of forty week-long summer camps). When you establish your priorities, think in terms of the cumulative effect of this upon your children. Think of the cumulative effect of this upon *you*, after forty or sixty or eighty years of daily family worship—all this without having to drive anywhere.

Catechism

Finally, we commend the catechizing of children, a grand old Protestant tradition that regrettably has fallen on hard times. Few catechize their children any more. For some, the word itself sounds archaic or like something the Catholics used to do. In actual fact, it is an ancient practice reaching all the way back to the earliest centuries of the church. It was revived in the sixteenth century by the Protestant Reformers so successfully that even the Roman Catholics began to mimic them. Catechisms were written by Luther, Calvin, Bullinger, and nearly all the major Reformers. In keeping with this tradition, the Westminster Assembly produced two catechisms, the Shorter Catechism for children, and the Larger Catechism for adults. The former has been the most popular and widely used in the English language since the mid-seventeenth century.

Should you catechize your children? Yes, you should, and for a number of reasons:

1. It is a tried and proven method of religious instruction. For generations Protestants have successfully transmitted the content of the Christian faith to their children through catechisms. This was taken so seriously in Puritan New England that a child could be removed from the parents’ custody if they failed to catechize him or her! Admission to the Communion table in Scotland for generations was preceded by the successful recitation of the Shorter Catechism. It was not uncommon in nineteenth century Presbyterian homes in America that the Shorter Catechism would be completed during a child’s sixth year. According to John Leith, 17,000

Presbyterian youth memorized the Shorter Catechism and had their names published in the *Christian Observer* in 1928, the year in which he achieved that feat. Education pedagogues come and go. Here is a method that works.

2. It is simple. It does not require additional resources. Any parent can catechize any child using no more than a small booklet. (In the process, the parent may learn more than the child!) But since the Bible places the responsibility of Christian education squarely upon Christian parents (Deut 6:4-9, Eph 6:1-4), here is a method easily adopted by parents.
3. It is content rich. The old catechisms are rich reservoirs of theological, devotional, and practical content. Fully 40 percent of the Shorter Catechism is concerned with ethics (the law of God) and nearly 10 percent with prayer. God, man, sin, Christ, faith, repentance, and so on are all given succinct, accurate definitions. Children nurtured on the catechism will be formidable theologians in an age of irrationalism and general mindlessness.
4. Memory is a faculty that should be developed. One might liken memory to a muscle—it grows when exercised and shrinks when neglected. J. A. Motyer, former Principal of Trinity College in Bristol and lecturer in Old Testament and Hebrew, once said that he noticed a significant change in the capacity of his students to learn Hebrew declensions. What was typically learned upon first hearing by students in the 1930s and 40s was the labor of a week in the 1970s and 80s. Obviously, it is a great asset in life to have what we call a “good memory.” What has often not been understood is that having such is more a matter of work than nature.
5. Memorizing logical, structured, conceptual material like the Shorter Catechism actually contributes to mental development. J. S. Mill, no friend of orthodox Christianity, claimed in his famous essay *On Liberty* that the Scots become mental philosophers of the first order through their study of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. Douglas Kelly, noting the work of Scottish theologian T. F. Torrance, states that “children brought up on the Catechism have a greater capacity for conceptual thinking (as opposed to merely pictorial thinking) than those who never memorized it.” It provides matter (theological matter!) for building the mental framework within which rational thought can take place. While not superior to the memorization of Scripture, this does explain why the catechisms are to be memorized alongside of Scripture. Anglo-Catholic essayist, J. A. Froude, who spoke of “the Scottish peasant as the most

remarkable man in Europe,” traced the dignity, intellect, and character of the typical Scottish peasant up to that time “as largely flowing from the memorization of the Shorter Catechism.”⁷ Let educational fads come and go. Concentrate on a method that has stood the test of time.

A Simpler Life

Now pull together the various threads. Instead of spiritual concerns contributing to an already frantic pace of life, the family should commit itself to the time-proven, biblically based means of spiritual nurture—public and family worship. In these settings great psalms and hymns are sung, children are catechized, sins are confessed, and the Scriptures are read and taught. Instead of running all over town, children and parents heading out in every direction, commitments are focused upon the Lord’s Day services and daily worship at home. Life is simplified! Not only will we be using means that are more fruitful than the modern alternatives, and more likely to result in the salvation and sanctification of covenant children and parents alike, but the pace of life will slow, allowing more rather than less time for families to be together. Public worship, family worship, the Lord’s Day, and catechizing are the ancient paths in which we will find rest for our souls. ■

¹This article was originally published as, and has been slightly adapted from, chapter thirteen (“A Call to Family Worship”) in *Give Praise to God: A Vision for Reforming Worship*, ed. Philip Graham Ryken, Derek W. H. Thomas, and J. Ligon Duncan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003) 317-338. Used by permission of P & R Publishing.

²Excellent helps on the subject of family worship are Jerry Marcellino, *Rediscovering the Lost Treasure of Family Worship* (Laurel, Miss.: Audubon, 1996); Terry Johnson, *The Family Worship Book* (Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 1998); and Douglas F. Kelly, “Family Worship: Biblical, Reformed, and Viable for Today” in *Worship in the Presence of God*, ed. David Lachmann and Frank J. Smith (Greenville: Greenville Seminary Press, 1992) 103-129. A number of classic works have been reprinted: Cotton Mather, *A Family Well-Ordered* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, 2001); J.W. Alexander, *Thoughts on Family Worship* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1981); and B. M. Palmer, *The Family in Its Civil and Churchly Aspects* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1981). See also Kerry Ptacek, *Family Worship* (Greenville: Southern Presbyterian Press, 1994) for an annotated copy of the old Westminster Directory of Worship.

³Marcellino, *Rediscovering* 11-12

⁴See Johnson, *The Family Worship Book*, especially the superb historical resources that he provides, including the great Thomas Manton’s famous letter to the readers of the Westminster Confession and catechisms, and the Westminster Directory for Family Worship.

⁵In the following section we are not promoting congregationalism as a form of government, though what we advocate by the phrase “congregational Christianity” should draw complete agreement from those committed to that church order. Rather, we mean, precisely, that Jesus’ intention was for his disciples to be nurtured in the context of a healthy local church. That is, explicitly, at least part of what the

Great Commission means by “baptizing and teaching” the disciples that are made among the nations. Jesus is saying in effect, “nurture these converts by word and sacrament into growing disciples in the context of a mutually accountable local gathering of believers.” Personal Christianity is to grow in the nursery of congregational Christianity. So when we speak of the renewal of congregational Christianity, we are acknowledging that our individualized Western Christianity needs to be “re-congregationalized.”

⁶Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship That is Reformed according to Scripture* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984) 37.

⁷See Douglas F. Kelly, “The Westminster Shorter Catechism” in *To Glorify and Enjoy God: A Commemoration of the 350th Anniversary of the Westminster Assembly*, ed. John L. Carson and David W. Hall (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994) 101-126, esp. 123-125 for his comments, referenced here and above, on the impact of memorization of the catechism.

What We Shall Be: A Look at Gender and the New Creation

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Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2 NKJV)

These words from the pen of the Apostle John reflect something of the mystery surrounding the future state of resurrected believers in the new creation. Because “what we shall be” has not yet been made fully apparent, many questions about that future state remain. One such question concerns the matter of gender: Will resurrected believers be male and female in the new creation? Some, perhaps, will view this question merely as fodder for idle reflection, a question whose answer is of little import beyond the satisfaction of a nugacious curiosity about the nature of things to come. However, in this age of “plastic sexuality” and confusion regarding the nature of gender and gender roles, the question takes on new significance.¹ If, on the one hand, gender differences are but temporal attributes that will be eliminated in the eschaton, then the egalitarian/constructionist view that gender differentiation is an accidental (as opposed to essential) attribute of human nature gains credence. It makes sense for the community of faith to seek the elimination of gender roles in an effort to approximate the coming eschatological reality. On the other hand, if it can be shown conclusively that gender differentiation will be preserved in the new creation, the complementarian/essentialist view of the fixity of sexual identity and gender roles is affirmed. It becomes incumbent upon the community of faith to embrace and, indeed, to celebrate the gender distinctives and roles established for humanity by its benevolent Creator.

Which view is correct? Is it even possible to determine “what we shall be” in the new creation with a reasonable degree of confidence, especially given that, as John Frame has accurately observed, “Scripture doesn’t *explicitly* address this question [of whether believers will be male and female in the new creation.]”² Clearly, in the absence of explicit special revelation, an element of uncertainty necessarily accompanies all inquiries into the nature of things so far beyond the realm of temporal human experience. Uncertainties notwithstanding, however, it is my contention that enough is *implicit* in the biblical record to permit careful students of Scripture to develop conclusions on the matter with reasonable confidence. This is not to imply that careful scholars have always reached the same conclusions in their analyses of the biblical evidence. Indeed, history records that virtually every logically possible view of gender and the new creation has found proponents among the thinkers and theologians of the church. However, as this article will show, one position, namely, that gender distinctions will be preserved in the new creation, singularly emerges as logically consistent and genuinely tenable for those who embrace the evangelical faith.

The objectives for this article are: 1) to identify and evaluate views of gender and the new creation that have been proposed within Christendom across the centuries; and 2) to present evidence that gender distinctions will persist in the new creation. As a preface to the discussion that follows, four foundational presuppositions warrant special mention at this point. The first of these is the divine inspiration, trustworthiness, and ultimate authority of the biblical record. To acknowledge the authority of Scripture here is to tacitly affirm that the question

of gender and the new creation is theological in nature—philosophical, sociological, ecclesiastical, and ethical ramifications notwithstanding. Second, this article accepts as a given the presupposition that the promised bodily resurrection of all true believers in Christ will be an eschatological reality. The doctrine of bodily resurrection is so fundamental to the historical Christian faith that it scarcely requires comment. However, it is well to note here that within this presupposition there inheres the understanding that the human body is, in some sense, of eternal import in the divine scheme of things. Third, this article accepts as a given that the *imago Dei* is the locus of human worth in the sight of God and is possessed by male and female in equal measure. It follows, then, that men and women possess ontological equality in the sight of God, and further, that functional equivalence cannot be the *sine qua non* of equality. Functional roles cannot be determinative of individual human worth. The fourth and final presupposition might be described as the ubiquity of individual sexual identity. By this I mean that the differences between male and female extend beyond the accoutrements of human physiology to less tangible (but no less real) aspects of human existence.³ Gender is a function of more than physiology; it involves the whole person.

Gender Differentiation in the New Creation: The Possibilities

Will there be gender differentiation in the new creation? Across the centuries, theologians and thinkers have proposed a variety of answers to the question. In reality, however, only four alternatives obtain as logically possible: resurrected saints in the new creation necessarily are *asexual*, *androgynous*, *monosexual*, or *sexual* in their essential nature. These four alternatives provide a convenient taxonomy for identifying and evaluating the views that historically have been set forth.

Resurrected Saints as Asexual

The view that resurrected saints will be asexual in the new creation holds that the process of transformation that occurs concomitantly with the resurrection completely does away with all sex characteristics. There is no distinction between male and female, not because the differences have become *blurred*, but because they have been *removed*. They are, ostensibly, an imperfect and no longer useful remnant of the “old” creation. In Christ, old things have passed away and all things have become new (cf. 2 Cor 5:17). The concept of “gender” does not become merely irrelevant in the new creation; it becomes meaningless.

On the face of it, this view has support both historically and scripturally as scholars, both ancient and modern, have found scriptural bases for embracing this position. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150–215), one of the earlier writers to use

language suggesting support of the view, offered that “souls, themselves by themselves, are equal. . . . *neither male nor female*, when they no longer marry nor are given in marriage.”⁴ Athanasius (c. A.D. 296–373) expressed a similar view when he observed that “‘in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the Angels;’ and in Christ Jesus it shall be ‘a new creation,’ and ‘*neither male nor female*, but all and all in Christ.’”⁵ And Zosimus (d. A.D. 418), bishop of Rome, in attempting to explain the transition that occurs at the death of believers, wrote that “the soul quits the body and the angels receive it, but we see the shape of the soul as a shape of light, perfect in all the body *apart from the distinction of male and female*.”⁶ A more recent proponent of the view, Albrecht Oepke, suggests that a “*full removal of sexual distinction*” awaits resurrected believers in the eschaton.⁷

Those who hold that believers will be asexual in the new creation usually find scriptural support for their view in three principal texts: (1) 1 Cor 6:13, (2) Gal 3:28, and (3) the account of Jesus’ exchange with the Sadducees concerning the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33; Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–38). Because they are significant for the larger question of “what we shall be” in the new creation, they merit attention at this point in the discussion.

First Corinthians 6:13 has been cited by some as offering evidence that distinctions of gender will be eliminated in the new creation. For example, Clement of Alexandria argued from this text that, just as the stomach and the desire for food are destined to be “destroyed” in the resurrection, so, too, are distinctions of gender, for in much the same way, sexual distinctions tend only to inflame sexual desire.⁸ Oepke is another who cites this verse as the basis for his assertion that gender distinctions will be removed. Although both are correct insofar as the apostle declares the eventual destruction of the human mechanisms responsible for sinful appetites, they fail to appreciate that within this text lies tacit affirmation that sexual distinctions remain in the new creation. Daniel Heimbach’s comments on this passage express the point well:

Here [in 1 Cor 6:13b–15] by divine inspiration Paul links sexual sin involving the bodies we have now with the purity that must and certainly will characterize the bodies we will have after the resurrection. Our sexual organs themselves, in Paul’s bold language, are said to be “members of Christ” and thus are parts of our future resurrection bodies—bodies that in their entirety God will raise from the dead—bodies that in their entirety God wants us to use now for His glory and that someday He will also perfect for His glory through the resurrection. *The logical connection Paul makes here between our pre- and post-resurrection bodies makes absolutely no sense . . . unless human sexual identity does in fact continue*

to characterize human embodiment on both sides of the resurrection.⁹

In other words, the human body—including its sexual “members”—is created to glorify God, both in the present age and in the world to come. Only by understanding the eternal importance of the body is it possible to understand Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor 6:13–15. When careful exegesis and analysis is applied to this text, it weakens considerably the support that proponents of this view of gender in the new creation claim to find therein.

Another text cited in defense of asexuality in the new creation is Gal 3:28. This verse, universally appropriated by egalitarians as the textual linchpin of their argument for functional equality between the genders, is employed by some to argue the ultimate dissolution of all distinctions of gender in the new creation. Reflections of Gal 3:28 can be seen in the statements of Clement of Alexandria, of Athanasius, and, less directly, of Zosimus, as they declare the eventual elimination of gender distinctives. But is this a valid application of this text? If Gal 3:28 does, in fact, proclaim the removal of gender distinctions to be part of the Christian ideal for the present age, then there is ample reason to suppose that gender differences, both functional and physiological, will be eliminated in the new creation. However, it is not at all certain that this is a valid application of the text. Only by isolating the text from its soteriological context does it become possible to read into this passage the idea that gender distinctions will be dissolved in the new creation.¹⁰

Of even greater import in the question of gender and the new creation are the several pericopae recounting Jesus’ confrontation by the Sadducees on the matter of the resurrection. Indeed, one can say with confidence that no other passage of Scripture is cited more frequently or *prima facie* addresses more directly the question of gender in the eschaton than these parallel texts. Here, the Sadducees (who denied the possibility of the resurrection¹¹) approach Jesus with a conundrum: There was a woman who, widowed seven times, had married seven brothers in succession according to the Mosaic provision for Levirate marriage (cf. Deut 25:5 and Gen 38:8ff.). Although each marriage was consummated, no offspring were produced. Whose wife, then, would she be in the resurrection? The Sadducees’ obvious intention here was to call Jesus’ teaching of the resurrection into question by demonstrating that the whole notion of any sort of meaningful life after death produces too many paradoxes and contradictions with scriptural principles to be taken seriously. Jesus, of course, was not deceived by the Sadducees’ feigned desire for instruction. Rather, he asserted that their culpable ignorance of Scripture and of the power of God had caused *them* to be deceived (Matt 22:29; Mark 12:24). He then dealt with their challenge by demonstrating effectively that their fundamental assumptions about the possibility and

nature of life after death were flawed. “For in the resurrection,” Jesus said, “they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven” (Matt 22:30, NKJV).

A cursory reading of the pericopae would seem to indicate that Jesus therein declares the end of sexual distinction in the resurrection, and, as the above references to Clement and Athanasius suggest, some ancient writers have reached that conclusion as well. However, a cursory reading of a biblical text sometimes fails to appreciate much that the text has to say. Careful exegesis of these texts reveals that, far from proclaiming the end of sexual distinction in the new creation, these pericopae provide some of the strongest biblical evidence that gender distinctions will remain throughout eternity.

Jesus answered the Sadducees by saying that in the resurrection, “they neither marry (γαμοῦσιν) nor are given in marriage (γαμίζονται).” The pairing of the two verbs indicates that both males and females are in view. Although the verb “marry” (γαμέω) can be used with reference to women (Mark 10:12; 1 Cor 7:8-9), in this context it would refer to a man marrying a woman, since it is paired with “given in marriage” (γαμίζω) which would refer to a daughter given in marriage by her father.¹² Far from saying that there will be no distinctions of gender in the new creation, Jesus said in essence that those who are male in heaven will not take a wife, nor will those who are female be given in marriage. New marriages¹³ will be no longer necessary because there will be no more death. The need for procreation will have ceased. Had Jesus intended to communicate to his questioners or his disciples that gender distinctions would no longer exist in the new creation, he could have done so easily by saying that in the resurrection the categories “male” and “female” simply do not apply.¹⁴ Instead, he used gender-specific terms that make sense only if distinctions of gender remain.

Some proponents of the asexual view might concede that, though Jesus’ comments on marriage do not eliminate the possibility of gender in the resurrection, his comparison of resurrected saints with the angels does, in fact, eliminate that possibility. The assumption here, of course, is that spiritual beings (angels) are genderless beings. If resurrected saints are like the angels, the argument goes, they also must be genderless beings. This argument, though plausible, is weak. It is weak, first, because there is little biblical evidence to suggest that angelic beings are genderless. To the contrary, when Scripture speaks of angels they are virtually always referred to as male.¹⁵ However, even if it is granted that angels are genderless, it does not follow that resurrected saints also are genderless. Jesus said only that they are “as the angels.” But in what sense? Certainly, there is a sense in which resurrected believers are *unlike* the angels as well. How then, are we to understand this comparison? Since Jesus’ declaration that resurrected saints are “as the angels” is offered in juxtaposition to his comment about marriage, it is reasonable to conclude that it is in this

sense that Jesus wanted his hearers to understand the similarity between angels and resurrected believers. All that can be said with confidence here is that resurrected believers, like angels, do not enter into marriage. One might legitimately infer from this comparison that believers do not procreate in the resurrection, since the best scholarship indicates that angels, as created rather than procreated beings, do not procreate. However, there is little else pertinent to the discussion at hand that can be deduced from Jesus' teaching about the similarity between resurrected believers and angels. In light of the clear distinctions made between the experiences of males and females in the eschaton through the pairing of the verbs used ("marry" and "given in marriage") it is exegetically unsound to find asexuality in this passage.

Thus, though there is *prima facie* evidence to suggest the asexual view, careful examination of the several principal texts reveals that the view has little scriptural support. Indeed, some of the passages actually lend substantial support to the opposing view. The question arises, then, as to how some scholars, ancient and modern, have come to embrace the view. Though it is not possible to answer that question with certainty, it seems likely that a few flawed presuppositions are responsible for leading proponents of the view to embrace it as biblical. The thought of early proponents of the view was shaped in an age when rigorous asceticism was considered to be among the essential virtues of the Christian faith. Sexual desire and every expression of it was considered sinful, even within the context of marriage. Sexuality was generally believed to be a "necessary evil" that, once its procreative function had been fulfilled, should be thoroughly suppressed. The husband should think of his wife as a sister. Marriage was for the purpose of procreation alone. With such a view of marriage and sexuality, it is easy to see why sexual differences would be viewed negatively and thought to have no place in God's perfect new creation.

Of course, modern proponents of the view are unlikely to agree with the notion of sexuality as either "necessary" or "evil." Rather, their support of the asexual view seems to be driven by a fundamental belief that equates sameness with equality, dissimilarity with inequity. Equality and equity are prized above all. Surely, they reason, a just God would eliminate all inequity in the eschaton—especially the ontological and functional dissimilarities associated with gender. For those who fully embrace such a worldview, any interpretation of the biblical texts that suggests gender distinctions will remain eternally is simply not given serious consideration.

When it is seen that there is little solid scriptural support for the asexual view and, moreover, its proponents must rely on flawed premises to support their argument, the asexual view of gender and the new creation must be rejected. Not all who reject this view, however, are prepared to accept the idea that gender distinctions will remain in the new creation. Rather, the same presuppositions that lead some to accept the asexual view

lead others to adopt an androgynous view of gender and the new creation.

Resurrected Saints as Androgynous

The androgynous view of gender and the new creation, like the asexual view, minimizes the place of gender in the resurrection. However unlike the asexual view, which maintains that resurrected saints are neither male nor female, the androgynous view maintains essentially that resurrected saints are at once both male and female. Sexual distinctions become blurred to the point of irrelevance as each resurrected individual manifests traits of masculinity and femininity with heavenly perfection.

The androgynous view, like the others, has both ancient and modern proponents—though certainly not all could be considered either Christian or orthodox. For example, we learn from Hippolytus (c. A.D. 170–236), in his *Refutation of All Heresies*, that the Naassene Gnostics taught of an "everlasting substance above, where . . . there is neither female or male, but a new creature, a new man, which is hermaphrodite."¹⁶ Although the source of this idea in Gnostic thought remains unclear, the concept of the androgynous man appears very early in Christianity. Clement, bishop of Rome (fl. A.D. 96), asserted that "man is a compound of two mixtures, the female and the male."¹⁷ Several centuries later, the Persian sage Aphrahat (fl. A.D. 345) offered, "They shall not marry wives there, nor shall they beget children; nor shall there the male be distinguished from the female . . ."¹⁸ The idea also appeared in Talmudic Judaism. One Rabbinic tradition held that the biblical account of the creation of man as "male and female" (Gen 1:27) was a reference to an androgynous Adam from whom the rest of the human race emerged.¹⁹ This notion of an androgynous Adam gave rise to the concept of an "androgynous ideal" to which the human race should ascribe and would in the eschaton attain.

Although some contemporary scholars have seized on this concept of an androgynous ideal, perhaps in an attempt to bolster the case for egalitarianism, the position is problematic both Christologically and hermeneutically. Indeed, the Christological ramifications alone are sufficient to render the view untenable. If, as the proponents of this position argue, androgyny is truly the Creator's ideal, reflected in the creation of the first "man," Adam, could Jesus Christ, the second Adam and the express image of the eternal Godhead be otherwise? Certainly not. To cede the androgyny of the first Adam is to cede the androgyny of Jesus Christ. Graham Ward, however, argues to that end in his chapter entitled "Bodies: The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ."²⁰ Here, Ward's central contention is that through progressive "displacements" of Jesus' body (e.g., the transfiguration, Eucharist, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension) one is led to a view of Christ's body that is progressively less male and progressively more androgynous.²¹ If he could demonstrate

conclusively that the resurrected and ascended Christ was in fact translated into an androgynous state, proponents of the androgynous view of gender in the new creation would have an immeasurably strengthened case.²² Ward fails, however, because the Christ he presents *could not* be Christ the Savior, and *is not* the Christ of Scripture. As Bruce Ware convincingly demonstrates, the maleness of Christ was *essential* to his redemptive mission:

Jesus' being male was in fact theologically, Christologically, and soteriologically significant, despite what others have asserted. For reasons ranging from the nature of the Trinity itself, to his role as the second Adam, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David, the Son of Man, and the Son of God, Jesus simply had to be a man. . . . his being male was by theological necessity.²³

And, we might add, if the maleness of Christ *was* a theological necessity, it *remains* a theological necessity for the eternal Son of God, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 4:8).

If the concept of an androgynous ideal is untenable Christologically, it is equally untenable hermeneutically. Judith Gundry-Volf, in exploring possible connections between a nascent sexual asceticism among Corinthian believers (1 Cor 7) and the Pauline declaration that in Christ "there is neither male nor female" (Gal 3:28),²⁴ explores the idea promoted by Wayne Meeks and others that "the Adam-Androgyne myth [Gen 1:27] lies behind Gal 3:28."²⁵ If it could be shown that Gal 3:28 is in fact a reference to this Adam-Androgyne myth, then the verse would become pivotal in the argument for an androgynous new creation. However, as Gundry-Volf has successfully demonstrated, the textual evidence does not support that conclusion. Accepting, for the sake of argument, that the "neither male nor female" is part of an early baptismal tradition, she writes

[If] the baptismal tradition did understand Genesis 1.27 in this way and wanted to communicate that the androgynous image is restored in baptism, it would not have *negated* the phrase 'male and female=masculo-feminine' of Gen. 1.27. As a matter of fact, however, the tradition draws on Gen. 1.27 to make a denial about what that text says: 'There is no "male and female"'. The only way to read this early Christian declaration as an affirmation of androgyne is to say that it sees *already in Gen. 1.27* the 'fateful division' of humanity narrated in Gen. 2.21-22, which is now overcome in Christ. But to say this is to saw off the limb on which one is sitting, for then Gen. 1.27 no longer expresses the ideal of an originally androgynous humanity which could have inspired the early Christians who were seeking to define

Endzeit in terms of *Urzeit*. The whole interpretation of Gal. 3.28c as expressing the androgynous ideal falters once we take seriously 'There is no "male and female"' as an allusion to Gen. 1.27 and, in some sense, its *negation*.²⁶

Even if a connection between Gen 1:27 and Gal 3:28 exists (and Gundry-Volf believes that it does),²⁷ it *negates* rather than affirms the possibility of an androgynous ideal toward which humanity moves.

Thus, when the textual and theological evidence is considered together, there remains little to commend the view that resurrected saints will be androgynous in the new creation. To the contrary, the weight of evidence suggests that the position is indefensible. Moreover, since the view that we will be asexual in the resurrection is likewise untenable, it must be removed from serious consideration as well. Of the four logically possible positions, the two that minimize the place of gender in the new creation must be rejected, leaving for consideration only the views that make allowance for sexual identity in the new creation, namely, the view that sees the company of resurrected believers as monosexual, and the 'sexual' view which holds that the company of saints will comprise those who retain their sexual identity as male or female in the new creation.

The Company of Saints as Monosexual

The view that resurrected saints will be monosexual holds that the whole company of resurrected believers will be all of one gender in the new creation. Strictly speaking, in this view gender distinctions are neither removed nor blurred, because gender identity remains, and in fact is strengthened and perfected. It is simply that one gender (or the other) is conspicuously absent in the new creation. Of course, the question of *which* gender will be the heavenly norm instantly arises. Will we all be male in the new creation, or will we all be female?

Proponents of the monosexual view divide over the question of "which gender." Some have argued that all resurrected saints will be female in the new creation, while others have held that resurrected saints would be male. Drawing on the bridegroom/bride metaphor for the eschatological relationship between Christ and his church, Eric Johnson suggests one sense in which all will possess a female identity. He concludes that, "Spiritually speaking, when resurrected we shall together all be as 'female.' In that day . . . we will all be fulfilled through perfect union with our husband [Jesus Christ]."²⁸ Historically, however, it seems that few have given much serious consideration to the idea that all would be female in the eschaton, opting instead for an all-male company

of saints in the new creation.

Many of the better-known examples of the view are found in early Gnostic literature. In her contribution to *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judeo-Christian Tradition*, Kari Vogt offers examples of expressions of the view from early Gnostic and Christian writings. The following well-known excerpt from the *Gospel of Thomas* is representative:

Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male (*hout*), so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male (*hout*) will enter the Kingdom of Heaven."²⁹

Vogt holds that this and other, similar Gnostic references are metaphorical depictions of spiritual progress from a lower to a more perfect state of being. If she is correct, then such passages have little bearing on the question at hand, even as exemplars of the view. But are there examples in early Christian literature of a more literal change in the eschaton? There are frequent instances of Christian writers accusing an opponent of embracing that position, but few, if any, seem willing personally to be identified with the view.³⁰ For example, the monk Rufinus (c. A.D. 345–411) accused Jerome (c. A.D. 345–420) of teaching that in the new creation women will be turned into men, citing the following from Jerome's commentary on Ephesians:

Let us men then cherish our wives and let our souls cherish our bodies in such a way as that the wives may be turned into men and the bodies into spirits, and that there may be no difference of sex but that, as among the angels there is neither male nor female, so we who are to be like the angels may begin here to be *what is promised that we shall be in heaven*.³¹

Rufinus continues his accusation against Jerome:

If the wives are to be turned into men, according to this suggestion of yours, that there is to be no difference of sex whatever, by which I suppose you mean that the female sex will entirely cease, being converted into the male, and the male sex will alone remain; I am not sure that you would have the permission of the women to speak here on behalf of their sex. But, even suppose that they grant you this, then with what consistency can you argue that the male sex is any longer necessary, when the female is shown not to be necessary? For there is a natural bond which unites the sexes in mutual dependence, so that if

one does not exist, there is no need of the other.³²

In other places Jerome convincingly demonstrates that Rufinus' charge against him is unjustified on this point.³³ However, what this interaction, and others like it, demonstrate is that the notion of a real, somatic change of gender in the new creation was an idea that received considerable attention in the first half of the first millennium *anno Domini*.

Given that the idea of a monosexual company of saints was being considered in the early years of Christianity, is there scriptural evidence that might be found to support such a view? One of the passages figuring prominently in early discussions of the view is found in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. In the fourth chapter of the letter, Paul describes the goal of Christian maturity as coming "to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *to a perfect man*, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13, emphasis added). Here, interpreting *perfect man* ἄνδρα τέλειον in an almost corporeal sense, some have concluded that the soteriological and eschatological ideal includes maleness. A similar hermeneutic has been applied to Rom 8:29 where Paul speaks of believers as being "predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." Since the Son of God clearly is male, they reason that "becoming male" must be an aspect of that conformity to his image. Another passage where this line of reasoning might be applied is Phil 3:20–21 where Paul writes that "the Lord Jesus Christ . . . will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body." Similarly, the Savior's statement that in the resurrection, believers will be "like the angels"³⁴ could be interpreted to include maleness, given the observation that angelic beings are always depicted as male in Scripture.

Do these passages provide scriptural support for the monosexual view? Most modern interpreters applying sound exegetical principles would be hesitant to find in these verses any reference to "maleness," and much less to "becoming male" in the eschaton. And they are not alone in their hesitancy, as early interpreters rejected that interpretation as a valid application of these verses.³⁵ If being conformed to the image of Christ involves transformation of one's physical features to match those of Jesus Christ, there seems to be no reason to limit that change to gender. Why not require a transformation of race as well? One could as easily make a case for "becoming Jewish" in the resurrection if such a material hermeneutic is to be applied.

It is clear enough that, though intriguing, the monosexual view of gender in the new creation, like the asexual and androgynous views, must be rejected on the grounds that there is inadequate scriptural support. Only one view, then, remains as *logically* possible: the view that resurrected believers will retain their sexual identity in the new creation. However, few can—or should—adopt a view on

an issue of such import simply by default. Certain questions must be answered: What, precisely, is the sexual view? Does it have historical support? Is it truly defensible scripturally and theologically? We now turn our attention to finding answers to these important questions.

Gender Distinctions Remain

The view of resurrected saints as sexual³⁶ in the new creation holds that gender identity is eternally fixed *and* will remain in the new creation. Unlike the asexual and androgynous views, which minimize gender to the point of irrelevance, the sexual view acknowledges gender as an eternally significant dimension of the created order, and as an eternally significant aspect of personhood. Unlike the monosexual view—which also emphasizes the eternal significance of gender—the sexual view celebrates rather than depreciates gender distinctives. While it acknowledges that the mortal, earthly bodies of believers will undergo a radical transformation of form and function in the new creation, it denies that those changes will either erase or obscure gender distinctives or identities. Gender was part of God’s original creation and is of God. Therefore, gender is in no sense incompatible with His eschatological new creation.

Like the three previous views of gender in the new creation, the sexual view has both ancient and modern proponents. A few examples from history will provide evidence that the view has found acceptance within the Christian community since the early centuries of the church. One of the first of record to address the question was Justin (c. A.D. 100–165). In his apology against those who denied the possibility of a real bodily resurrection for believers, Justin affirmed that the bodies of both males and females would rise entire, with organs of reproduction intact.³⁷ Jerome, likewise in response to those who denied the resurrection, declared in very certain terms that “if the woman shall not rise again as a woman nor the man as a man, there will be no resurrection of the dead.”³⁸ Jerome did, of course, believe in the reality of the resurrection and, accordingly, believed that distinctions of gender would be preserved in the new creation. Consider also the view of Rufinus, who, in his unequivocal declaration that “in the resurrection even lawful intercourse will no longer exist between the sexes,”³⁹ actually affirmed that differentiation of the sexes remains. Finally, consider Augustine. Augustine probably addressed the question of what we shall be in the new creation more directly and extensively than any of the other fathers of the church, yet his position on gender in the new creation is expressed succinctly in the following excerpt from *The City of God*: “He . . . who created both sexes will restore both [sexes].”⁴⁰ Clearly, the view that resurrected believers will retain their respective genders in the new creation has had able proponents since the early centuries of the church. But what of modern times? Does the view continue to find support among

contemporary scholars and exegetes? It does indeed, though the number of contemporary scholars that have written recently on the question of gender in the new creation is somewhat limited. A brief look at several proponents of the view will provide some orientation to the state of contemporary studies on the subject.

John Frame, cited earlier in this article for his observation that Scripture does not explicitly answer the question of gender in the new creation, nonetheless indicates that he is “inclined toward an affirmative answer”⁴¹ and proceeds to provide evidence from Scripture to explain why he is so inclined. Similarly, Daniel Heimbach, in one of the more extensive treatments of the subject to date, affirms that gender distinctives will remain in the new creation.⁴² In addition to offering philosophical and ethical support for the view, Heimbach presents four distinct lines of biblical evidence to suggest that believers will maintain their gender identities in the eschaton. Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, also affirms the view that believers will be male and female in the new creation. Although Grudem here does not address the question as directly as some others, his position is clear: “[It] is appropriate to think that our resurrection bodies . . . will have the characteristics of youthful but mature manhood or womanhood forever.”⁴³

We see, then, that the sexual view of gender in the new creation is well represented by notable apologists, theologians, and students of Scripture from both past and present. One could argue, however, that at least some of the other views had notable proponents as well. Simple recognition that one view has enjoyed a degree of acceptance in some quarters does little to help establish the correctness of one view above the other. Of far greater importance is the question of evidence. Is there sufficient evidence for the sexual view of gender in the new creation to distinguish it as the more theologically probable among the logically possible choices? It is to that end that we now turn our attention.

Evidence that Gender Distinction Remains

In the discussion of the asexual, androgynous, and monosexual views, above, several passages of Scripture have been identified as central to the question of what we shall be in the new creation. A review of the major passages will be helpful at this point. First Corinthians 6:13 was thought by some to support the view that all sex characteristics would be erased in the new creation. Closer analysis of the passage, however, revealed that, far from denying sexual distinctives in the new creation, the verse made sense only if gender distinctions remained. Similarly, Gal 3:28 has been interpreted by some as declaring the end of gender in the new creation. Judith Gundry-Volf has shown, however, that the phrase “no male and female” should not be construed to

affirm an androgynous (or sexless) ideal toward which society moves. Indeed, when the verse is properly interpreted in its soteriological context, it shows that both male and female have access to salvation and thus would take part in the eschatological new creation. Ultimately, Gal 3:28 says more to *affirm* the place of gender distinctives in the eschaton than to deny them.

Of the various passages of Scripture thought to speak to the question of gender in the new creation, none are more significant than those that relate Jesus' interaction with the Sadducees on the question of the resurrection (Matt 22:23–33; Mark 12:18–27; Luke 20:27–38). Here, some have alleged, Jesus declared the end of gender. In reality, however, Jesus affirmed that gender would remain. For, as Augustine observed

[Jesus] affirmed that . . . [gender] should exist by saying, 'They shall not be given in marriage,' which can only apply to females; 'Neither shall they marry,' which applies to males. There shall therefore be those who are in this world accustomed to marry and to be given in marriage, only there they shall make no such marriages.⁴⁴

Thus, the passage that often is thought to provide the strongest scriptural evidence *against* the view that gender distinctions will remain, in fact argues most persuasively *for* it.

When taken together, the weight of scriptural evidence favors the sexual view of gender in the new creation. But is the view theologically sound? Are there theological principles that support, perhaps even require, the sexual view? Two related yet distinct theological principles when taken together, argue persuasively that sexual distinctions must remain in the new creation.

Gender Central to Human Identity

Consider, first, that *gender is central to human identity*. In creating humanity "male and female" (Gen 1:27), God established gender as the first and most elemental dimension of human identity. More than just a social or behavioral construct, gender is at the very heart of who we are as human beings. Even Eric Johnson, who denies that gender is of any ultimate importance,⁴⁵ says that "for one's membership in the kingdom it is hard to imagine any more important distinguishing human characteristic. . . . It is as males and females that we exist, and we are called upon to listen to the Word of God as males and females in order to find out who we are individually and in our social relations."⁴⁶

Gender is more than just an accidental attribute of human nature, peripheral to the human experience. Gender

is an essential part of who we are. Accordingly, the *essential* nature of gender perhaps is best described in terms of the *imago Dei*. Scripture teaches that both male and female are, in some sense, created "in the image of God" (Gen 1:27), and thus bear the divine image. On this there is general agreement throughout the Christian community.⁴⁷ The question of precisely what the *imago Dei* entails, however, is a different matter. Even a cursory survey of the various views of the divine image would take us far afield. However, some consideration of the *imago Dei* as it touches the subject of gender is in order.

One view maintains that male and female together constitute the image of God. They do so, however, in such a way that God is not fully "imaged" by either the male or female alone. Both male and female together are necessary to properly reflect the divine image. Some proponents of this view, perhaps following Barth, find the locus of the divine image in the male-female marriage relationship. Other proponents of the view find the locus of the image in the characteristic traits of the genders. According to this version of the view, neither masculinity nor femininity alone is sufficient. Only when both masculine and feminine traits are taken together is the divine image properly constituted, according to this view. No doubt many will find one of these versions of the view appealing. It does, after all, emphasize the unique contribution of female bearers of the divine image, as well as the need for mutual respect between the sexes. However, significant difficulties are associated with this view.

It is generally accepted that it is the *imago Dei* that separates human beings from the rest of creation. Humans are qualitatively different from the animals, not because of biology, but because human beings alone bear the image of God. It is the image of God that makes us human. However, if man alone or woman alone bears only part of the image of God, it necessarily follows that either alone is not fully human. Clearly, the ethical and social ramifications of this position are enormous. Of much greater import, however, are the christological and consequent soteriological difficulties that inhere in this view. If both genders are required to fully constitute the image of God, then Jesus Christ who was and is and remains male, is incapable of bearing the whole image of God. Both the deity and humanity of Christ stand in jeopardy under this view, as does the salvation of those He came to save.

Is there, then, an alternative? Some might suggest that it is best to understand gender as a non-issue where the image of God is concerned. But this, too, is problematic. It is problematic, not only because it would introduce an element of circular reasoning into our argument, but most especially because it fails to account for an obvious and important characteristic of God, namely, that He is in some sense a gendered Being. The fact that consistently throughout Scripture, the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is

referred to in masculine terms simply cannot be ignored. If one maintains a high view of the inspiration of Scripture, he or she is compelled to acknowledge that the way the Scriptures present God and His character must be consistent with the way He desired to make Himself known. Neither accommodation to culture nor anthropomorphic imagery can account for the consistently masculine portrait Scripture presents of God. Gender must be, in some sense, characteristic of God.

Are we to conclude, then, that because God is masculine that *masculinity* is essential to the image of God? Are males the only true bearers of the divine image? Is there a solution? As previously discussed, Scripture requires that any valid view of the *imago Dei* be able to account for it as borne by male and female alike. Clearly, then, neither masculinity, nor femininity, nor any commingling of the two can legitimately be identified with the essential image of God. The difficulty disappears, however, with the understanding that *gender itself* is an aspect of the essential image of God. To be created in God's image, then is to be created with gender. Since both males and females possess gender to an equal degree, both are able to bear the divine image of God. Both are fully human. And both enjoy ontological equality in the sight of God.

Because gender is part of the *imago Dei*, gender is an essential aspect of human identity. Even in this age of "plastic sexuality," sex-change operations, gender-identity disorders, and homosexual marriage, gender is a part of being human that cannot be ignored. Gender is at the heart of human physical identity. As Augustine observed, "What is there which more intimately concerns a body than its sex?"⁴⁸ But gender is much more than physiology. It is at the heart of the identity of the soul. Tertullian, for example, taught that souls were assigned gender simultaneously with the body:

The soul, being sown in the womb at the same time as the body, receives likewise along with it its sex; and this indeed so simultaneously, that neither of the two substances can be alone regarded as the cause of the sex.⁴⁹

Tertullian's position presents some difficulties, but it does reflect the ubiquitousness of gender in the human constitution. Ultimately, however, whether Tertullian was correct in the details of his assertion is irrelevant. Why? Because, as Heimbach has observed, in creating Adam and Eve God "created embodied spirits. God did not first create nonmaterial beings and then in a second, separate action place them into material bodies. Rather, each was created whole in a single divine act of creation."⁵⁰ Human beings, then, are sexual, gendered beings, and it is as sexual, gendered beings that we are known.

Resurrection Requires Holistic Continuity

It has been shown that gender is central to human identity. Second, consider that *resurrection requires holistic continuity*.⁵¹ If the Christian concept of resurrection is to be in any sense meaningful, some degree of continuity must exist between what we *are* and what we *shall be*. Scripture provides a number of examples of postmortem appearances (1 Sam 28:11–15; Matt 17:1–3, 27:52ff.; Luke 16:19–31; Rev 11:1–12). In each case, John Frame has observed, "those who appear after death . . . appear similar to their earthly forms."⁵² In other words, they were recognizable in and by their corporeality. Likewise, as Frame again has observed, "Jesus' resurrection body also resembled the form He bore on earth, even down to the wounds he bore in His hands and side (John 20:25, 27)."⁵³ He was recognizable in and by his bodily form. As Günter Thomas suggests, "Christ's body becomes the visible medium for his memory. The cross remains inscribed in the body of the Resurrected One."⁵⁴ By showing that in the life after death, persons are recognizable by their physical appearance, the scriptural evidence suggests something we have alluded to already, namely, that the bodies of resurrected saints will be recognizable because of a somatic continuity between their pre- and postresurrection forms.

The basis for this continuity lies in the nature of resurrection itself. The biblical concept of resurrection is much more accurately described as a transformation of that which *is*, than as a re-creation of that which *was*.⁵⁵ In the resurrection bodies are changed, not replaced (1 Cor 15:51ff.),⁵⁶ for as Justin maintained, "the resurrection is a resurrection of the flesh which died."⁵⁷ Because there is a resurrection of the very body that died, somatic continuity is maintained.

Admittedly, there is much that will change in the resurrection. Present concepts of space, time, and matter are inadequate to allow full comprehension of *how* we shall be "what we shall be." Nancy Murphey is probably correct in her assertion that "the language of the present aeon is incapable of describing a resurrected body."⁵⁸ Many of the changes that resurrection will bring to the body—for example, the removal of deformities, the elimination of disease, and so forth—are restorative in nature. Resurrection will "fix" that which has gone wrong. Other changes are designed to fit believers for kingdom life. Because the world to come is vastly different from the world in which we now live, Murphey notes, "our physical composition has to be unimaginably different."⁵⁹ Our bodies must be changed, for they "must provide all that is necessary to carry forward the moral and social relations that constitute the kingdom of God."⁶⁰ However, as sweeping as resurrection changes may be, *identity*, of which the body is an integral part, remains unchanged. And this is as it must be. Why? Because, as Murphey observes, "participation in the postresurrection kingdom depends on one's being the same person before and after the resurrection." The eschatological

hope of life in the new creation is meaningless, so far as human beings are concerned, if continuity is not maintained.

Being the same person, however, involves more than somatic continuity. Because human beings are “embodied souls,” the requirement for continuity applies equally to the material and nonmaterial aspects of man. Resurrection necessarily requires continuity of the personality as fully as it requires continuity of the body. Lampe, referencing Paul’s theology of resurrection, states the point well:

In Paul’s holistic perspective . . . the reality of salvation is not *another* reality apart from the outer everyday life, not just a religious reality for the *inner* life of a person. It grasps and embraces the whole of human existence, the entire personality. This principle is also applied very consistently to the eschatological concept of a postmortem life: this life will not only involve *parts* of a human being, a soul or a spirit, but the entire personality, *including* his or her bodily existence.⁶¹

Although in this excerpt Lampe is arguing for *bodily* resurrection on the basis of a holistic view of salvation, he nonetheless demonstrates effectively that the eschatological hope of resurrection applies to the *whole* person. The continuity of resurrection is a continuity of body *and* soul. Resurrection thus involves continuity of the whole of personal identity.

The connection between principles one (1) and two (2) is now apparent. We have seen that resurrection requires holistic continuity (i.e., continuity of the whole of personal identity). We have seen, also, that gender is a central feature of personal identity. It follows, then, that resurrection necessarily must include continuity of gender. To put it another way, if gender is a central part of who we *are*, an integral part of our human identity, then the biblical, Christian understanding of resurrection virtually requires that our resurrected bodies preserve our respective genders.

Conclusion

In the preceding discussion, the four logically possible views of gender and the new creation have been defined and analyzed. Each view was found to have proponents and, to some extent, to claim to have scriptural support. On closer analysis, however, the scriptural evidence for the asexual, androgynous, and monosexual views was found to be wanting. The only view that could be shown to have genuine biblical support was the sexual view, which maintains that gender distinctions will remain in the new creation. Moreover, an examination of the theological evidence for the view revealed that the Christian

understanding of resurrection virtually requires that gender be preserved in the eschaton. Gender is so much a part of *who we are* that it is nearly inconceivable that our eschatological transformation would blur, erase, or change a feature so central to our understanding of ourselves as members of the human race and as bearers of the image of God.

In the absence of an *explicit* scriptural declaration of “what we shall be,” an element of uncertainty persists. Clearly, there is room for more discussion and research. Objections need to be answered. Social, ethical, and theological ramifications of the view need to be explored. As consensus is reached on the question of “what we shall be,” divisions no doubt will occur over the questions of “what we shall do” and “how we shall relate” as male and female in the new creation. Until the view can be thoroughly vetted in both church and academia, dogmatism should yield to scholarly reserve. Still, the evidence that gender will remain in the new creation is convincing and strong. We conclude, then, with Augustine: “*They seem to be wiser who make no doubt that both sexes shall rise.*”⁶² ■

¹See Daniel R. Heimbach, “The Unchangeable Difference: Eternally Fixed Sexual Identity for an Age of Plastic Sexuality,” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002) 275–81.

²Emphasis added. John M. Frame, “Men and Women in the Image of God,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991) 232.

³Of course, this premise does not enjoy universal acceptance, particularly among feminists and egalitarians. Later in the article, I present arguments that support my presupposition, but a thorough defense of this fundamental concept lies beyond the scope of this article.

⁴Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 6.12 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 2:503. Emphasis added. Hereafter, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* will be indicated by the abbreviation ANF.

⁵Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 2.21.69 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols. (repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 4:386. Emphasis added. Hereafter, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, will be indicated by the abbreviation NPNF².

⁶Zosimus, *Narrative of Zosimus Concerning the Life of the Blessed* 14 (ANF 9:223). Emphasis added.

⁷Albrecht Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964) s.v. “γυνή.” Emphasis added.

⁸Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.6 (ANF 2:389–90).

⁹Heimbach, “The Unchangeable Difference,” 285. Emphasis added.

¹⁰For a thorough evaluation of Gal 3:28 as the principal proof text for the egalitarian position, see Peter R. Schemm Jr., “Galatians 3:28—Proof-text or Context?” *Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* 8/1 (Spring 2003) 23–30.

¹¹See Matt 22:23; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27. Precisely what the

Sadducees believed about the fate of the soul after death is a matter of some debate. Josephus (*Ant.* 18.1.3) wrote that “the doctrine of the Sadducees is . . . that souls die with the bodies.” Davies and Allison, however, suggest that the Sadducees “were probably not . . . genuine annihilationists, but in harmony with many OT texts, rather believed in a shadowy existence in Sheol.” W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, ed. J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, and G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997) 223.

¹²See Kurt Niederwimmer, “γαμέω, et. al.,” in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 235-38; and “γαμέω” and “γαμίζω” in Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). For similar pairings of the two verbs, see Matt 24:38; Luke 17:27.

¹³Strictly speaking, Jesus did not say that the institution of marriage would not exist in heaven. He said, in effect, only that there would be no new marriages.

¹⁴It should be noted that Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 3.9, 3), quoting from the no longer extant Gospel according to the Egyptians, reports that Jesus said precisely that in responding to a question about the coming of his kingdom.

¹⁵To say that angels are identified as “male” is not to imply that they necessarily possess the physical characteristics of human males, i.e., male genitalia.

¹⁶Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.2 (*ANF* 5:49). This “hermaphrodite” man, rather than being male or female, in his postmortem life emerges as a *tertium quid* of sorts, at once being both male and female, yet being neither male nor female.

¹⁷Clement of Rome, *The Clementine Homilies* 20.2 (*ANF* 8:339) Note, however, that Clement’s statement goes only so far as to affirm that man is basically androgynous and does not indicate that man will be androgynous in the resurrection. Indeed, in another place (*Homilies* 19:23), he seems to suggest that maleness is the eternal condition of humanity. It could be argued that Clement viewed the world in terms of a male/female duality with the female principle having to do with the present world, and the male having to do with the world to come (*Homilies* 3.22).

¹⁸Aphrahat, *Select Demonstrations* 22.12 (*NPNF*² 13:406).

¹⁹See Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) s.v. “Woman.”

²⁰Graham Ward, “Bodies: The Displaced Body of Jesus Christ,” in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward (London: Routledge, 1999) 163–81.

²¹“I wish to argue that, since none of us has access to bodies as such, only to bodies that are mediated through the giving and receiving of signs, the series of displacements or assumptions of Jesus’s body continually refigures a masculine symbolics until the particularities of one sex give way to the particularities of bodies which are then male and female.” Ibid. 163.

²²See Phil 3:20–21.

²³Bruce A. Ware, “Could Our Savior have been a Woman? The Relevance of Jesus’ Gender for His Incarnational Mission,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood* 8/1 (Spring 2003) 31–38.

²⁴Lit. *there is not male and female* (οὐκ ἐνὶ ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ). The major Greek text families are all in agreement regarding the “not . . .

and” construction of this phrase.

²⁵Judith M. Gundry-Volf, “Male and Female in Creation and New Creation: Interpretations of Galatians 3:28c in 1 Corinthians 7,” in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moisés Silva, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 100 (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994) 102. Note that ‘myth’ is used here in a technical rather than pejorative sense.

²⁶Ibid. 103.

²⁷Ibid. 102.

²⁸Eric L. Johnson, “Playing Games and Living Metaphors: The Incarnation and the End of Gender,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40/2 (June 1997) 285. In fairness to Johnson, it should be noted that he qualifies this statement in a footnote that reads as follows: “This need not imply that our resurrected bodies will be gender-neutral. Though there is little relevant Scriptural material, we would seem warranted in concluding that our resurrected physical forms will have continuity with our preresurrection bodies. . . .” Ibid.

²⁹As cited by Kari Vogt, “‘Becoming Male’: A Gnostic and Early Christian Metaphor,” in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Oslo: Solum Forlag, 1991; reprint, n.p.: Fortress, 1995) 170.

³⁰Vogt concludes that Clement of Alexandria held to a more concrete view of the eschatological change from woman to man on the basis of his language in *Strom.* 6.100.3 and *Strom.* 4.132.1. I freely grant that it is difficult, at best, to determine the true position of Clement on this point. He, Origen, Athanasius, and others use language that seems to suggest first one view and then another. Clearly, a thorough analysis of their respective positions is beyond the scope of this article. It is my opinion, however, that Clement of Alexandria and Athanasius are more accurately identified with the view that resurrected saints are asexual in the new creation. Vogt is probably correct in her observation that Origen “spiritualizes . . . the category of sex” to the extent that “the individual human being’s real sexual appurtenance is of an inner nature” (Vogt, “‘Becoming Male’” 176–77). Origen does not seem especially concerned to answer the question of gender identity as we have framed it in this discussion.

³¹Rufinus, *Apology* 1.23 (*NPNF*² 3:447). Emphasis added.

³²Rufinus, *Apology* 1.24 (*NPNF*² 3:447).

³³See Jerome, *To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem* 31; *Letter to Eustochium* 108.23; *Letter to Theodora* 75.2.

³⁴See Matt 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:36.

³⁵Augustine, for one, rejected the interpretation of those who from these verses concluded “that women shall not rise women, but that all shall be men” in the resurrection. Augustine, *City of God* 22.17 in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, ed. Philip Schaff, 14 vols. (repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 2:495–96. Emphasis added. Hereafter, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, will be indicated by the abbreviation *NPNF*¹.

³⁶It should be noted here that the sexual view *does not* imply that there will be sexual intercourse or any other “sexual activity” (as the term is commonly used) in the new creation. Neither does it *necessarily* imply that resurrected bodies in the new creation will have members that are either equivalent or analogous to male or female genitalia, reproductive organs, etc.

³⁷Justin, *Fragments of the Lost Work of Justin on the Resurrection* 2 (*ANF* 1:294–95).

³⁸Jerome, *Letter to Eustochium* 108.23 (*NPNF*² 6:208).

³⁹Rufinus, *Apology of Rufinus against Jerome* 1.8 (*NPNF*² 3:438).

- ⁴⁰Augustine, *City of God* 22.17 (NPNF¹ 2:496).
- ⁴¹Frame, “Men and Women in the Image of God” 232.
- ⁴²Heimbach, “The Unchangeable Difference” 275–89.
- ⁴³Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 831. Emphasis added.
- ⁴⁴Augustine, *City of God* 22.17 (NPNF¹ 2:496).
- ⁴⁵Eric Johnson, “Playing Games” 281.
- ⁴⁶Ibid. 280.
- ⁴⁷Although the question of whether woman, too, was created in God’s image has been hotly debated in ages past, few contemporary interpreters, if any, deny that women as well as men bear the image of God.
- ⁴⁸Augustine, *City of God* 5.6 (NPNF¹ 2:88).
- ⁴⁹Tertullian, *Treatise on the Soul* 36 (ANF 3:217).
- ⁵⁰Heimbach, “The Unchangeable Difference” 282.
- ⁵¹Some degree of *discontinuity* is required as well, lest the idea of ‘resurrection’ become moot. Central to the Christian concept of resurrection is the idea of transformation (1 Cor 15:12ff.). If what we *shall be* is not in some sense radically different from what we *are*, then it is hardly justifiable to speak of what takes place as ‘resurrection’. As Lampe has observed, “‘Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable’ (1 Cor 15:50). Whoever dies and ‘is with Christ’ is ‘not in the flesh anymore’ (Phil 1:23–24). Therefore, the spiritual body of the resurrected is something ‘unnatural,’ that is, something beyond the possibilities inherent in the present creation.” Peter Lampe, “Paul’s Concept of a Spiritual Body,” in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 110.
- ⁵²John Frame, “Men and Women in the Image of God” 232. Admittedly, there is limited correlation here with the resurrected bodies of the new creation, since prior to the resurrection of Christ, who is “the firstborn from the dead” (Col 1:18), none had as yet received their glorified resurrection bodies. However, it is reasonable to assume that if preresurrection saints were recognizable by their corporeal form, their resurrected and glorified bodies likewise would be recognizable in their heavenly corporeality.
- ⁵³Ibid.
- ⁵⁴Günter Thomas, “Resurrection to New Life: Pneumatological Implications of the Eschatological Transition,” in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 264.
- ⁵⁵Cf. Rom 8:11, Phil 3:21, 1 Cor 15:37.
- ⁵⁶Grudem, *Systematic Theology* 834.
- ⁵⁷Justin, *Fragments of the Lost Work of Justin on the Resurrection* 10 (ANF 1:298).
- ⁵⁸Nancy Murphey, “The Resurrection Body and Personal Identity: Possibilities and Limits of Eschatological Knowledge,” in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, Robert John Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 204–5.
- ⁵⁹Ibid. 207.
- ⁶⁰Ibid.
- ⁶¹Peter Lampe, “Paul’s Concept of a Spiritual Body,” 105.
- ⁶²Augustine, *City of God* 22.17 (NPNF¹ 2:496). Emphasis mine.

The Essence of the Veil: The Veil as a Metaphor for Islamic Women¹

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Fatima is a fifty-three year old woman living in Damascus, Syria. Married, with six children, her day is busy with family responsibilities, grandchildren, household chores, and errands. But before she leaves the privacy of her home on any outing, she slips a baggy overcoat over her clothing, regardless of the temperature outside. Carefully covering her hair with a large scarf, she checks her reflection in the mirror, grabs her purse, and heads out the door.

Noor is a woman living in Tehran, Iran. Only twenty-eight years old, she already has four young children. She wishes she had the freedom that Fatima enjoys, however limited it may seem to others. Noor must veil herself in a *chador*, a large piece of fabric that covers her from head to toe, whenever she appears outside her home, which is rarely. Since the penalty in Iran for even a slight violation of Islamic dress is twelve months in prison and possible flogging, she avoids public places (as do most women).² Confined within the walls of her home, her only outings are occasional trips to the market and to the local mosque, where she joins the other women who are sequestered in separate quarters from the men.

However restrictive Noor's dress may be, it is preferable to that of her cousin Nadia, who married a strict Muslim from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) when she was only seventeen. According to UAE law Nadia must wear an *abaya*, a full-length coat; the *burqa*, a face mask made of stiff fabric; and gloves that cover her arms to her elbows.

Then there is Leila, a twenty-five year old single woman living in her native city of San Diego, California. With

a graduate degree from the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), Leila is the image of the successful, well-educated twenty-first-century woman, with a bright career ahead of her. Yet Leila, who was raised in a moderate Muslim home, has begun to cover her hair with a scarf and wear loose clothing in the traditional Muslim fashion when she appears in public. Having seriously reexamined her faith, she chooses to veil herself as a sign of her devotion to Islam.

Despite the vast diversity in their lives, all of these women "veil" themselves in obedience to the *Qur'an* and Islamic law. To some degree, most Muslim countries adhere to Islamic law, which requires women to cover their heads and often their entire bodies in public. Westerners may be surprised to learn that Muslims such as Leila, who live in secular countries where no veil is required, wear one anyway. These women do not see the headscarf as repressive or restrictive. Rather, it is viewed as a sign of their identity and their devotion to the Prophet Muhammed and his teachings.

The Meaning of the Veil

To understand Muslim women, we must grasp the importance and meaning of the veil and other pieces of traditional Islamic clothing. There is great diversity in the Islamic community worldwide, which is easily seen if you look at a map of the world. The Middle East and much of Africa consists of Muslim countries, and the largest Muslim population is in Southeast Asia. Europe and North America both have significant Muslim populations, including many

converts. Although regional customs and traditions are influential in women's lives, many factors contribute to a remarkable unity among Muslim believers worldwide. The dictate of the *Qur'an* regarding veiling is one that almost all hold in common. The practice of veiling goes far beyond local mores, cultural perceptions of beauty, or even legal requirements.

The use of the veil has a long history in the East and was used by women years before the Islamic rise to power. Centuries before Muhammed, a veil signified that a woman was in the king's harem. The isolation of wealthy upper-class women, signified by their veiling was common in classical Greece, as well as in the Byzantine Empire, Persia, and India. Veiling became accepted among the followers Muhammed primarily because it was a sign of wealth and position. The veil became accepted as the norm around the tenth century and has moved in and out of fashion since.³

The first followers of Muhammed wore traditional Arab dress. As time progressed and the *Qur'an* was applied to practical aspects of life, women began to cover their heads out of respect to the Prophet and his commands. It became an act of religious obedience. Now the veil is considered obligatory for most devout Muslim women. It is seen as a reflection of one's faith, purity, and adherence to Islam, an identification worn with honor.

With few exceptions, most women in Muslim countries are required to wear some form of Islamic dress. In the West, Muslim women wear the veil usually by choice, although those who do so are viewed with suspicion or pity. Most American women are genuinely puzzled as to why any woman who lives in their neighborhood and works in their community would choose to wear an unnecessary headscarf or other head covering. To Western women, the scarf symbolizes repression and discrimination. To most Islamic women, it symbolizes devotion. Many have dared wear it even where it is outlawed, as in Turkey and Tunisia. The veil expresses their return to Islamic values. Understanding the deeper meaning of the practice of veiling should help us better understand and appreciate Muslim women who may be friends and neighbors. Rather than pity or fear a veiled woman, we should respect her in this choice and appreciate the long history that stands behind it.

Hijab in the Qur'an

Hijab is the general term used to describe the dress and veiling customs of Islamic women. *Hijab* comes from the Arabic word *hajaba*, which means "to hide from view."⁴ The literal meaning of the word is "curtain." In its strictest sense, *hijab* refers to the scarf or veil worn over the head to cover the hair. In most Islamic countries, it is the minimum covering required for all women, including girls as young as nine years

old. The *Qur'an* instructed Muhammed's followers on the proper way to address the Prophet's wives: "If you ask his wives for anything, speak to them from behind a curtain. This is purer for your hearts and their hearts" (surah 35:33).

This "curtain" was supposedly meant to be a protection against the sexual temptations that Muhammed believed would inevitably occur should men and women intermingle. He apparently believed that any contact between men and women would inevitably result in illicit sexual relations or at least lead to impure thoughts: "If a man and woman are alone in one place, the third person present is the devil," he said. This conviction is clearly seen in Islamic law and customs throughout the Muslim world.

Muhammed left similar instructions for female believers other than his wives:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that they should not display their beauty or ornaments except what they must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex. (surah 24:31)

From this verse, the practice of veiling has evolved into the head and shoulder coverings and loose clothing that will not attract attention to a woman's body. The intent of veiling is to hide the woman's body and/or face to avoid attracting male attention. Because of this directive, devout Muslims consider veiling one of the Prophet's commands and a sign of a woman's adherence to the *Qur'an*: "Veiling has become a measure of a woman's honor, dignity, nationalism, and devotion to Islam."⁵

Just as Christians base their beliefs on Scripture, Muslims believe the *Qur'an* is the ultimate authority on life. Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is to be studied in the original Arabic, which ensures the purity of the Prophet's words. There are no cultural modernizations or translations of the *Qur'an*, though the ulema (scholars) have provided translations with side-by-side Arabic text. Therefore the directives on veiling are taken literally rather than set in a historical context. Veiling is not considered a mode of dress of *past* cultures but an instruction for women in the past, present, and future.

Because the *Qur'an* is considered to be without error and cannot be criticized or defiled in any way, in some

countries donning the *hijab* is considered the sixth pillar of Islam—especially in societies that observe *shari'a* law.

Shari'a Law

Understanding the authority of *shari'a* law gives a perspective from which to view the veiling and dress of Muslim women. All details of life, including modes of dress, are addressed in one of three sources of Islamic law: the *Qur'an*; the *Hadith*; and *shari'a* law. Of the three, *shari'a* law is the most specific regarding women's dress. This code of law is based on the *Qur'an*, the *Hadith*, and the work of Muslim scholars throughout the early centuries of Islam. It is applied as a civil law code to the most obscure areas of life. This volume of laws is best understood as a religious code for living, encompassing every aspect of life from governmental law to personal dress codes to family life. Along with *shari'a* descriptions of acceptable dress are the *fatwas*, legal opinions by Muslim scholars on interpreting a law in specific situations. Religious Muslims believe that *shari'a* law describes the highest form of Islamic life, as laid out in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*. Though *shari'a* law is expected to be part of the conscience of devout Muslims, often it is also formally instituted as the legal code of Islamic states. Sometimes the law is strictly enforced, as in Saudi Arabia. In other countries it is more loosely interpreted, such as in the more open-minded Malaysian society.⁶ However it is enforced, *shari'a* governs all areas of life, with severe penalties for disobedience.

Shari'a law is a concept foreign to most Westerners. Muhammed saw little, if any, difference between the political and faith expressions of Islamic belief. Where *shari'a* law is implemented, there is no separation of state and religion. The religious law is the civil law. H. A. R. Gibb writes, "For the early Muslims there was little or no distinction between 'legal' and 'religious.' In the *Qur'an* the two aspects are found side by side, or rather interwoven one with the other, and so likewise in the *Hadith*. . . . The meshing of law and religion results in the belief that the law is divinely inspired and immutable."⁷

It logically follows that the belief that women should be covered would be the law of the land. Contemporary veiling practices are a response to interpretations of the *shari'a*, which gives women a specific set of garments referred to as "lawful dress."⁸ The term "lawful dress" is rather general and can be seen in the various styles of *hijab* adhered to in Islamic cultures.

Under societies practicing strict adherence to *shari'a* law, women can be shot for random violations, as shown in the video "Inside Afghanistan: Behind the Veil," which was broadcast over the Cable News Network (CNN) during the 2002 war in Afghanistan. In this film, an undercover woman reporter secretly documented the plight of women under the

oppressive Taliban. Covered with a thick veil and a small grille for her eyes, she found life impossibly difficult. Even if she accidentally showed her face or ankles, she could have been arrested.⁹ This may be an extreme example, but similar practices are common in the most conservative Islamic countries, such as Iran and the Persian Gulf states. A woman who does not conform to the local standard of *hijab* is likely to be punished severely. Worse, she brings shame on her family in the eyes of her community in a culture where honor is tightly interwoven with the virtues of modesty and purity. The standards extend from dictates about wearing the *hijab* to laws regulating behavior toward men, however innocent it may be. Often a woman is forbidden even to look at a man other than her husband or an immediate family member.

"Honor depends on a woman remaining chaste; should she be violated in any way, the men of the family risk being seen as weak perhaps even being ostracized."¹⁰ Here is a crucial point in understanding the predicament of Muslim women. The reputation of families rests on their shoulders. Even if a woman is completely innocent of any wrongdoing, she bears the shame when sexual misconduct occurs.

It is from this core idea that "honor killings" take place. In her book *Nine Parts of Desire*, author Geraldine Brooks tells of interviewing a young Palestinian woman who'd had a love affair with a young doctor. She became quite concerned for her life, fearing that she might become the victim of an "honor killing" by her father or younger brothers. Fortunately that did not happen, but when she attempted to protest this horrid practice with the help of Muslim women's rights advocates, she met with total resistance. According to Brooks, about forty Palestinian women a year are victims of this type of killing, which is believed to remove the shame of adultery from the family.¹¹ Most killings take place in rural villages, where the majority of residents are uneducated and live in poverty. One of the reasons that honor killings are more easily documented in this area is because, under Israeli occupation, murders are more likely to come to the attention of civilian police.¹² A number of Muslim women are speaking against this barbaric practice, such as Riffat Hassan, an activist who founded International Network for the Rights of Female Victims of Violence in Pakistan. An Islamic theologian, she effectively speaks for women's rights, especially regarding honor killings. Hassan courageously appeared on the ABC news program *Nightline* in February 1999 to address this "misogynistic" practice.¹³ Although the extreme application of *shari'a* is not common in every Islamic country, it does occur.

Certain aspects of the *shari'a* law institutionalize women's oppression and have been a central concern of women's movements in the Arab world. The ability of men to divorce their wives without cause and with little penalty, the vesting of ultimate child custody with the father and his family, and the permitting of polygyny are all stipulations of the *shari'a* still in

force in most Arab countries.¹⁴

An example of this gender inequality is found in the law regarding rape in Pakistan. Women who are raped are charged with “adultery or fornication” known as *zina*. To prove that there was truly a forced rape and not just consensual fornication, the victim must produce four honorable Muslim males who witnessed the actual act. Of course, this is impossible, so the perpetrator cannot be punished. The fault for the crime is charged to the victim, who has confessed to unlawful sexual relations just by alleging that a rape occurred.¹⁵ For the woman, the suffering extends beyond the physical violation to the intense shame and reproach of society and her subsequent isolation due to the stain on her family name.

Prescribing *hijab* is the Islamic law’s attempt to protect women from such troubles. Because sexual assaults are relatively common in Islamic societies, one can see why women might want to hide their faces and bodies to avoid male attention of any sort.

The Manifestations of Modesty

It is difficult to overstate the Islamic emphasis on female chastity, modesty, and social order to avoid sexual perversion. The virtue of veiling modesty shown in Qur’anic verses about covering is of paramount importance. It is the basis for all *hijab*. However, the practical application of “modesty” can be subjective. Some interpret the *Qur’an* to call for a simple head covering, as worn in Egypt, Morocco, and the more moderate Muslim countries. The *hijab* and the *jilba*, similar to a caftan, are a common ensemble there. On the other hand, the most extreme form of *hijab* was recently seen in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, where women were required to wear the *burqa*, a shapeless form that covers the body from head to toe, with a type of face mask covering the eyes. These are also worn in regions of Pakistan.¹⁶

One can only imagine the intense discomfort experienced during the summer heat. The *abaya*, a long black cloak with arm slits, is worn in the Persian Gulf countries. Iranian and some Lebanese women wear the *chador*, a large square fabric piece worn over the head and pinned under the chin. A *niqab*, worn in some regions, is a veil that covers the face and shoulders completely. In various parts of the Gulf States, women are even required to cover their hands with long gloves. Jordanian and Syrian women generally wear scarves and loose-fitting clothes, perhaps covered by a long coat. The fabric must be opaque except over the eyes where a type of netting is used. Despite the restrictions, it is interesting to note that there can be all sorts of fashion additions to the *hijab*, assuming a woman has the time and resources to decorate them. A visit to various Islamic Web sites for women shows all types of dress with varying colors, fabrics, trims, and designs.

Debra Decker, a writer for the *Dallas Morning News*, tells of a journey she took to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Uzbekistan with the National Conference of Editorial Writers. Her assignment was to better understand Islam and its effect on women. She tells of interviewing Saudi women and observing, to her surprise, that when their *abayas* were removed in the privacy of a home, the women were dressed quite stylishly, with full makeup and Western haircuts.¹⁷

When the Taliban was vanquished in 2002, Afghan women officially were freed from the suffocating *burqas*. However most women continued to wear it, mystifying the Western reporters. Considering the importance placed on respect, virtue, and modesty, one can see why these women did not cast off their traditional dress. Their culture demands that they maintain their covering and dress appropriately, despite the new legal freedom. Despite the law of the land, which may change from time to time, Muslim women must continue to bear the cultural and religious pressure to conform, even when dress is not regulated by law.

Application of *shari’a* law in regard to *hijab* can be carried to extremes in such countries as Saudi Arabia. Saudi women are sequestered from the world by more than dress. They live very restricted lives. Whenever they travel outside the home, they must be accompanied by a male relative. They cannot drive.¹⁸ In a restaurant, they may take their veils off to eat only if isolated in the privacy of family cubicles. Again we are reminded of the goal of *shari’a* law to protect the culture from sexual immorality by separating women in public, whether in dress or location. It is solely the woman’s responsibility to avert any male attention or glances.

Strolling along the busy streets amid the traffic, shopping areas, and outdoor cafes of Morocco, one will rarely see a woman who is not a tourist sitting in a restaurant. Although Moroccan women are legally allowed to appear in a public place, cultural expectations do not give such freedom. There are so few women in public that even a visiting Western woman feels uncomfortable.

Modesty is protected by more than dress requirements. It is also safeguarded by a wide-ranging standard for behavior in social interaction. Modesty as a virtue also applies to men, according to the *Qur’an*. In public, a man is to be covered from the navel to the knee. In practice, however, there is more inequity. Brooks tells of her experience on a Caspian Sea beach, where she saw Iranian men swimming in normal swim trunks near women who were swimming in *chadors*.¹⁹ Conspicuously absent in *shari’a* law are complementary constraints on the responsibility of men to guard their own thought or behavior.

Social and Political Implications of *Hijab*

Above, we pointed out the interesting phenomenon that Muslim women choose to wear the *hijab* in secular countries where it is not required. To the Western mind-set, the veil “symbolizes the relegation of women to a secluded world.”²⁰ However, as part of a minority culture within a larger society, people often want to identify with their heritage, even if it means standing out and drawing discrimination. A sense of ethnic pride and identity may surface when one feels marginalized in a foreign culture. Many women feel that the veil frees them from sexual harassment and prejudice that can occur in work or social situations. After choosing to veil herself, one North American young woman wrote:

No one knows whether my hair looks as if I just stepped out of a salon, whether or not I can pinch an inch, or even if I have unsightly stretch marks. Feeling that one has to meet the impossible male standards of beauty is tiring and often humiliating. . . . The idea is that modest dress and head coverings allow women to appear as individuals, rather than as purely physical objects.²¹

Islamic believers often claim that wearing the veil frees a woman from the tyranny of the beauty industry and its exploitation of the female body. Given that many women enjoy styling their hair, using makeup, and wearing fashionable clothing under their *hijab*, this is a questionable liberation. Nevertheless, the social message of the veil should not be overlooked. The trend to promote Islamic values in a secular culture is enforced by the wearing of *hijab*, and these women want respect for their beliefs.

Beyond culture, there are political implications to the veil. In 1923, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk began to secularize Turkey, moving the country away from Islamic law. One of his proclamations condemned the veil as “demeaning and a hindrance to a civilized nation.”²² This decree was not well received within the religious community.

In the 1930s, the shah of Iran outlawed wearing the *hijab* in an effort to Westernize society. His efforts to establish the Family Protection Acts of 1965 and 1975 improved the lives of Iranian women. However, in the Revolution of 1979, things quickly changed.²³ The laws were promptly overturned amid the backlash against the shah. Female protesters took to the streets, veiling themselves as a sign of the revolution. Their demonstrations protested the increasing Westernization of their society. As political pendulums swing away from modernization in Islamic societies, the veil becomes an outward sign of Islamic fidelity. In a political context, the veil symbolizes rejection of Western values, or the lack thereof, and support of Islamic law. It is a “shield against the invasions of

Western-bred corruption and immorality.”²⁴

Among Islamic women’s issues, the veil is an ongoing topic of controversy. Some groups, such as the Woman’s Action Forum in Pakistan, argue that any dress code for women denies basic freedoms. Other groups that support stricter interpretations promote the dress codes, even publishing requirements for modest dress. Anyone who wishes to understand this debate can get a good introduction by touring Islamic Web sites that address the matter.

Conclusion

Reaching Muslim women with the liberating message of the gospel of Christ is indeed a challenge. However, understanding the important facets of their lives helps build a bridge of communication to friendship and opportunities for ministry. In regard to *hijab*, some observations might help us to do this.

First, recognize the virtue that lies behind veiling. “Modesty” is described in the *Oxford Dictionary* as “unpretentious, or not excessive.” Surely, we Christian women can appreciate this value. We are exhorted to exhibit modesty in dress and behavior in 1 Peter 3. Because Western culture is characterized overseas by television programs that depict a low view of morality, Western Christians can see why Muslims sometimes come to consider Western society as the epitome of evil. We can appreciate their serious approach to virtue and their willingness to adjust personal appearance to reflect genuine modesty.

Second, the veil is an obvious metaphor for the separation between genders required by Islamic law. Often emotionally and physically separated from their husbands and sons, as well as from the world around them, women can experience loneliness, depression, and frustration. Their profound responsibility for upholding the honor of the social order is visible to all—epitomized by the protective veil.

Despite the implications of the veil, there remains one undistorted truth: Islam regards the female body essentially as evil and the cause of sexual immorality. Geraldine Brooks, in reflecting on the deeper meaning of *hijab*, concluded that it is “the dangerous female body that somehow, in Muslim society, has been made to carry the heavy burden of male honor.”²⁵

In the Christian worldview, the body can be used as an instrument of sin, but the Bible teaches that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps 139:14, ESV). As we prayerfully consider how to reach Muslim women like Fatima, Noor, and Leila with the good news of Christ’s love, we must remember that honor and dignity are important values to them. We also must remember that they may be hidden from human view by

their covering, but they are not invisible to God. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart," according to 1 Sam 16:7. God knows each person's name, dreams, and fears. He loves to show his mercies and blessings. May God give us the grace and opportunities to speak his truth with unveiled love. ■

¹This article was originally published in, and has been slightly adapted from, Ergun Mehmet Caner, ed., *Voices Behind the Veil: The World of Islam through the Eyes of Women* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003) 93-106. Used by permission of Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. All rights reserved.

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³Lyn Reese, "The Burqa, Chador, Veil and Hijab! Historical Perspectives on Islamic Dress; A Featured Essay from Women in the Muslim World," <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com> (9 September 2002).

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¹³D. Cameron Lawrence, "People: Beyond the Burqa," <http://www.louisville.com/loumag/loumagdisplay.html?article=8825> (20 October 2002).

¹⁴Suha Sabbagh, ed., *Arab Women, Between Defiance and Restraint* (New York: Interlink, 1996) 11.

¹⁵Goodwin, *Price of Honor* 53.

¹⁶Ibid. 56.

¹⁷Debra Decker, "Behind the Veils," *Dallas Morning News*, 15 September 2002.

¹⁸Ibid.

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²⁵Brooks, *Nine Parts of Desire* 32.

Is Evangelical Feminism the New Path to Liberalism?

Some Disturbing Warning Signs¹

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I am concerned that evangelical feminism (or “egalitarianism”) is becoming the new path by which evangelicals are being drawn into theological liberalism. (By “theological liberalism” I mean a system of thinking that denies the complete truthfulness of the Bible as the Word of God and denies the unique and absolute authority of the Bible in our lives.) In the study that follows, I attempt to show (1) that liberal Protestant denominations were the pioneers of evangelical feminism; (2) that evangelical feminists today have adopted many of the arguments earlier used by theological liberals to advocate the ordination of women and to reject male headship in marriage; (3) that many prominent evangelical feminist writers today advocate positions that deny or undermine the authority of Scripture, and many other egalitarian leaders promote their books; (4) that recent trends now suggest that egalitarianism is heading toward a denial of anything uniquely masculine, an endorsement of God as Mother, and ultimately an endorsement of the moral legitimacy of homosexuality. Therefore I will attempt to show that, while egalitarian leaders claim to be subject to Scripture in their thinking, what is increasingly evident in their actual scholarship and practice is a rejection of the effective authority of Scripture in our lives.

A. The Historical Connection Between Liberalism and an Egalitarian View of Women in the Church

When we look at what happened in the last half of the twentieth century, quite a clear connection can be seen between theological liberalism and the endorsement of women’s

ordination. In an important sociological study published by Harvard University Press, Mark Chaves traces the history of women’s ordination in various denominations in the United States.² From Chaves’ study, we can observe a pattern among the mainstream Protestant denominations whose leadership is dominated by theological liberals (that is, by those who reject the idea that the entire Bible is the written Word of God, and is therefore truthful in all it affirms).³ Chaves notes the dates when ordination of women was approved in each of these denominations:

Methodist Church	1956
Presbyterian Church (USA)	1956 (north), 1964 (south)
American Lutheran Church	1970
Lutheran Church in America ⁴	1970
Episcopal Church	1976 ⁵

Chaves notes an interesting example with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). In 1964 the SBC approved women’s ordination (that is, a local congregation ordained a woman and this was not overturned by the denomination itself). But in 1964 the denominational leadership and the control of the seminaries were in the hands of “moderates” (the SBC term for those who did not affirm biblical inerrancy). However, in 1984, after conservatives recaptured control of the SBC, the denomination passed a resolution “that we encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work *other than pastoral functions and leadership roles entailing ordination*.”⁶ This means that when the conservatives who held to biblical inerrancy recaptured the denomination, the denomination revoked its

previous willingness to ordain women.⁷

Chaves lists some other denominations that are not completely dominated by theological liberalism, but that are broadly tolerant of liberalism and have seminary professors and denominational officials who have moved significantly in a liberal direction. (These categorizations of denominational doctrinal positions are not made by Chaves, who simply lists the denominations and the dates, but they are my own assessment.) Consider the following denominations:

Mennonite Church	1973
Evangelical Covenant Church	1976
Reformed Church in America	1979

Another example that occurred after Chaves finished his book was the Christian Reformed Church, which in 1995 approved the ordination of women.⁸ Chaves does note, however, that the Christian Reformed Church “shifted its official position away from inerrancy only in 1972.”⁹

Are there any types of denominations that are resistant to the ordination of women? Chaves indicates the following results of his study:

Two groups of denominations are particularly resistant to women’s ordination: denominations practicing sacramental ritual and *denominations endorsing biblical inerrancy*. . . . Biblically inerrant denominations are . . . resistant to formal gender equality.¹⁰

By “denominations practicing sacramental ritual” Chaves refers especially to Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Episcopalian denominations, who think of the priest as standing in the place of Christ at the Lord’s Supper. Chaves thinks that explains why the Episcopal Church was rather slow in endorsing women’s ordination in comparison to other denominations. But he notes that for “biblically inerrant denominations” the argument that the Bible prohibits the ordination of women is by far the most persuasive argument.¹¹

I think that Chaves’s observation that “denominations endorsing biblical inerrancy” are “particularly resistant to women’s ordination” can be reinforced if we consider three influential evangelical denominations in the U. S.: the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). All three have the following characteristics in common:

- (1) they have fought major battles with liberalism recently enough that such conflicts are still part of the personal memories of current leaders
- (2) these leaders recognize that the liberal groups from which they are separate now aggressively promote women’s ordination (the Evangelical

Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church–U.S.A., and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship)

(3) these leaders and their denominations are strongly opposed to women’s ordination

In the Southern Baptist Convention, conservatives who held to inerrancy regained control of the denomination over a ten or fifteen year period beginning in 1979.¹² The SBC in 2000 added a formal provision to its doctrinal statement that “The office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture” (Article VI of The Baptist Faith and Message).

The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod in 1974 dismissed the president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, a measure that soon led to the angry resignation of forty-five of the fifty faculty members of the seminary, thereby removing most of the influence of theological liberalism that denied the complete truthfulness of Scripture.¹³

Yet another example is the Presbyterian Church in America, which was formed when conservatives left the more liberal Southern Presbyterian Church in 1973.¹⁴

In each of these three denominations, people who currently hold positions of leadership remember their struggles with theological liberalism, and they remember that an egalitarian advocacy of women’s ordination goes hand in hand with theological liberalism.

Another example of the connection between tendencies toward liberalism and the ordination of women is Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. Though Fuller started as a conservative evangelical seminary, it removed the doctrine of biblical inerrancy from its statement of faith in 1971, and today there is significant influence from theological liberalism among its faculty. In addition, full-fledged advocacy of the ordination of women reigns on campus, and I doubt that Fuller would hire anyone holding another position to teach at Fuller (or if someone were hired, I doubt that he would be allowed to express his opposition to women’s ordination publicly).

As long ago as 1987, the egalitarian viewpoint was so firmly entrenched at Fuller that even a responsible academic statement of a complementarian view was effectively silenced by a barrage of protests. In May 1987, I received the following letter from a New Testament professor who had been invited to teach a course at Fuller on the Pastoral Epistles:

What reminded me to write this letter was the class on the Pastorals that I am teaching at Fuller. . . . Boy did I get in trouble. One lady walked out, incredibly irate. The Women’s Concerns Committee sent a letter to all my students,

claiming that I should never have been allowed to teach this and that they would try to censor any further teaching along traditional lines of interpretation. So much for academic freedom and inquiry. I wrote to the dean and will be interested to see how the actual administration will react. I find it incredibly interesting, and inconsistent, that they allow the teaching of universalism . . . but our view of the women's passage must be banned.¹⁵

Two months later I received a follow-up letter:

For two and a half weeks I was slandered up and down campus. I was the major subject on the declaration board, etc. It was a real mess. . . . The vast majority of the letters were from students who were not in the class. . . . 2 1/2 weeks after the fact . . . Dean Meye finally called and we had dinner together. . . . He asked if I would be willing to retell the class what my actual intention was, and without groveling or backtracking, say that to whatever extent I was responsible for the misunderstanding, I apologize. . . . So I agreed and it went very well. . . . The next day Meye was deluged with letters and visits from my students who were very upset at the committee and his handling of the situation. . . . Meye never apologized, said that he or the school had behaved improperly, or that anything was mishandled except that I was allowed to teach what I thought. He accused me of such dastardly deeds as presenting my personal views with more force than the other views. . . . People need to be aware of what will happen at their schools if this situation is not dealt with properly.¹⁶

Endorsement of the ordination of women is not the final step in the process, however. If we look at the denominations that approved women's ordination from 1956–1976, we find that several of them, such as the United Methodist Church and the United Presbyterian Church (now called the United Presbyterian Church–USA), have large contingents pressing for (a) the endorsement of homosexual conduct as morally valid and (b) the approval of homosexual ordination. In fact, the Episcopal Church on August 5, 2003, approved the appointment of an openly homosexual bishop.

In more liberal denominations such as these, a predictable sequence has been seen (though only the Episcopal Church has followed the sequence to point 7):

1. Abandoning biblical inerrancy
2. Endorsing the ordination of women
3. Abandoning the Bible's teaching on male headship in

marriage

4. Excluding clergy who are opposed to women's ordination
5. Approving homosexual conduct as morally valid in some cases
6. Approving homosexual ordination
7. Ordaining homosexuals to high leadership positions in the denomination¹⁷

I am not arguing that all egalitarians are liberals. Some denominations have approved women's ordination for other reasons, such as a long historical tradition and a strong emphasis on gifting by the Holy Spirit as the primary requirement for ministry (as in the Assemblies of God), or because of the dominant influence of an egalitarian leader and a high priority on relating effectively to the culture (as in the Willow Creek Association). But it is unquestionable that theological liberalism leads to the endorsement of women's ordination. While not all egalitarians are liberals, all liberals are egalitarians. There is no theologically liberal denomination or seminary in the United States today that opposes women's ordination. *Liberalism and the approval of women's ordination go hand in hand.*

B. Current Egalitarian Views that Deny the Authority of Scripture

In their writings, a surprising number of egalitarians have published statements that either deny the complete *truthfulness* of Scripture or else deny the full *authority* of Scripture as the Word of God for us today. I have listed these in the following fifteen categories. Then in the following section, I list several other egalitarian claims that undermine the effective authority of Scripture in a different way, by making people think it says something other than what it really says.

1. Denying the authority or truthfulness of Genesis 1-3

With respect to egalitarian writings that deny the authority of Genesis 1-3, one example is Rebecca Groothuis's claim that the Hebrew language of the Old Testament reflects a wrongful patriarchy. Groothuis says,

We should note that the ancient Hebrew language was an expression of patriarchal culture. We cannot conclude, simply because the Bible was written under divine inspiration, that the languages in which the Bible was written were themselves created under divine inspiration. These languages were as male centered as the cultures they reflected and by which they were created. The fact that certain words in a language can be used to refer either to a male human or

to humans in general reflects cultural concepts of gender; it says nothing about God's view of gender.¹⁸

Groothuis uses this statement to answer Raymond C. Ortlund's claim that male headship is hinted at when God calls the human race by the Hebrew equivalent of our word *man*, rather than by a Hebrew word that means *woman* or a word that would mean *person*.¹⁹ Groothuis uses this argument about language reflecting patriarchal culture in order to deny the meaning of some of the words of Scripture. She talks about "the languages in which the Bible was written" as if the debate were about words that occur *outside* of Scripture. But she glosses over the fact that the story of God's naming the human race *man* (Gen 1:26–27; 5:2) is found in the Hebrew language *in the text of the Bible*. To say that these *words of the Bible* have a patriarchal meaning that God did not intend, and in fact to say that these *words of the Bible* tell us "nothing about God's view of gender," is simply to deny the authority of this part of Scripture. This approach is not a legitimate evangelical option.

Another example of denying the authority of Genesis 1–3 is William Webb's claim that Genesis 1–3 are not historically accurate. In a recent book that has had widespread influence, Webb argues that the elements of male leadership that are in Genesis 2 do not reflect the actual historical situation in the Garden of Eden, but were inserted there as a literary device for possibly three reasons: (1) to anticipate the fall, (2) to allow for better understanding by readers in the society and culture of Moses' time, or (3) to anticipate the agrarian society that would come into effect after the fall.²⁰

Webb agrees that "the practice of primogeniture in which the first born is granted prominence within the 'creative order' of a family unit"²¹ is found in the narrative in Genesis 2. He sees this as support for male headship within the text of Genesis 2. He also thinks this is how it is understood by Paul when he says, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim 2:13). But Webb sees this primogeniture theme in Genesis 2 as a "cultural component" in that text.

But how could there be changing cultural influence in the pre-fall Garden of Eden? Webb answers this question in three ways. First, he says these indications of male headship may be a *literary device that anticipates the fall and God's subsequent curse*, rather than accurately recording what was in fact true in the garden:

A . . . question is how cultural features could possibly be found in the garden before the influence of culture. Several explanations exist. First, the whispers of patriarchy in the garden may have been placed there *in order to anticipate the curse*.²²

Webb then claims that the literary construction of Genesis 2–3 includes at least one other example of "literary foreshadowing of the curse" in the pejorative description of the serpent as "*more crafty* than any of the wild animals" (Gen. 3:1). Webb then asks, "If the garden is completely pristine, how could certain creatures in the just-created animal kingdom reflect craftiness? Obviously, this Edenic material embraces *an artistic foreshadowing of events to come*."²³

Webb's analysis here assumes that there was no sin or evil in Genesis 3:1 *in actual fact*, but that by a literary device the author described the serpent as "crafty" (and therefore deceitful and therefore sinful), thus anticipating what he would be later, after the fall. In the same way, he thinks the elements of male headship in Genesis 2 were not there in the garden in actual fact, but were inserted as "an artistic foreshadowing of events to come."

Webb says further that "patriarchy" in Genesis 2 may have been inserted because it was a reflection of social categories familiar to readers at the time when Moses wrote Genesis, and that would have kept readers in Moses' time from being confused about the main point of the story (namely, that God made everything).

Second, Eden's quiet echoes of patriarchy may be a way of *describing the past through present categories*. The creation story may be *using the social categories that Moses' audience would have been familiar with*. God sometimes permits such accommodation in order not to confuse the main point he wants to communicate with factors that are secondary to that overall theme.²⁴

Finally, Webb gives a third reason:

Third . . . *the patriarchy of the garden may reflect God's anticipation of the social context into which Adam and Eve were about to venture*. An agrarian lifestyle . . . would naturally produce some kind of hierarchy between men and women. . . . The presentation of the male-female relationship in patriarchal forms may simply be a way of anticipating this first (and major) life setting into which humankind would enter.²⁵

Even in his analysis of the statement that the serpent was "crafty," Webb understands Gen 3:1 to affirm something that he thinks was not true at that time, and thus Webb denies the truthfulness of a section of historical narrative in Scripture.

There is really no great difficulty in affirming that Gen 3:1 is stating historical fact, and taking it at face value. Webb fails even to consider the most likely explanation: that there was sin in the angelic world sometime after the completion of

the initial creation (Gen 1:31) but prior to Gen 3:1.²⁶ Because of this rebellion in the angelic world (see 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6), Satan himself was already evil and was somehow speaking through the serpent.²⁷ So Webb's claim that the crafty serpent in Gen 3:1 must be "artistic foreshadowing of events to come" is not persuasive. It is better to take Gen 3:1 as historically accurate and affirm that the serpent was in fact "crafty" and therefore deceptive and sinful.

Webb also denies the historical accuracy of Genesis 2 in all three of his explanations of why the narrative indicates male leadership (what he calls "patriarchy" and "primogeniture"). In reason (1), Webb claims that "the whispers of patriarchy in the garden may have been placed there in order to anticipate the curse."²⁸ Webb is saying that patriarchy did not exist in the garden *in actual fact*, but the author placed hints of it in the story as a way of anticipating the situation that would come about after there was sin in the world. This then is also an explicit denial of the historical accuracy of the Genesis 2 account.

In reason (2), Webb says that Moses, in the time he wrote, used "present categories" such as patriarchy to describe the past, and this was simply an "accommodation" by God "in order not to confuse the main point." That is, patriarchy did not actually exist in the garden of Eden, but Moses inserted it there in Genesis 2 so as not to confuse his audience at a later time. Thus, Moses inserted false information into Genesis 2.

The same is true of Webb's reason (3). Webb believes that primogeniture (Adam being created before Eve) occurs in Genesis 2, not because it reflected the actual situation in the garden of Eden, but *because Adam and Eve after they sinned would enter into a situation where Adam had leadership over his wife*. This again is an explicit denial of the historical accuracy of the headship of Adam and his prior creation in Genesis 2. It was simply "a practical and gracious *anticipation* of the agrarian setting into which Adam and Eve were headed"²⁹

It is important to realize how much Webb denies as historical fact in the Genesis narrative. He is not just denying that there was a "crafty" serpent who spoke to Eve (Gen 3:1). He also denies the entire *theme of primogeniture* found in Genesis 2. That is, he denies the entire narrative structure that shows the man as created before the woman, for this is the basis for the primogeniture theme he sees Paul referring to in 1 Tim 2:13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

How much of Genesis 2 does that involve? How much inaccurate material has to be inserted into Genesis 2 either as a literary device foreshadowing the fall (reason 1), or as an accommodation to the situation familiar to readers at the time of Moses (reason 2), or as an anticipation of an agrarian society that would be established after the fall (reason 3)? It is no small amount.

- God placing the man in the garden (Gen 2:8)
- God putting the man in the garden "to work it and keep it" (2:15)
- God commanding the man that he may eat of every tree of the garden but not of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:16–17),
- God saying, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (2:18),
- God bringing the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens to the man to see what he would call them (2:19),
- the man giving names to every living creature (2:20),
- there not being found a helper fit for man (2:20),
- God causing a deep sleep to fall upon the man and taking one of his ribs and forming it into a woman (2:21–22)

This entire sequence, summarized by Paul in the statement "For Adam was formed first, then Eve," is merely a literary device that did not actually happen, according to Webb. And all of this then enables Webb to say that Paul's appeal to the creation of Adam prior to Eve is not proof of a transcultural ethical standard. But if a theological argument has to deny significant portions of Scripture for its support, it should surely be rejected by evangelicals who are subject to the authority of the entire Bible as the Word of God.

2. Saying that New Testament teachings are "seed ideas" showing that superior teaching would come later

With respect to egalitarian writings on the New Testament, a rejection of the final authority of Scripture for our lives today is found in William Webb's claim that Gal 3:28 is a "seed idea" that would later lead to an ethic superior to that of the New Testament. This argument is found in the second of Webb's eighteen proposed criteria for determining cultural relativity. He says, "A component of a text may be cultural if 'seed ideas' are present within the rest of Scripture to suggest and encourage further movement on a particular subject."³⁰

Webb's conception of a "seed idea" is based on his claim that some New Testament commands are inconsistent with that seed idea, and those commands show only that "the biblical author pushed society as far as it could go at that time without creating more damage than good."³¹ Webb claims that the "seed idea" is simply a pointer showing that there should be "further movement" toward a "more fully realized ethic" that is "more just, more equitable and more loving . . . a better ethic than the one expressed in the isolated words of the text."³² Webb thinks Gal 3:28 is just such a "seed idea," that carries "social implications for the equality of women" today.³³

We should not think it necessary to "move beyond"

the ethic of the New Testament. It is not necessary to do this to argue for the abolition of slavery, for the New Testament never condones or approves of slavery as an institution, and never says it was created by God (as marriage was). The New Testament itself provides statements that would eventually lead to the abolition of slavery *based on the New Testament ethic itself*, not based on some “higher ethic” that would later be discovered. (See section 6 below for a discussion of the anti-slavery teachings of the Bible itself, teachings that were widely and effectively used by abolitionists in the 19th century.)

Similarly, Webb is incorrect to see Gal 3:28 as a “seed idea” pointing to some future, “higher ethic.” Rather, this verse is fully consistent with other things the apostle Paul and other New Testament authors wrote about the relationships between men and women. If we take the entire New Testament as the very words of God for us in the new covenant today, then any claim that Gal 3:28 should overrule other texts such as Ephesians 5 and 1 Timothy 2 is a claim that Paul the apostle contradicts himself, and therefore that the Word of God contradicts itself.

Webb also claims that the New Testament commands regarding male headship are only a “preliminary movement” to partially correct the culture at that time, but that the New Testament ethic regarding male headship still needed further improvement beyond what was taught in the New Testament. He argues that the commands about wives submitting to their husbands in Eph 5:22–33 are not part of the “final ethic” that we should follow today, but are simply an indication of “where Scripture is moving on the issue of patriarchal power.”³⁴

Webb’s argument at this point is not persuasive because it depends on his assumption that the ethical standards of the New Testament are not God’s ultimate ethical standards for us, but are simply one step along the way toward a kind of “ultimate ethic” that we should adopt today.³⁵ Webb does not consider the moral commands of the New Testament to represent a perfect or final moral system for Christians. They are rather a pointer that “provides the direction toward the divine destination, but its literal, isolated words are not always the destination itself. Sometimes God’s instructions are simply designed to get his flock moving.”³⁶

But we should not find this position acceptable, because it essentially nullifies the moral authority of the New Testament for Christians today, not only with respect to Ephesians 5, but (in principle) with respect to all the moral commands of the New Testament. Webb may in fact view some New Testament commands as representing an ultimate ethic, but even then we should obey them *not because they are taught in the New Testament*, but because Webb’s system has filtered them through his eighteen criteria and then has found that what the New Testament teaches is also the moral standard that is found in his “ultimate ethic.”

3. Saying that some verses that are in every manuscript are not really part of the Bible

A different kind of problem is found in Gordon Fee’s claim that 1 Cor 14:34–35 should not be considered part of the Bible and that these verses are “certainly not binding for Christians.”³⁷ In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Fee argues that Paul did not write 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, but these verses were the addition of a later scribe.³⁸ He says,

The case against these verses is so strong, and finding a viable solution to their meaning so difficult, that it seems best to view them as an interpolation. . . . One must assume that the words were first written as a gloss in the margin by someone who, probably in light of 1 Tim. 2:9–15, felt the need to qualify Paul’s instructions even further.³⁹

Fee’s main reasons are that some later Greek manuscripts move these verses so that they follow verse 40, and, he says, the verses cannot be reconciled with 1 Cor 11:5 where Paul allows women to prophesy in the church. But Fee’s arguments have been strongly rejected.⁴⁰ While some who read Fee may see this as merely a text-critical decision based on Fee’s careful analysis of many different ancient manuscripts, two factors lead me to think of it rather as a different method of rejecting the authority of these verses for the church today. (I am not speaking of Fee’s intention, which I do not know, but of the actual process he followed and the result he reached.)

First, out of the thousands of ancient New Testament manuscripts that exist today, not one has ever omitted these verses (the Western manuscripts that move the verses to follow verse 40 are unreliable elsewhere in any case). This makes this passage significantly different from the other two examples Fee mentions where something not original has crept into the text tradition (John 5:3b–4 and 1 John 5:7).⁴¹ In those cases the oldest and best manuscripts *lack* the added material, but in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 *no* manuscript lacks this material. So Fee’s procedure is different from every other text-critical decision made by editors of the Greek New Testament throughout history: he thinks we should exclude a passage from the New Testament that is *included* in every manuscript we have! In fact, this is not a highly doubtful text, but one that is given a “B” rating in the United Bible Societies’ fourth edition of the Greek New Testament,⁴² indicating that it is “almost certain.”⁴³

Second, the most decisive factor for Fee’s conclusion is not the evidence from ancient manuscripts but rather that he thinks that these verses, which say that “the women should keep silent in the churches” (1 Cor 14:34), are impossible to reconcile with 1 Corinthians 11. This makes me think this is ultimately not a text-critical question but an objection he has

to the content of these verses. He says, “these verses stand in obvious contradiction to 11:2–16, where it is assumed without reproof that women pray and prophesy in the assembly.”⁴⁴ But virtually all other interpreters in the history of the church have seen various ways to reconcile 14:34–35 and 11:5, so Fee wrongly sees them as impossible to reconcile, and that is his primary argument against their authenticity. At this point Fee’s procedure is different from that of all evangelical interpreters of Scripture. There are many passages in the Bible that on first reading seem difficult to reconcile with other passages in the Bible (think, for example, of the teaching of Paul and James on justification by faith, or the astounding claim that Jesus is God and the Father is God, when combined with the teaching that there is only one God). Historically interpreters with a high respect for the authority and consistency of Scripture have not decided that one set of verses stands “in obvious contradiction” to the other set and then thrown the difficult verses out of the Bible. Think of what would happen if we followed Fee’s procedure in the Gospels, where we find some manuscript evidence of scribal attempts to “fix” the difficulty in almost every parallel passage that has details that are difficult to harmonize, just as Fee finds some manuscript evidence of scribal attempts to move 1 Cor 14:34–35 to another context. Rather, interpreters have returned to the difficult texts with the assumption that they have misunderstood something, and they have sought for interpretations that are fair to both texts and are not contradictory.⁴⁵

Does Fee’s solution to 1 Cor 14:34–35 then constitute evidence of a liberal tendency to reject the authority of the Bible? Readers will have to come to their own conclusions. It should trouble evangelicals that Fee and others say these verses that are missing from no ancient manuscript are not part of the Bible and therefore “certainly not binding for Christians.” It seems to me that Fee’s recommendation that we should remove some hard verses from the Bible rather than seeking to understand them in a way that does not contradict other verses establishes a dangerous precedent. When the verses that he throws out of the Bible are missing from no manuscript, and also happen to be the very verses that show Paul’s insistence on male governance of the church meetings “in all the churches of the saints,” then it seems to me to be another example of a pattern in many egalitarian writings, a pattern of using sophisticated scholarly procedures in order to evade the requirement of submitting to the authority of the Word of God.

4. Saying that Paul was wrong

A liberal tendency to reject the authority of Scripture is also seen in the writings of both Paul King Jewett and David Thompson. In 1975 Jewett, a professor at Fuller Seminary, published *Man as Male and Female*,⁴⁶ which was (as far as I know) the first scholarly defense of an egalitarian viewpoint by an evangelical in modern times. In it he claims that Paul was

wrong in his teaching in 1 Timothy 2:

The apostle Paul was the heir of this contrast between the old and the new. . . . He was both a Jew and a Christian. . . . And his thinking about women . . . reflects both his Jewish and his Christian experience So far as he thought in terms of his Jewish background, he thought of the woman as subordinate to the man for whose sake she was created (1 Cor. 11:9). But so far as he thought in terms of the new insight he had gained through the revelation of God in Christ, he thought of the woman as equal to the man in all things. . . . Because *these two perspectives—the Jewish and the Christian—are incompatible, there is no satisfying way to harmonize the Pauline argument.* . . .

Paul . . . is assuming the traditional rabbinic understanding [of Gen. 2:18–23]. . . . *Is this rabbinic understanding of Genesis 2:18f correct? We do not think that it is*

The difficulty is that Paul, who was an inspired apostle, appears to teach such female subordination in certain passages. . . . To resolve this difficulty, *one must recognize the human as well as the divine quality of Scripture.*⁴⁷

Although few have followed Jewett in his claim that Paul made a mistake in what he wrote, Thomas Schreiner points out that a similar position was advocated by Clarence Boomsma as well.⁴⁸

Jewett’s position allows the church today to disobey 1 Tim 2:11–15, saying it was a mistake. But Christians who take the entire Bible as the Word of God, and authoritative for us today, do not have that option. This view refuses to take 1 Timothy 2 as God’s truthful, divinely authoritative commands for Christians throughout the church age. This is not a legitimate position for an evangelical who believes that the entire Bible is “breathed out by God” (2 Tim 3:16) and is, thus, the very Word of God.

A different kind of claim that the Apostle Paul was wrong is found in the argument of David L. Thompson that Paul misinterprets Genesis 2, and that we can come to a better understanding of Genesis 2 than Paul did. According to Thompson, there may be unusual times when we can carefully and cautiously differ with a New Testament author’s interpretation of an Old Testament text. And one of those times is when we read Paul’s interpretation of Genesis 2 in 1 Timothy 2.⁴⁹

Thompson says that 1 Tim 2:11–15 is hard to interpret. It poses “particularly complex problems hermeneutically,” 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.⁵⁰ 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."⁵¹

Thompson's procedure effectively denies the authority of Scripture for us today. Of course Paul's use of Genesis 2 is a problem for egalitarians 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 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 twentieth-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.

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

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 an interpretation of the Old Testament by a New Testament author, but that does not give me the right to disagree with his interpretation. 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 his interpretation of the Old Testament, or gave us interpretations of the Old Testament that we can reject in favor of better ones of our own.

5. Locating ultimate authority not in Scripture but at the end of a "trajectory" along which the New Testament was progressing, thus rejecting *sola Scriptura*

Liberal tendencies in egalitarian procedures for interpreting the Bible include the claims of R. T. France and David Thompson that our authority is the point toward which the New Testament authors were progressing in a trajectory, not what the New Testament actually taught. R. T. France, in his book *Women in the Church's Ministry: A Test Case for Biblical Interpretation*, takes this position. He argues that the Old Testament and Judaism in the time of Jesus were male-dominated and biased against women, but that Jesus began to overturn this system, and that the New Testament churches continued the process. We can now follow this "trajectory" to a point of full inclusion of women in all ministries. France explains,

The gospels do not, perhaps, record a total reversal of Jewish prejudice against women and of their total exclusion from roles of leadership. But *they do contain the seeds from which such a reversal was bound to grow.* Effective revolutions are seldom completed in a year or two. In this, as in other matters, the disciples were slow learners. But the fuse, long as it might prove to be, had been ignited.⁵²

France later comments on "there is no longer male and female" in Gal 3:28,

Paul here expresses *the end-point of the historical trajectory* which we have been tracing . . . from the male-dominated society of the Old Testament and of later Judaism, through the revolutionary implications and yet still limited actual outworking of Jesus' attitude to women, and on to the increasing prominence of women in the apostolic church and in its active ministry. At all points within the period of biblical history *the working out of the fundamental equality* expressed in Galatians 3:28 *remained constrained by the realities of the time*, and yet there was the basis, indeed the imperative, for the dismantling of the sexual discrimination which has prevailed since the fall. *How far along that trajectory it is appropriate and possible for the church to move* at any subsequent stage in history must remain a matter for debate, as it is today.⁵³

And he says that he has found his "basic position" regarding women in ministry

not in these few texts [1 Cor 14:34–36 and 1 Tim 2:11–15] but *in a trajectory of thought and practice developing through Scripture, and arguably pointing beyond itself* to the fuller outworking of God's ultimate purpose in Christ in ways which the first-century situation did not yet allow.⁵⁴

A similar position is argued by David Thompson in his 1996 article in *Christian Scholar's Review*:⁵⁵

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*.⁵⁶

Both France and Thompson admit that the New Testament authors did not teach the full inclusion of women in all forms of church leadership. As France says, the first-century situation "did not yet allow" this "fuller outworking of God's ultimate purpose," which they say should be our standard today.

But this means that the teachings of the New Testament are no longer our final authority. Our authority now becomes *our own ideas of the direction the New Testament was heading* but never quite reached. In order to guard against making our authority something other than the Bible, major confessions of faith have insisted that the words of God *in Scripture* are our authority, not some position arrived at after the Bible was finished. This is the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, or "the Bible alone," as our ultimate authority for doctrine and life. The Westminster Confession of Faith 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.⁵⁷

More recently, the widely-acknowledged Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy said,

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.⁵⁸

This trajectory position would have the later standard (the supposed "goal" to which the New Testament was headed) contradict earlier revelation (which limited certain roles in the church to men). The doctrinal statement of the Evangelical

Theological Society says:

The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, *is the Word of God written*, and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.⁵⁹

But this trajectory argument places authority ultimately in something beyond the New Testament writings.

France argues that we already see change from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and within the New Testament we see the apostles gradually growing in their understanding of the way Gentiles can be fully included in the church (as in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15).⁶⁰ So why should we not allow change beyond what is in the New Testament?

This view fails to recognize the uniqueness of the New Testament. Yes, the New Testament explicitly tells us that we are no longer under the regulations of the Old Covenant (Heb 8:6–13), so we have clear warrant for saying the sacrificial laws and dietary laws are no longer binding on us. And we do see the apostles in a process of coming to understand the inclusion of the Gentiles in the church (Acts 15; Gal 2:1–14; 3:28). But *that process was completed within the New Testament*, and the commands given to Christians in the New Testament say nothing about excluding Gentiles from the church. We do not have to progress on a "trajectory" beyond the New Testament to discover that.

Christians living in the time of Paul's epistles were living under the New Covenant. And we Christians living today are also living under the New Covenant. This is "the New Covenant in my blood" (1 Cor 11:25), which Jesus established and which we affirm every time we take the Lord's Supper. That means we are living in the same period in God's plan for "the history of redemption" as the first-century Christians. And that is why we can read and apply the New Testament directly to ourselves today. To attempt to go beyond the New Testament documents and derive our authority from "where the New Testament was heading" is to reject the very documents God gave us to govern our life under the New Covenant until Christ returns.

I agree that the church later formulated doctrines, such as the Trinity, that are not spelled out explicitly in the New Testament. But that is far different from what France and Thompson advocate, because Trinitarian doctrine was always *based on the actual teachings of the New Testament*, and its defenders always took the New Testament writings as their final authority. By contrast, France and Thompson do not take the New Testament statements as their final authority, but "go beyond" the New Testament to a "target" that *contradicts or nullifies* the restrictions on women's ministry given by Paul. No Trinitarian doctrine was ever built by saying we need a view

that contradicts and denies what Paul wrote.

France and Thompson think the trajectory was heading toward egalitarianism. But this argument could be used in just the other way. Someone could take France's view of Gal 3:28 and argue that the trajectory looks like this:

FROM PAUL'S EARLY WRIT- INGS	TO PAUL'S LAST, MORE MATURE WRITINGS	TO THE FINAL TARGET FOR THIS TRAJECTORY	APPLICATION TODAY
Gal 3:28: women in all positions of leadership	1 Tim 2-3, Titus 1: only men can teach or be elders	Women cannot par- ticipate in any ministry in the church	All ministry of all kinds must be done by men

This is a ridiculous conclusion, but if we accept the "trajectory" principle of France and Thompson, it would be hard to say it was wrong.

Or we could take a "trajectory" argument on divorce:

FROM JESUS' TEACHINGS	TO PAUL'S TEACHINGS	TO THE FINAL TARGET FOR THIS TRAJECTORY	APPLICATION TODAY
Only one ground for divorce: adultery (Matt 19:6)	Two grounds for divorce: adultery or desertion (1 Cor 7:14)	Divorce for any hardship	God approves divorce for any hardship in marriage

We may think these trajectories are foolish, but they use the same process as France and Thompson in moving from earlier to later biblical writings. And these trajectories all have one thing in common: we no longer have to obey what the New Testament teaches. We can devise our own ideas about the direction things were heading at the end of the New Testament. This method has no controls on it. It is subjective, and the final authority is not the Bible but anyone's guess as to where the trajectory was heading.

One of the distinctive differences between historic, orthodox Protestants and the Roman Catholic Church has been that Protestants base doctrine on "Scripture alone" (in Latin, *sola Scriptura*), while Catholics base doctrine on Scripture *plus* the authoritative teaching of the church through history. This

"trajectory" argument of France and Thompson is disturbingly similar to Roman Catholicism in this regard, because they place final authority not in the New Testament writings but in their ideas of where that teaching was leading. Yet a Roman Catholic could argue that more reliable than their *speculation* on where the teaching was leading are the *historical facts* of where the teaching did lead. So the trajectory (which actually was fulfilled in church history) would look like this:

FROM JESUS' TEACHINGS	TO PAUL'S TEACHINGS	TO THE FINAL TARGET FOR THIS TRAJECTORY	APPLICATION TODAY
No local church officers or governing structure mentioned	Increased authority given to elders and deacons	World-wide authority given to the Pope, cardinals, and bishops	We should submit to the authority of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church

The Reformation principle *sola Scriptura* was formulated to guard against the kind of procedure France and Thompson advocate, 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. On several grounds, then, this trajectory argument must be rejected as inconsistent with the view that "all Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim 3:16), and

Every word of God proves true. . . .
Do not add to his words,
lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar
(Prov. 30:5-6).

6. Adopting William Webb's "Redemptive-Movement" Approach to Interpreting Scripture

A variation of the "trajectory hermeneutic" discussed in the previous section, one that contains a similar rejection of the authority of the New Testament writings for our lives today, is found in the redemptive-movement hermeneutic of William Webb. Webb says that the New Testament teachings on male headship in marriage and male leadership in the church were simply points along the path toward a superior ethic to that of the New Testament, an "ultimate ethic" toward which the New Testament was heading. Webb's book, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, proposes a system that he calls a "redemptive-movement hermeneutic." Through his use of this system, Webb

argues that the New Testament texts about male headship in marriage and male church leadership are culturally relative.

In contrast to many egalitarians who argue that the New Testament does not teach that wives should be subject to their husbands or that only men should be elders, Webb takes a different approach: he believes that the New Testament *does* teach these things *for the culture in which the New Testament was written*, but he claims that in today's culture the treatment of women is an area in which "a better ethic than the one expressed in the isolated words of the text is possible."⁶¹

Webb admits that the Old and New Testaments improved the treatment of women when compared with their surrounding cultures, but he says,

If one adopts a redemptive-movement hermeneutic, the softening of patriarchy (which Scripture itself initiates) can be taken a considerable distance further. Carrying the redemptive movement within Scripture to a more improved expression for gender relationships . . . [today] ends in either ultra-soft patriarchy or complementary egalitarianism.⁶²

Later in the book, Webb defines "ultra-soft patriarchy" as a position in which there are no unique leadership roles for men in marriage or in the church, but men are given "a certain level of *symbolic* honor."⁶³ He defines "complementary egalitarianism" as a system in which there is full interdependence and "mutual submission" within marriage, and the only differences in roles are "based upon biological differences between men and women," so that Webb would favor "a greater participation of women in the early stages of child rearing."⁶⁴ Thus, Webb's "ultra-soft patriarchy" differs from his "complementary egalitarianism" only in the slight bit of "symbolic honor" that ultra-soft patriarchy would still give to men.

Because of its detail, novelty, and the complexity of its approach, this book deserves to be taken seriously by complementarians. It is the most sophisticated version of a "trajectory hermeneutic" that has ever been published. However, because of concerns that are detailed below, I do not think the book succeeds in showing that male headship in the home and the church are culturally relative. Nor do I believe that the book provides a system for analyzing cultural relativity that is ultimately helpful for Christians to use today.⁶⁵

At first glance, it may not seem as though Webb "nullifies" the moral authority of the entire New Testament, because he agrees, for example, that homosexual conduct is morally wrong, and that the New Testament condemnations of homosexual conduct are transcultural.⁶⁶ He also affirms that the New Testament admonitions for children to be subject to their

parents are transcultural.⁶⁷

The important point to realize is the *basis* on which Webb affirms that these commands are transcultural. Most evangelicals read a text such as, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Eph 6:1), and conclude that children *today* are to obey their parents because the New Testament was written for Christians in the new covenant age (the time between Christ's death and his return). Most evangelicals reason similarly about the New Testament texts concerning homosexual conduct (see, for example, Rom 1:26–27; 1 Cor 6:9), and conclude that these are morally binding on us today, because we are part of the new covenant age and these texts were written to new covenant Christians.

But for Webb, the process is entirely different, and the basis of authority is different. The commands concerning children and homosexuals are binding on us today not because we are part of the new covenant age, for which the New Testament was written (I could not find such a consideration anywhere in Webb's book), but rather *because these commands have passed through the filtering system of Webb's eighteen criteria* and have survived. Actually, the command for children to obey their parents has not entirely survived his filtering process, because Webb believes the command means that *adult* children should continue to be obedient to their parents throughout their adult lives, but this aspect of the command was culturally relative and need not be followed by us today.⁶⁸

In this way, I believe it is fair to say that Webb's system invalidates the moral authority of the entire New Testament, at least in the sense that we today should be obedient to the moral commands that were written to new covenant Christians. Instead, only those commands are binding that have passed through his eighteen-part filter.

According to Webb's system, then, Christians can no longer go to the New Testament, read the moral commands in one of Paul's epistles, and obey them. That would be to use a "static hermeneutic" that just reads the "isolated words of the text" and fails to understand "the spirit-movement component of meaning which significantly transforms the application of texts for subsequent generations."⁶⁹ Rather, we must realize that the New Testament teachings simply represent one stage in a trajectory of movement toward an ultimate ethic.

So how can Christians discover this "ultimate ethic"? Webb takes the rest of the book to explain eighteen fairly complex criteria (to which he gives names such as "preliminary movement," "seed ideas," "breakouts," and "competing options") by which Christians must evaluate the commands of the Bible and thereby discover the more just, more equitable ethical system the Bible was heading toward. Once that ultimate ethic has been discovered, it becomes the moral standard we should follow and obey.

What this means in actual practice, then, is that the moral authority of the New Testament is completely nullified, at least in principle. There may be some New Testament commands that Webb concludes actually do represent an ultimate ethic, but even then we should obey them *not because they are taught in the New Testament*, but because Webb's system has found that they meet the criteria of his "ultimate ethic."

The implications of this for Christian morality are extremely serious. It means that our ultimate authority is no longer the Bible but Webb's system. Of course, he claims that the "redemptive spirit" that drives his hermeneutic is *derived* from the biblical text, but by his own admission this "redemptive spirit" is not the same as the teachings of the Bible. It is derived from Webb's analysis of the interaction between the ancient culture and the biblical text.

Someone may object at this point, "Doesn't everyone have to use some kind of cultural filter like this? Doesn't everyone have to test the New Testament commands to see if they are culturally relative or transcultural, before deciding whether to obey them?"

There is a significant difference in approach. Most evangelicals (including me) believe we are under the moral authority of the New Testament and are obligated to obey its commands *when we are in the same situation as that addressed in the New Testament command* (such as being a parent, a child, a person contemplating a divorce, a church selecting elders or deacons, a church preparing to celebrate the Lord's Supper, a husband, a wife, and so forth). When there is no exact modern equivalent to some aspect of a command (such as, "honor the emperor" in 1 Pet 2:17), we are still obligated to obey the command, but we do so by *applying* it to situations that are essentially similar. Therefore, "honor the emperor" is applied to honoring the president or the prime minister. In fact, in several such cases the immediate context contains pointers to broader applications (such as 1 Pet 2:13–14, which mentions being subject to "every human institution" including the "emperor" and "governors" as specific examples).

But with Webb the situation is entirely different. He does not consider the moral commands of the New Testament to represent a perfect or final moral system for Christians. They are rather a *pointer* that "provides the direction toward the divine destination, but its literal, isolated words are not always the destination itself. Sometimes God's instructions are simply designed to get his flock moving."⁷⁰

At the heart of Webb's system is what he calls a "redemptive-movement hermeneutic." He says that some may prefer calling his approach a "progressive" or "developmental" or "trajectory" hermeneutic, and he says that's fine. Webb explains his hermeneutic by what he calls "the X → Y → Z

Principle." The letter Y indicates what the Bible says about a topic. Webb says, "The *central position* (Y) stands for where the isolated words of the Bible are in their development of a subject." The letter X represents "the perspective of the *original culture*," and the letter Z represents "an *ultimate ethic*," that is, God's final ideal that the Bible is moving toward.⁷¹

Therefore, what evangelicals have ordinarily understood to be the teaching of the Bible on particular subjects is in fact *only a point along the way* (indicated by letter Y) toward the development of a final or ultimate ethic (Z). Webb says,

The X → Y → Z Principle illustrates how numerous aspects of the biblical text were *not* written to establish a utopian society with complete justice and equity. They were written within a cultural framework with limited moves toward an ultimate ethic.⁷²

Therefore, Webb discovers a number of points where "our contemporary culture" has a *better* ethic than what is found in the Bible. Our culture has a better ethic today "where it happens to reflect a better social ethic—one closer to an *ultimate ethic* (Z) than to the ethic revealed in the isolated words of the biblical text."⁷³

Webb's approach to Scripture can also be seen in the way he deals with biblical texts regarding slavery. Most evangelical interpreters say that the Bible does not command or encourage or endorse slavery, but rather tells Christians who were slaves how they should conduct themselves, and also gives principles that would modify and ultimately lead to the abolition of slavery (1 Cor 7:21–22; Gal 3:28; Philemon 16, 21; and note the condemnation of "enslavers" at 1 Tim. 1:10, ESV, a verse that was previously overlooked in this regard because it was often translated "kidnappers"). However, Webb *believes that the Bible actually endorses slavery*, even though it is a kind of slavery with "better conditions and fewer abuses."⁷⁴

In claiming that the Bible endorses slavery, Webb shows no awareness of biblical anti-slavery arguments such as those of Theodore Weld in *The Bible Against Slavery*,⁷⁵ a book which was widely distributed and frequently reprinted by anti-slavery abolitionists in 19th century America. Weld argued strongly against American slavery from Exodus 21:16, "He that stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death" (KJV) (13–15), as well as from the fact that men are in the image of God and therefore it is morally wrong to treat any human being as property (8–9, 15–17). He argued that ownership of another person breaks the eighth commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," as follows:

The eighth commandment forbids the taking of any part of that which belongs to another.

Slavery takes the *whole*. Does the same Bible which prohibits the taking of *any* thing from him, sanction the taking of *every* thing? Does it thunder wrath against the man who robs his neighbor of a *cent*, yet commission him to rob his neighbor of *himself*? Slaveholding is the highest possible violation of the eighth commandment" (10-11).

In the rest of the book Weld answered detailed objections about various verses used by slavery proponents. The whole basis of his book is that the moral standards taught in the Bible are right, and there is no hint that we have to move beyond the Bible's ethics to oppose slavery, as Webb would have us do.

By contrast to such anti-slavery crusaders who took the Bible's teachings as their ultimate authority, Webb claims that we need to move beyond the Bible to a higher ethic. Webb's redemptive-movement hermeneutic approaches the slavery question by saying that the original culture (X) approved of "slavery with many abuses." Second, the Bible (Y) endorses "slavery with better conditions and fewer abuses." However, Webb believes that on the issue of slavery "our culture is much closer to an ultimate ethic than it is to the unrealized ethic reflected in the isolated words of the Bible." Today, the ethic of our culture, which is superior to that of the Bible, has "slavery eliminated and working conditions often improved." Webb believes our culture is much closer to an "ultimate ethic" (Z) in which we will see "wages maximized for all."⁷⁶

At the end of the book, Webb recapitulates the results of his analysis regarding slavery:

Scripture does not present a "finalized ethic" in every area of human relationship. . . . to stop where the Bible stops (with its isolated words) ultimately fails to reapply the redemptive spirit of the text as it spoke to the original audience. It fails to see that further reformation is possible . . . while Scripture had a positive influence in its time, we should take that redemptive spirit and move to an even better, more fully-realized ethic today.⁷⁷

Therefore, rather than saying that the New Testament does not endorse or command slavery, Webb believes that it *does* approve a system of slavery for the people at the time at which it was written. However, in its modifications and regulations of the institution of slavery, the Bible starts us along a trajectory which would lead to the ultimate abolition of slavery, though the New Testament never actually reaches that point.

When Webb claims that "A redemptive-movement

hermeneutic has always been a major part of the historic church, apostolic and beyond,"⁷⁸ and therefore that all Christians believe in some kind of "redemptive-movement" hermeneutic, he fails to make one important distinction: Evangelicals have always held that the redemptive movement within Scripture ends with the New Testament! Webb carries it beyond the New Testament. To attempt to go *beyond* the New Testament documents and derive our authority from "where the New Testament was heading" is to reject the very documents God gave us to govern our life under the New Covenant until Christ returns. Webb's "trajectory hermeneutic" suffers from the same problems as the works of France and Thompson critiqued above.

Here is Webb's key explanation of how his system works to discover the "redemptive spirit" within a text:

The final and most important characteristic of a redemptive-movement hermeneutic is its focus on the spirit of a text. . . . The coinage "redemptive-movement hermeneutic" is derived from a concern that Christians apply the *redemptive spirit* within Scripture, not merely, or even primarily, its isolated words. *Finding the underlying spirit of a text is a delicate matter. It is not as direct or explicit as reading the words on the page.* In order to grasp the spirit of a text, *the interpreter must listen for how the texts sounds within its various social contexts.* Two life settings are crucial: the broader, foreign ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman (ANE/GR) social context and the immediate, domestic Israelite/church setting. One must ask, what change/improvement is the text making in the lives of people in the covenant community? And, how does the text influence the larger ANE/GR world? Through reflecting upon these social-setting questions *the modern reader will begin to sense the redemptive spirit of the text.* Also, a third setting permits one another way of discovering the redemptive spirit, namely, the canonical movement across various biblical epochs.⁷⁹

This paragraph is remarkable for the candor with which it reveals the subjective and indeterminate nature of Webb's ethical system. If the heart of the "most important characteristic" of his hermeneutic is discovered through "reflecting upon" the way the Bible interacts with ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman cultures, and through such reflection the interpreter will "begin to sense the redemptive spirit of the text," we have entered a realm so subjective that no two interpreters in the future will probably ever agree on where the "redemptive spirit of the text" that they are beginning to "sense" is leading, and what kind of "ultimate ethic" they should count as God's will for them. Ancient Near Eastern

and Greek and Roman cultures were themselves diverse and complex, and different scholars will discover different trends and emphases in them. And then listening for “how the text sounds” within each culture is a process fraught with subjective judgments.

Those with a predisposition toward socialism will no doubt be delighted that Webb has begun to sense a redemptive spirit that will lead to “wages maximized for all.”⁸⁰ But those more inclined to capitalism will no doubt begin to sense quite another redemptive spirit moving against the slavery and oppression of the ancient world, a redemptive spirit in which the dominant biblical themes of freedom and liberty and fair reward for one’s labor lead to an “ultimate ethic” (Z) that encourages investment and a free enterprise system, one with maximization of profits for those worthy individuals who through their business activities best meet the material needs of mankind, and by the high quality of goods they produce for others best show that they love their neighbors as themselves.

No doubt Arminians will begin to sense the redemptive spirit of Arminianism moving against the fatalism of the ancient world in a much more Arminian direction than we find even in the New Testament. And Calvinists, through sober reflection upon the way the biblical text corrects the puny, weak gods in the Greek and Roman pantheon, will begin to sense the redemptive spirit of Calvinism moving through the New Testament toward an even higher emphasis on the sovereignty of God than we find in any current New Testament texts.

And on and on it will go. Baptists will begin to sense the redemptive spirit of believer’s baptism as the New Testament corrects the all-inclusive nature of the religions of the ancient world, and paedobaptists will begin to sense the redemptive spirit of inclusion of infants in the covenant community, as the New Testament decisively corrects the neglect and abuse of children found in many ancient cultures. People seeking justification for their desire to obtain a divorce will begin to sense the redemptive spirit of more and more reasons for divorce, moving from the one reason that Jesus allowed (adultery—Matt 19:9), to the increasing freedom found in Paul (desertion by an unbeliever—1 Cor 7:15), to many more reasons for divorce as we move along a trajectory toward an “ultimate ethic” (Z) where everyone should be completely happy with his or her spouse.

Now Webb may object that these hypothetical “redemptive spirit” findings could not be derived from a responsible use of his eighteen criteria. However, I have lived in the academic world for over thirty years, and I have a great deal of confidence in the ability of scholars to take Webb’s set of criteria and make a case for almost anything they want. Whether or not my examples are the result of a proper use of Webb’s criteria, the point remains: *the standard is no longer*

what the New Testament says, but rather the point toward which some biblical scholar thinks the Bible was moving. Webb’s redemptive-movement hermeneutic nullifies in principle the moral authority of the entire New Testament.

Webb’s denial of the moral authority of the New Testament means that his system is not a legitimate option for evangelicals whose final authority is the Bible itself, not some better system for which the New Testament was only one step along the way.

7. Claiming that everyone’s position just depends on what verses people choose to prioritize

A different kind of problem is found when R. T. France, Stanley Grenz, and Sarah Sumner assert that our position on the roles of men and women simply depends on which verses we choose to emphasize, as if we were free to make such a decision to emphasize some verses and thereby have less obligation or no obligation to obey others. For example, R. T. France says,

We have seen that fundamental to this issue has been the question which among differing biblical texts or themes is considered to be basic. . . . Once we choose to begin at a given point, everything else will be viewed and interpreted in the light of that starting point. . . . There is no rule of thumb—that is precisely our problem. A judgment has to be made, and not all will make it in the same way. Probably we all have our ‘canon within the canon’ (by which we mean those parts of Scripture with which we feel comfortable, and which say what we would like them to say) which we regard as ‘basic.’ But those instinctive preferences are normally derived from the tradition within which we have been brought up, rather than from an informed and principled choice made on the basis of the texts themselves.⁸¹

Stanley Grenz adopts a similar view in a section in his book titled “The Question of Hermeneutical Priority”:

Yet one question remains: Which Pauline text(s) carry hermeneutical priority in our attempt to understand Paul’s teaching about women in the church? Are we to look to the egalitarian principle the apostle set forth in Galatians 3:28 as the foundation for our understanding of the apostle’s own position? Or do we begin with those passages which seem to place limitation on the service of women (1 Cor 11:3–16; 14:34–35; 1 Tim 2:11–15) and understand the Galatians text

in the light of such restrictions?

Egalitarians often claim that Galatians 3:28 deserves hermeneutical priority. . . . At this point, egalitarians, and not complementarians, are on the right track. . . . The seemingly restrictive texts complementarians cite . . . cannot be universal rules but Paul's attempts to counter the abuses of specific situations.⁸²

Sarah Sumner says we have to decide "which verse(s) should take priority over the others," or "which verse stands in charge as the boss" (which she then calls the "boss verse").⁸³ Elsewhere she claims that we disagree because "we bring so many assumptions to the text," and if we bring egalitarian assumptions we will find egalitarian teaching in the text, but if we bring complementarian assumptions, we will find complementarian teaching in the text.⁸⁴

But this is not the approach of complementarians, nor is it an approach toward Scripture that evangelicals should adopt. This approach essentially claims that various parts of the Bible teach different, self-contradictory positions, so people can just decide what position they want to find in Scripture and then go there and find it! In the end, rather than Scripture having authority over our lives, the result of this process is that we have authority over the Bible and we just go there to find what we want to find.

In contrast to this approach, nowhere in my writings (to take one example of a complementarian position) have I claimed that we must minimize or ignore so-called "egalitarian texts" on the basis of some kind of "hermeneutical priority" of other texts. I do not believe we should treat Scripture that way, because all of it is God's Word, and all of it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). We must not minimize but treat these texts fairly and to remain subject to their authority, and this includes such "egalitarian texts" as Gal 3:28, and the passages about Deborah, Huldah, Phoebe, Priscilla, and Junia(s). Even if we studied all of these texts first and drew conclusions from them before we looked at any "complementarian texts" such as 1 Tim 2:12, these "egalitarian texts" would not lead us to affirm that women could have governing and teaching roles over New Testament churches. The texts would not lead us to affirm that because they do not teach that. They surely honor the valuable ministries of women and their equality in value and dignity, but they do not tell us that women could govern or teach a New Testament church.

But it is difficult to imagine that an egalitarian advocate could do the same with passages such as 1 Cor 14:33–36, 1 Tim 2:11–15, the passages about male elders, and the passages about the twelve male apostles. It would be difficult to believe that an egalitarian could begin with only those texts and reach the conclusion that all roles in the church are open to women

as well as men, because these texts set a pattern that so clearly affirms just the opposite.

I am not saying that we all emphasize every verse of the Bible equally. There will always be passages that a pastor will emphasize more in his preaching and teaching (he will probably spend more time teaching from Romans or 1 Corinthians than from Leviticus, for example), but that is not because this pastor thinks that Romans is part of a "canon within the canon" or that it has more authority. It is rather because Leviticus was written to a situation we no longer find ourselves in, the situation of God's people in the old covenant who had to follow ceremonial rules and regulations. But the New Testament epistles are written to people in the same situation we are in today—members of the New Testament church who live after Jesus' resurrection and before his second coming. Preaching from Leviticus is worthwhile and also "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16), but its application to our situation is less direct and more difficult to understand, and it is not wrong to give it less emphasis in preaching than many of the New Testament books. This question of emphasis, however, is different from an egalitarian claim that implies we can decide to be subject to some parts of Scripture and not others.

I am troubled by the egalitarian claim that it all depends on what texts we choose as basic, because that suggests there are other texts we can decide do not apply to us today and do not have authority over us today. Once again, that position weakens the authority of Scripture in our lives.

The complementarian position does not "limit the application" of the so called "equality texts" in Scripture (such as Gal 3:28), but understands them to be limited by their own contexts and subject matter and wording. This is not wrongly understanding these texts, but is understanding them according to the principles by which we should understand all texts. And we understand these texts in a way that does not require them to nullify or contradict other texts about male leadership in the church.

The two positions are not the same in how they treat the texts they emphasize. Egalitarians *wrongly limit* the application of male leadership texts by saying they *don't apply today to the very same kinds of situations* they applied to when originally written (namely, conduct in the assembled church and the office of elder with governing authority over the church). But egalitarians *wrongly expand* the application of equality texts far beyond the kinds of situations they were originally written to address (as explained above, the "egalitarian texts" were not written to address situations of governing or teaching over the church).

By contrast, the complementarian position *rightly*

applies the texts on male leadership to exactly *the same kind of situations* they applied to when originally written (governing and teaching God's people in the church). And the complementarian position *rightly applies* the "equality texts" to exactly *the same kinds of situations* they applied to when originally written (affirming all sorts of ministries for women except governing or teaching over the assembled church, and affirming the full dignity and value of women in God's sight and in the ministry of the church).

Thus, the two positions clearly differ in the way they interpret and apply biblical texts, not just in which texts they "choose as basic."

In fact, this egalitarian claim that first derives a principle of "equality" from Gal 3:28, and then uses that *general principle* to override the *specific teaching* of texts that talk about church leadership, looks dangerously similar to a procedure that has been used numerous times in the past to deny the authority of Scripture and allow all sorts of false doctrine into the church. For example, in the early part of the twentieth century, liberals routinely appealed to a *vague general principle* of the "love of God" (which surely can be found in many passages) in order to deny that God had any wrath against sin. And once they denied God's wrath, then it was easy to believe that all people everywhere would be saved (for God is a "God of love" and not of wrath). After that, it was also easy to believe that Jesus' death was not a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins—that is, he did not bear the wrath of God against our sins—but rather that his death was somehow an example for us. In this way a vague biblical principle ("God's love") was used to deny many specific passages of Scripture on the wrath of God and on Christ's death, and to deny a major doctrine such as substitutionary atonement.

This is similar to the egalitarian claim that the *vague general principles* of equality and fairness (as derived from Galatians 3:28) require that women have access to the same governing and teaching roles in the church that men do. In this way, vague general principles (equality, fairness) are also used to weaken or nullify specific verses of Scripture.

8. Silencing the Most Relevant Verses by Saying They Are "Disputed"

Another egalitarian method of effectively denying the authority of Scripture is one taken by egalitarian authors Cindy Jacobs, Sarah Sumner, and Rich Nathan, and also by the position paper of The Assemblies of God on "The Role of Women in Ministry." These egalitarians claim that *it is not possible to figure out what the Bible teaches on this issue*, so our decision must be made on the basis of observing what kinds of ministries are effective today. But this procedure effectively silences the ability of Scripture to speak to this

controversy, so it is a different kind of rejection of the authority of Scripture. Cindy Jacobs writes,

As I've studied the so-called "difficult passages" about women, I have concluded that the differing interpretations are rather like that of teaching on end-time eschatology. Throughout the years I've heard excellent sermons on just about every position, all using Scripture, and all sounding as if they had merit!⁸⁵

A few pages later she affirms this principle regarding controversial passages of Scripture:

Controversial passages lacking consensus from godly people of different persuasions usually mean that the passages are not clear enough to resolve with certainty. Therefore we must be tolerant on [sic] different views on those passages.⁸⁶

A similar approach is taken by the Assemblies of God position paper on "The Role of Women in Ministry":

We all agree that Scripture must be our final authority in settling questions of faith and practice. But when born-again, Spirit-filled Christians, following proper hermeneutical principles, come to reasonable but differing interpretations, we do well not to become dogmatic in support of one position.⁸⁷

Sarah Sumner says,

We don't know how to translate 1 Timothy 2, much less interpret it correctly or apply it appropriately today. That's why this passage is so humbling; to some extent it has stumped us all, scholars and practitioners alike.⁸⁸

Rich Nathan writes,

It is not at all plain what Paul meant to communicate to his original readers, plus it is even less plain how Paul's words should be applied today My files include at least fifteen very different interpretations of 1 Timothy 2. . . . To summarize, there is no common agreement on what these individual words mean in 1 Timothy 2:9-15.⁸⁹

The heart of this approach is that sincere Christians like Cindy Jacobs, the leaders of the Assemblies of God, Sarah Sumner, and Rich Nathan are saying that they cannot reach a decision on the meaning of 1 Corinthians 14, 1 Timothy

2, and the passages that say elders are to be the husband of one wife.⁹⁰ It is important to recognize what this does in this debate. It effectively prevents these passages from speaking to this question. If someone says, "Don't talk to us about those passages because nobody can figure out what they mean anyway," then he has essentially said that those passages cannot play a role in his decision about this question. And that means that the passages that most directly speak to the question of women teaching and governing in the church are silenced and excluded from discussion on that very question.

In essence, this approach guarantees that a decision about women teaching and governing in the church will be made without reference to the passages in the Bible that speak most directly to the topic. *It is hard to think of an approach more likely to lead to a wrong decision.*

There is another serious problem with an approach that says we will not make decisions based on any "disputed" passages. If people really adopt this principle, they probably cannot rule out any major heresy in the church. In the fourth-century controversy over the deity of Christ, the Arians (who denied the full deity of Christ) were apparently godly people *who disputed every major verse used by those who argued for the full deity of Christ*. That meant that all the passages on the deity of Christ were "disputed verses," with godly, praying scholars on both sides of the question. In the debate over biblical inerrancy, "godly people" vigorously debate the key verses used to support inerrancy. The "Oneness Pentecostals" who deny the Trinity hotly dispute all the verses brought to support the Trinity.

I wonder how many who take this "avoid disputed passages" approach have ever tried to discuss justification by faith alone with a born-again Roman Catholic. Within the Roman Catholic church are "godly people" *who make every verse on justification by faith alone a point of controversy*. On this principle of "avoiding disputed passages," no Christian could ever come to any conclusion about whether to baptize infants because "godly people" differ on whether infants should be baptized, and every verse is in dispute! To take yet another matter, the matter of spiritual gifts, all the key passages about miraculous gifts are "disputed" by sincere Christians. Must we say about all those passages, "These are disputed passages and evangelical scholars will never reach agreement, therefore, we cannot use these passages to decide what we think about miraculous gifts today?"

Once we begin to use the "avoid disputed passages" approach, we lose the ability to use hundreds of verses in God's Word that he gave us to understand, to believe, and to obey. And when that happens, our churches will be "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14).

A better approach is to say that God has given us his Word so that it can be understood. Therefore we must pursue these "controversial texts" and follow the arguments on both sides, until we come to a satisfactory answer on what they mean. If a position is true to God's Word, it should not be based on "trust me" arguments from scholars who appeal to evidence that lay people cannot examine and evaluate, or who just quote the opinions of other authors to "prove" their points. Even when it involves arguments about Greek and Hebrew words, or ancient history, the evidence should be laid out in clear English, the examples of word usages should be given in English translation, and interested lay persons should be able to look at it and evaluate it for themselves, so that people can come to their own conclusions about what the Bible says.⁹¹

Much of the dispute on this question is not because the Scripture passages are difficult to understand. The "controversy" and "lack of consensus" over the key passages on women in ministry is in many cases caused by lack of information or by false statements being repeated again and again in egalitarian literature.

With regard to most of the crucial questions, the supporting evidence is not something that is restricted to the realm of specialist scholars with technical knowledge. Even in those cases where the argument depends on the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew word, the relevant evidence from ancient literature can usually be presented in a clear and forthright way (in English translation) so that interested lay people have an opportunity to make an informed decision.

Sadly, again and again I find that egalitarian interpretations are accepted *not* because people have *actually seen* the hard and fast evidence that proves these views to be valid, but rather *because they have read the interpretation (not the actual evidence for it) in some evangelical writer whom they trust*. What readers don't realize is that often these writers are depending on the statements of other writers, and those writers on yet other writers, or in a number of cases the egalitarian scholar is advocating an extremely doubtful theory about the evidence that no one has ever before held. But seldom is the actual evidence itself provided. In many cases, that is because it simply does not exist. In other cases, the egalitarian scholar who is trusted has promoted an unusual understanding of the ancient world or a novel interpretation held by no other expert in the field before or since, yet the lay person believes and trusts the egalitarian scholar while having no idea how strange that scholar's views actually are, or how widely what the egalitarian author claims wanders from the actual truth about the ancient world.⁹²

This consideration affects claims such as the idea that the Greek word for "head" could mean "source," the idea that Eph 5:21 teaches "mutual submission," the idea that there were women teaching false doctrine in Ephesus when Paul wrote 1

Timothy 2, the idea that the word translated “have authority over” in 1 Tim 2:12 can mean “commit murder” or “proclaim oneself the originator of a man,” and so forth. For all of these points and more, there is no clear factual evidence from ancient literature (from word usage, similar grammatical constructions, etc.) to support the claims made. The necessary evidence does not exist and no egalitarian author has shown that it exists. Yet thousands of people are making decisions based on these claims because they think the relevant evidence really does exist. In many cases they are believing a myth.

To say that we should be tolerant of different views about the end times is understandable. Whether someone is an amillennialist or a premillennialist, or a pretribulational or posttribulational premillennialist, does not make very much difference in how he lives the Christian life. And since these views involve predictions of the future, they will continue to be impossible to resolve with certainty until the future arrives! It should not surprise us that God has left us with some aspects of mystery concerning the end times.

But the question of whether women should teach and govern churches is a different matter. Either we decide to have women pastors and elders or we do not. It is impossible to do both at the same time. Do we think this topic is something that God cares about? Do we think it is something that he counts as a matter of obedience to him? Or do we think that God does not really care what we do about this question?

The issue of roles of men and women in the church affects, to some degree, every Christian in the world, for it affects whom we choose as leaders in our churches, and it has a significant effect on what kinds of ministries the men and women in our churches carry out. When we say, “It is impossible to decide what the Bible teaches on this,” we imply that God did not think this to be an important enough issue to give us clear guidance in his Word. We imply that God has left us instructions that are unclear or confusing on this issue. Do we really want to say this about God and his Word, on a topic that affects every church in the world every week of the year, for the entire church age until Christ returns?

I do not believe that this subject is unimportant to God. Nor do I believe that he has left instructions that are confusing or unclear. Yes, there is controversy about this matter today, but the controversy has come about because of other factors, not because God’s Word is confusing or unclear.

Finally, there is one other difference between questions about the end times and questions about women’s roles in the church. There have been controversies about the end times since the very early centuries of the church’s history. But there have not been controversies about whether the roles of pastor and elder are reserved for men. Apart from a few sectarian movements, the entire Christian church from the first century

until the 1850s agreed that only men could be pastors and elders, and the vast majority agreed that only men could do public Bible teaching of men and women. From the 1850s until the 1950s in the United States, women pastors were a tiny minority, but over 98 percent of evangelical churches (over 99 percent of the Christian church if Roman Catholic and Orthodox groups are included) had only men as pastors.⁹³ Allowing women to be ordained began with some liberal Protestant denominations in the 1950s and spread to a number of evangelical groups under the influence of evangelical feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. Before the advent of evangelical feminist writings in the 1970s, today’s “disputed passages” on women in ministry were not thought to be unclear. This matter is much different from disputes over the end times.

9. Saying that Women Can Teach “Under the Authority” of the Pastors or Elders

Another liberal tendency to reject the authority of Scripture in our lives is found in the claim that a woman may teach Scripture to men if she does so “under the authority of the pastor or elders.” I say this is indicative of a liberal tendency because on no other area of conduct would we be willing to say that someone can do what the Bible says not to do as long as the pastor and elders give their approval.

This position is found frequently in evangelical churches. Many people who hold this position say they genuinely want to uphold male leadership in the church, and they are doing so when the woman teaches “under the authority of the elders,” who are men (or of the pastor, who is a man).

This is not a commonly held view among egalitarian authors,⁹⁴ for they do not think only men should be elders, or that women need any approval from men to teach the Bible. But this view is often stated in phone calls or e-mails to The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood office, and I often hear it in personal conversations and discussions of church policies.

Is it really true that a woman is obeying the Bible if she preaches a sermon “under the authority of the pastor and elders”?

The question here is, what does the Bible say? It does not merely say, “Preserve some kind of male authority in the congregation.” It does not say, “A woman may not teach men unless she is under the authority of the elders.” Rather, it says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12).

Can a pastor or the elders of a church give a woman permission to disobey this statement of Scripture? Certainly

not! Can a woman do what the Bible says *not* to do and excuse it by saying “I’m under the authority of the elders”? Would we say that the elders of a church could tell people “under their authority” that they have permission to disobey *other* passages of Scripture? What would we think of someone who said, “I’m going to rob a bank today because I need money and my pastor has given me permission, and I’m under his authority”? Or of a person who said, “I’m committing adultery because I’m unhappy in my marriage and my elders have given me permission, so I’m still under the authority of my elders”? Or of someone who said, “I’m committing perjury because I don’t want to go to jail and my pastor has given me permission, and I’m under his authority”? We would dismiss those statements as ridiculous, but they highlight the general principle that *no pastor or church elder or bishop or any other church officer has the authority to give people permission to disobey God’s Word.*

Someone may answer, “But we are respecting the Bible’s *general principle* of male headship in the church.” But Paul did not say, “*Respect the general principle of male headship in your church.*” He said, “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man*” (1 Tim 2:12). We do not have the right to change what the Bible says and then obey some new “general principle of the Bible” we have made up.

Nor do we have the right to take a specific teaching of Scripture and abstract some general principle from it (such as a principle of “male headship”) and then say that principle gives us the right *to disobey the specific commands of Scripture* that fall under that principle. We are not free to abstract general principles from the Bible however we wish, and then invent opinions about how those principles will apply in our situations. Such a procedure would allow people to evade any command of Scripture they were uncomfortable with. We would become a law unto ourselves, no longer subject to the authority of God’s word.

We could try this same procedure with some other passages. Would we think it right to say that the Bible teaches that men should pray “without anger or quarreling, *unless they quarrel under the authority of the elders*”? Or that women should adorn themselves “with modesty and self-control, *unless the elders give them permission to dress immodestly*”? Or would we say that those who are “rich in this present age” should “be generous and ready to share, *unless the elders give them permission to be stingy and miserly*”? (See 1 Tim 6:17–19). But if we would not add, “unless the elders give permission to do otherwise under their authority” to any of the other commands in Scripture, neither should we add that evasion to 1 Tim 2:12.

If a woman says, “I will teach the Bible to men only when I am under the authority of the elders,” she has become no different from men who teach the Bible. No man in any

church should teach the Bible publicly unless he also is under the authority of the elders (or pastor, or other church officers) in that church. The general principle is that anyone who does Bible teaching in a church should be subject to the established governing authority in that church, whether it is a board of elders, a board of deacons, a church governing council, or the church board. Both men and women alike are subject to that requirement. Therefore this “under the authority of the elders” position essentially says there is no difference between what men can do and what women can do in teaching the Bible to men.

Do we really think that is what Paul meant? Do we really think that Paul did not mean to say anything that applied only to women when he said, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12)?

10. Evading New Testament Commands Regarding a Specific Activity by Saying, “We Are Not a Church”

And yet another liberal tendency is the claim that since an organization is not a church, it does not have to follow the New Testament commands regarding such activities as women teaching the Bible to men. The reason I say this is indicative of a liberal tendency to avoid the authority of Scripture is that, while we may agree that parachurch organizations are not required to do *everything* that the New Testament commands for churches, nevertheless, when a parachurch organization *does those same things* that the New Testament talks about for churches, *it is required to follow the same rules* that the New Testament lays down for churches. It is not as if we can set up a separate organization next door to a church and then say that the rules no longer apply to us.

This is another argument that is not usually made by egalitarian writers, because to make this argument someone has to assume that the New Testament restrictions on women in ministry *do* apply to a church situation. That is an assumption egalitarians are not willing to make.

But this argument is frequently made by people who *claim* to be complementarian and say they support male headship in the home and the church. Yet they say *because they are part of a parachurch organization* (such as a seminary, a mission board, or a campus ministry), the New Testament teachings on women not teaching or having authority over men do not apply to their organization. I have listed this argument here as an “egalitarian claim” because it often functions in practice to advance egalitarian goals and to encourage women to function in ways contrary to New Testament teachings. It is thus a kind of “closet egalitarian” argument.

To respond to this argument it is necessary to point out,

first, that there is some truth in the argument, but it is not the whole truth. There is some truth regarding some kinds of New Testament commands, but it is not the whole truth regarding the commands relating to women's roles in ministry situations.

The *truth* in this argument is that parachurch organizations *do not function in every way as churches do*. Take, for example, some of the parachurch organizations I have been involved with. As far as I know, Phoenix Seminary, where I teach, has never

- baptized anyone
- ordained anyone to the ministry
- conducted a wedding or a funeral for anyone
- held morning Sunday school classes for children
- held Sunday morning worship services

Nor does Christian Heritage Academy of Northbrook, Illinois, a Christian school that my children attended, do such things. Nor does Multnomah Publishers. Nor does the Evangelical Theological Society, a professional academic society of which I have been a member of for many years. As a general practice, I do not think these activities are carried out by Campus Crusade for Christ or Focus on the Family or Promise Keepers or The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. These are all "parachurch" organizations in that they serve special purposes alongside the work of the church, and there are some "church" activities they do not do. If asked why they do not do these things, they will probably answer, "Because we are not a church."

But that is not the whole story. In another sense, *there is only one church*, the worldwide Body of Christ, and these organizations are all part of it. They are just not part of any one local church or any one denomination.

In addition, these organizations seek to obey many commands that were first written to churches. They don't say, "First Corinthians was written to a church, and we are not a church, so we don't have to obey 1 Corinthians." All these organizations would probably think it important to follow the procedures of Matthew 18:15–17 in dealing with cases where one person sins against another. But these instructions assume they will be carried out by a church: "If he refuses to listen to them, *tell it to the church*" (Matt 18:17).

The same is true of mission boards. If their missionaries baptize new converts they will think it important for the missionaries to obey the New Testament teachings on baptism (and not baptize people indiscriminately whether they profess faith or not, for example).⁹⁵ They do not say, "We are not a church, so we don't have to follow the New Testament teachings about baptism, which were written to a church."

All of the New Testament epistles were written to

churches (or to individuals such as Timothy and Titus and Philemon who were involved in local churches). Therefore the argument that "we are not a church, so we don't need to follow the instructions written to churches," taken to its logical conclusion, would mean that parachurch organizations do not have to obey anything written in the entire New Testament! Surely that conclusion is wrong.

How then can we know when "we are not a church" is a valid reason and when it is not? I think the answer will be found as we look at a number of cases where the statement "we are not a church" is a good reason, and a number of other cases where it is not a good reason.

What follows is a list of some New Testament commands to churches (left column) and some examples of parachurch organizations that should *not* be expected to follow those commands (right column).

New Testament command	Parachurch organization that would not follow this command
Hebrews 10:25—"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."	The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, whose members "meet together" once a year. (But going to church once a year is hardly the frequency of attendance this verse has in mind.)
Hebrews 13:17—"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account."	The Evangelical Theological Society, a professional academic society. (When I was president in 1999, I don't think any of the twenty-five hundred members obeyed me for the entire year, or even considered it an option! Nor did I think that I had pastoral responsibility for their spiritual condition, as this verse assumes leaders will have in local churches.)
1 Corinthians 14:26—"When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation."	My "Introduction to Theology" class at Phoenix Seminary, where I, not all the students, do the teaching when we "come together."
1 Timothy 3:2—"Therefore an overseer must be . . . the husband of one wife"	Bible Study Fellowship, an organization run entirely by women. (They do not require any of their leaders to be the "husband of one wife"!)

Titus 1:5—"This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you"	Multnomah Publishers, a book publisher that has no intention of trying to appoint elders in every town in which they sell books, or even in every town in which they have employees.
Matthew 28:19—"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"	Focus on the Family, a worldwide ministry through radio and other media (they do not attempt to baptize anyone who listens to their programs or calls them for advice, but they expect local churches to do that).

The following chart contains another list of New Testament commands (left column) and some examples of ways parachurch organizations should *not* ignore or disobey these commands, but should obey them (right column).

New Testament command	Example of situation where a parachurch organization should obey this command
1 Corinthians 11:27—"Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup."	Whenever members of a parachurch organization celebrate the Lord's Supper. (For example, if the teachers and administrators of a Christian school celebrate the Lord's Supper at a retreat, they should not say, "We are not a church, so we don't have to follow this command, and people don't have to examine their lives before partaking.")
1 Corinthians 14:40—"But all things should be done decently and in order."	Whenever a group of Christians meets for worship, prayer, and study of the Bible. (For example, members of a Campus Crusade prayer meeting should not say, "All kinds of disorder and irreverent behavior are fine here, since we are not a church.")

1 Timothy 2:8—"I desire then that in every place the men should pray. . . without anger or quarreling"	Whenever men, or men and women, meet to pray in a group. (For example, a Promise Keepers prayer group should not say, "Anger and quarreling are OK here, since we are not a church").
1 Timothy 2:9—"likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control"	Whenever a group of Christian men and women meet to pray (For example, members of an InterVarsity prayer meeting on a college campus should not say, "It's OK for women to dress immodestly here, and not to show self-control, since we are not a church.")
1 Thessalonians 5:20-21—"Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good."	Whenever a group of Christians allows the gift of prophecy to function. (For example, a charismatic prayer group meeting at Regent University in Virginia Beach should not say, "We do not have to test prophecies, since we are not a church.")
1 Corinthians 14:27-28—"If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God."	Whenever a group of Christians allows the gift of tongues to function. (For example, leaders of a charismatic worship service on some college campus should not say, "We are not a church, so it's OK if we have many messages in tongues with no interpretation.")
1 Timothy 3:2-3—"Therefore an overseer must be . . . sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable . . . not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money."	Whenever a parachurch organization chooses people for leadership positions. (For example, Campus Crusade for Christ should not say, "We can have staff members who are quarrelsome, violent, and occasionally get drunk, because we are not a church.")

2 Timothy 2:24–25—“And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth”

Whenever a parachurch organization puts people in a teaching position. (For example, the leaders of Walk Thru the Bible should not say, “We can hire Bible teachers who are impatient and quarrelsome and harsh with people because we are not a church.”)

In each of these cases, the members of a parachurch organization would be likely to use the very verses I quoted in the left column to correct any such abuses that might arise, even though all of those verses were written to a church, not to a parachurch organization.

What makes the difference then? *How can we know when a New Testament command applies to a parachurch organization and when it does not?* I think the solution is not a complex one, but is fairly straightforward.

The principle that allows us to distinguish between commands that parachurch organizations should obey and those they do not need to obey is a simple one. It is a general principle that Christians often use, sometimes even instinctively, in the application of Scripture to all of life. The principle is that *we should obey the command when we are doing the same activity, or a very similar activity, as the command is talking about.*

Therefore, Multnomah Publishers *should not* “appoint elders in every town” (Titus 1:5) where it sells books because it is not planting churches in a region, as Paul and Titus were. On the other hand, if a mission organization is planting churches in a region, it *should* make plans for how it could “appoint elders in every town” by raising up indigenous Christian leaders. Similarly, the Evangelical Theological Society might never celebrate the Lord’s Supper at one of its meetings. But if it did decide to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, then it should follow Paul’s directions in 1 Corinthians 11.

The principle then is simple: *Parachurch organizations should follow New Testament commands written to churches when those organizations are doing the same activities that the command is talking about.*

How then does that conclusion apply to women’s roles in parachurch ministries?

With all of the thousands of parachurch organizations in the world today, and the hundreds of thousands of activities carried out by those organizations, situations will vary widely. Before any decisions are made, leaders in each organization will need to ask for God’s wisdom, according to James 1:5–8,

in order to understand how their situations are *similar to* or *different from* the situations and activities found in the New Testament. Although in some cases it will be difficult at first to say how much the situation is similar and how much it is different, I believe in most cases the application of this principle will be quite clear.

Teaching the Bible to an assembled group of men and women is so much like the situation Paul had in mind when he said, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (1 Tim 2:12), that only men should do this. I believe that such a principle should apply not only to meetings in local churches, but also to Bible conferences, weekend retreats, and annual meetings held by parachurch organizations or denominations. For similar reasons, I do not think it appropriate for women to hold Bible teaching positions in Christian colleges and seminaries, because this responsibility is very similar to the Bible teaching role of elders in the New Testament, or even to the role of a mature, senior elder training younger elders.

The activities and responsibilities that a military chaplain carries out are not significantly different from the activities and responsibilities carried out by a pastor/elder in a local church. Therefore, just as ordination to the pastorate is restricted to men, so appointment to the military chaplaincy, to be consistent, should also be restricted to men.⁹⁶ However, if there are military chaplaincy roles that do not involve Bible teaching or governing authority over groups of Christian men, then such roles are appropriate for women as well as men.

A member of an elder board in a church has great responsibility for the lives, conduct, and spiritual well-being of members of the church. Christians are to “be subject” to the elders (1 Pet 5:5), and the author of Hebrews says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account” (Heb 13:17).

But the member of a parachurch governing board has authority over an *organization*, and over certain *activities* that people carry out within that organization, not over the entire lives of the members. So, for example, I consider myself to be subject to the authority of my pastor and the elders at Scottsdale Bible Church (of which I am a member), but I don’t think of my life as subject to the authority of the governing board of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (of which I am also a member). And the members of the board of a Christian school have authority over the school and its activities, but they do not have elder-like authority over the lives of the parents who make up the association that owns that school.⁹⁷ In fact, if an employee of a parachurch organization is involved in conduct that brings reproach on the organization (for example, if a Christian school teacher were discovered in sexual immorality), the organization would dismiss the

employee, but the elder board at the teacher's church, not the school board, would pursue church discipline for that teacher.

Therefore when Paul says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man," the kind of authority he has in mind is *sufficiently different* from the kind of authority a governing board member generally has in parachurch organizations, and the argument, "We are not a church" is a helpful distinction in this situation.

To take a somewhat different example, the person serving as the academic dean in a theological seminary is supervising a number of men (the male faculty members) in their Bible teaching ministry. He does "exercise authority" over these men with respect to what they teach and their conduct as they teach and relate to students and to each other. His role is very much like that of a pastor or elder to these faculty members, and therefore it is appropriate for only men to have this role.⁹⁸

To take another example, the campus director of a parachurch ministry on a college campus (such as Campus Crusade or InterVarsity) has a supervisory authority over the other staff members on that campus that is very similar to the role of a pastor or elder in a church, especially as the pastor or elder supervises other ministry activities in the church. Therefore it is not appropriate for a woman to have the role of campus director and "exercise authority" in such a direct way over the men in that ministry. That would be doing what Paul said not to do.

On the other hand, supervisory positions in other types of organizations may be different. Are these roles mostly like the role of a pastor or elder, overseeing and supervising people's whole lives as they minister to others? Or are they more like the role of a supervisor in a secular workplace, overseeing only specific kinds of on-the-job activities? It will require godly wisdom to decide in each situation.

The commands in the New Testament do not say that Christians should follow them "only in church settings." This is a crucial point. Some New Testament commands do *not* apply to parachurch organizations not because they are not churches, but because *they are not performing the activity mentioned in those commands*. The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood may never observe the Lord's Supper together, and therefore they will not have to follow the New Testament directions for the Lord's Supper. But *if they ever do observe the Lord's Supper*, then they will have to follow those commands. Whether CBMW is a church is not the crucial point. The crucial point is whether that organization is carrying out an activity for which the New Testament gives commands.

We must continue to insist strongly that the New Testament applies to *all* Christians in *all* societies and *all*

cultures and *all* situations. Its commands are valid whenever Christians carry out the activities included in those commands. I cannot imagine the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians, "Follow these instructions if you are doing this as part of the church in Corinth, but if you are doing this as part of a Christian organization outside the church, then you do not have to obey my commands." The New Testament never speaks that way, or hints at any such way to "escape" from being accountable to obey it. This should make us reject any claims that allow us to ignore New Testament commands that speak to the same kind of situations we are in. Otherwise, the "we are not a church" argument will function as a "closet egalitarian" argument that will effectively nullify the authority of Scripture to govern this area of our lives.

11. Putting Church Tradition Above the Bible

A different kind of rejection of the Bible's ultimate authority is found in the view of Kevin Giles that theological differences cannot be settled by appealing to the Bible, so the historical tradition of the church must be the basis for our decisions. In his book *The Trinity and Subordinationism*,⁹⁹ Giles explicitly tells readers that he will not argue his case from Scripture:

In seeking to make a response to my fellow evangelicals who subordinate the Son to the Father, I do not appeal directly to particular scriptural passages to establish who is right or wrong. . . . I seek rather to prove that orthodoxy rejects this way of reading the Scriptures.¹⁰⁰

Giles has a reason for not appealing to Scripture: he does not think that citing verses from the Bible can resolve theological questions in general. He thinks that the Bible can be read in different ways, and even though "given texts cannot mean just anything," he says that "more than one interpretation is possible."¹⁰¹

Giles even admits that it is possible to find evidence for the eternal subordination of the Son in Scripture: "I concede immediately that the New Testament *can* be read to teach that the Son is *eternally* subordinated to the Father."¹⁰² But for him that is not decisive, because, as he tells us at the outset, "This book is predicated on the view that the Bible can often be read in more than one way, even on important matters."¹⁰³ Giles's fundamental approach should disturb evangelicals, for it means that appeals to Scripture can have no effect in his system. He can just reply, "Yes, the Bible can be read that way, but other readings are possible." And thus the voice of God's Word is effectively silenced in the church.

How then does Giles think we should find out which view is right? The answer is found in church history: "In

relation to the doctrine of the Trinity my argument is that the tradition should prescribe the correct reading.”¹⁰⁴ For Giles then the tradition of the church becomes the supreme authority, an approach similar to Roman Catholicism but contradictory to the Reformation doctrine of *sola Scriptura* (“Scripture alone”), and contrary to beliefs of evangelical Protestants.

Finally, it should be noted that Giles’s understanding of the historic view of the church on the Trinity is deeply flawed. He continually blurs the distinction between the heresy of subordinationism (the view that the Son had a lesser being than the Father) and the orthodox view that the Son had a subordinate role but was equal in his being (this he also calls subordinationism, making the book simply a contribution to confusion on this topic) (16-17, 60-69). He even equates modern complementarians with ancient Arians who denied the deity of the Son (66). An extensive and insightful review of Giles’ book by Peter Schemm also points out several significant inaccuracies in Giles’s reporting of the views of others, so his book should be read with caution.¹⁰⁵

12. Putting Experience Above the Bible

Another procedure egalitarians use to avoid obedience to the New Testament directions concerning men and women is to place such a strong emphasis on experience that the teachings of Scripture no longer are the highest authority. This occurs when egalitarians such as Cindy Jacobs say that God’s blessing on the ministries of women pastors shows that what they are doing is right, and therefore objections based on what Scripture teaches are discarded. Jacobs argues,

Women in numerous different ministries teach both men and women and are producing godly, lasting fruit for the Kingdom. Would that be happening if their work wasn’t sanctioned by God? Wouldn’t their ministries simply be dead and lifeless if God weren’t anointing them?¹⁰⁶

In personal conversation, people will sometimes say, “I heard Anne Graham Lotz preach and it changed my mind about women preaching.” Or they will hear Beth Moore preach at a conference and think, “This is such good Bible teaching. How can it be wrong?” But is this reasoning true? Does the evident blessing of God on some women pastors prove that what they are doing is right?

It is not surprising to me that there is some measure of blessing when women act as pastors and teach the Word of God, whether in a local congregation, at a Bible conference, or before a television audience. This is because God’s Word is powerful, and God brings blessing through his Word to those who hear it. But the fact that God blesses the preaching of his Word does not make it right for a woman to be the preacher.

God is a God of grace and there are many times when he blesses his people even when they disobey him.

One example where God brought blessing in spite of disobedience is the story of Samson in Judges 13–16. Even though Samson broke God’s laws by taking a Philistine wife (Judges 14), sleeping with a prostitute at Gaza (Judges 16:1–3), and living with Delilah, a foreign woman he had not married (Judges 16:4–22), God still empowered him mightily to defeat the Philistines again and again. This does not mean that Samson’s sin was right in God’s sight, but only that God in his grace empowered Samson *in spite of his disobedience*. Eventually God’s protection and power were withdrawn, “but he did not know that the LORD had left him” (Judges 16:20), and the Philistines captured and imprisoned him (v. 21).

If God waited until Christians were perfect before he brought blessing to their ministries, there would be no blessing on any ministry in this life! God’s grace is given to us in spite of our failings. But that does not mean that it is right to disobey Scripture, or that God will always give such blessing.

If a woman goes on serving as an elder or pastor, I believe she is doing so outside the will of God, and she has no guarantee of God’s protection on her life. By continuing to act in ways contrary to Scripture, she puts herself spiritually in a dangerous position. I expect that eventually even the measure of blessing God has allowed on her ministry will be withdrawn (though I cannot presume that this will be true in every case).

One example of this is the tragic story of Aimee Semple McPherson (1890–1944) at the end of her ministry. Ruth Tucker recounts the story as follows:

Aimee Semple McPherson, one of the most celebrated evangelists in the early decades of the twentieth century . . . was a crowd-pleaser who played up to her audiences with a dramatic flair, never seeming too concerned that her eccentricities might demean the cause of Christ. Nor was she particularly careful about her personal life: she left her first husband to go on the road as an itinerant evangelist, later remarried, and finally claimed to have been kidnapped—a story challenged by reporters, who insisted that she was hiding out with another man. . . . She cannot be excused for apparent moral lapses . . . but her ministry does demonstrate the power of God that often prevails despite sin and failure.¹⁰⁷

There is no doubt that God accomplished much good through Aimee Semple McPherson, including the founding of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel and of her church, the 5,300-seat Angeles Temple in Los Angeles. C. M. Robeck says, “She was undoubtedly the most prominent

woman leader Pentecostalism has produced to date.”¹⁰⁸ She was perhaps the most prominent woman leader in the entire history of Christianity in America.

But there was much personal tragedy after she began preaching widely around 1915, including a divorce in 1921, the scandal of her disappearance while swimming off Venice Beach in 1926, followed by her subsequent discovery in Mexico a month later and allegations (never proven but widely believed) about an affair with a former employee, a nervous breakdown in 1930, another failed marriage in 1931, and death from “an apparently accidental overdose of a medical prescription” in 1944.¹⁰⁹

Arguments based on experience are seldom conclusive. Even today, in the strongly egalitarian popular culture of the United States, by far the largest and most successful ministries (by any measure), the ministries that seem to have been most blessed by God, have men as senior pastors. Even those few large evangelical churches that have women as part of their pastoral team (such as Willow Creek Community Church) have a man (such as Bill Hybels) as the senior pastor and men do most of the preaching. And evangelical churches with women pastors are few in comparison to the large number of churches that have only men as pastors and elders.

This fact should not be lightly dismissed. If it really were God’s ideal for men and women to share equally in eldership and pastoral leadership roles, then at some point in the last two thousand years, and especially today, would we not expect to see a remarkable blessing of God on some churches that have an equal number of men and women as elders and that share the main Bible teaching responsibilities equally between men and women pastors? If this is God’s ideal, then why have we never seen God’s evident blessing on such a church even once throughout the millions of churches that have existed in the last two thousand years?

Liberal denominations that ordain women pastors have continually declined in membership and income. Historian Ruth Tucker summarizes this trend:

The role of women in the church in the twentieth century will perplex future historians. . . . Those historians who dig deeper will discover that the mainline churches that were offering women the greatest opportunities were simultaneously declining in membership and influence. Some of these churches, which once had stood firm on the historic orthodox faith, were becoming too sophisticated to take the Bible at face value. The gains that have been made, then, are mixed at best.¹¹⁰

Tucker’s assessment can be supported by observing the

membership trends in the large liberal denominations that have been the strongest proponents of women’s ordination:¹¹¹

Denomination	1971	1980	1990	2000
American Baptist Church	1,693,423	1,922,467	1,873,731	1,767,462
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	5,500,687	5,273,662	5,226,798	5,113,418
Episcopal Church	3,024,724	2,823,399	2,445,286	2,314,756
Presbyterian Church – USA	4,649,440	4,012,825	3,553,335	3,141,566
United Methodist Church	11,535,986	11,552,111	11,091,032	10,350,629

Not all the churches in those denominations have women pastors, of course. And not all of the individual congregations within those denominations have adopted a liberal view of the Bible. Therefore this information must be used with caution. Anecdotal evidence that people have told me over the years suggests that a detailed study of those denominations would show that within those denominations the congregations that have grown the most also have the most conservative views of the Bible and have resisted the trend to have women pastors, but I do not have actual data to prove this (and I am sure that people could point to individual exceptions).¹¹² In any case, the argument that churches must ordain women pastors in order to do effective evangelism and grow in modern society simply is not supported by the evidence.

When people say there is “much blessing” from the ministries of women pastors, I do not think they are able to see all the consequences. Once a woman pastor and women elders are installed in a church, several other consequences will follow:

- (1) Many of the most conservative, faithful, Bible-believing members of the church will leave, convinced that the church is disobeying Scripture and that they cannot in good conscience support it any longer.¹¹³
- (2) Some of those who stay will still believe that the Bible teaches that women should not be elders, but they will support the leadership of the church. Many of them will think that the leaders they respect are encouraging a practice of disobedience to Scripture, and this will tend to erode people’s confidence in Scripture and other areas as well.

- (3) Those who are persuaded that the Bible allows women as pastors will usually accept one or more of the methods of interpretation I discussed in previous chapters, methods that tend to erode and undermine the effective authority of Scripture in our lives. Therefore, they will be likely to adapt such methods in evading the force of other passages of Scripture in the future.
- (4) A church with female elders or pastors will tend to become more and more “feminized”¹¹⁴ over time, with women holding most of the major leadership positions and men constituting a smaller and smaller percentage of the congregation.
- (5) Male leadership in the home will also be eroded, for people will reason instinctively if not explicitly that if women can function as leaders in the family of God, the church, then why should women not be able to function as well as men in leadership roles in the home? This influence will not be sudden or immediate, but will increase over time.

All this is to say that the “evident blessing” that God gives when women preach the Bible is not the only result of such preaching. There are negative consequences as well.

What is right and wrong must be determined by the Bible, not by our experiences or our evaluation of the results of certain actions. Determining right and wrong by means of results is often known as “the end justifies the means.” It is a dangerous approach to take in ethical decisions, because it so easily encourages disobedience to Scripture.

In 1966, Joseph Fletcher published *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*.¹¹⁵ He argued that people at times needed to break God’s moral laws in the Bible in order to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. But as these ideas worked their way through American society, the “new morality” of Fletcher’s situation ethics brought about a tremendous erosion of moral standards and widespread disobedience to all of God’s moral laws.

If I say that women should be pastors because it brings good results, *even if the Bible says otherwise*, then I have simply capitulated to situation ethics. What is right and wrong must be determined by the teachings of Scripture, not by looking at the results of actions that violate Scripture and then saying those actions are right.

J. I. Packer explains that one of the characteristics of theological liberalism is “an optimistic view of cultured humanity’s power to perceive God by reflecting on its experience.”¹¹⁶ Thus, *experience* rather than the Bible becomes the ultimate standard in theology. If we decide that women

and men can have all the same roles in the church primarily because we have seen blessing on the work of women preachers and Bible teachers, such an egalitarian argument leads us toward theological liberalism.

I am not saying that experience or personal testimonies should be disregarded as we think about the teachings of the Bible. But experience and personal testimony can never prove something contrary to what the Bible teaches. If we begin to go in that direction, then we leave ourselves wide open to accepting such practices as praying to the saints based on some people’s belief that those prayers have been answered, or accepting arguments and testimonies claiming that Christians should always be “healthy and wealthy,” based on the experiences of some who teach this. Basing our doctrine on experience alone can lead us in any direction.

During the present controversy over women in leadership roles in the church, God has continued to allow a measure of blessing (for a time at least) on some churches that have women pastors and women elders, and on women who teach the Bible to congregations of men and women. This gives us an opportunity to decide whether we will follow his Word or allow ourselves to be led away from his Word by experiences that seem to bring blessing to people. Though not everyone will agree with me at this point, I believe this is a test of our faithfulness to God and to his Word in our generation. Eventually the consequences of each decision will become plain.

13. Putting a Subjective Sense of “Calling” Above the Bible

In a similar way, a liberal tendency to reject the authority of Scripture is seen whenever egalitarians claim that if a woman has a genuine call from God for a pastoral ministry, we have no right to oppose that call, and so the teachings of Scripture on this topic are nullified. This argument is often made by women who believe that God has called them to become pastors. Millicent Hunter, whom *Charisma* magazine identifies as “pastor of 3,000-member Baptist Worship Center in Philadelphia,” says that the current generation of women ministers is emerging with more boldness. “They are coming out of the woodwork with an ‘I don’t care what you think; this is what God called me to do’ type of attitude.”¹¹⁷

Sarah Sumner insists that God called her to be a theology professor:

I didn’t ask God to grant me the grace to enter seminary and complete my doctoral work. That was his idea. He designed the plan; he’s the one who saw me through.¹¹⁸

She encourages other women to follow God's calling no matter what others may say:

It is not Anne Graham Lotz's spiritual obligation to sit down with the leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention and convince them that God gave her as a preacher. . . . If God gave her as a preacher, then she is a preacher, even if someone claims that that's impossible. . . . You are who you are no matter what. . . . God decides your calling. God decides your spiritual giftedness. . . . If the Spirit of God has given you as a pastor, you are a pastor, even if you're not employed as one.¹¹⁹

The following statement from a personal letter is typical of many that come to the office of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood:

What will they answer, when before the throne of God, as to exactly why they didn't permit one that the Lord Himself *called* to teach, even a woman? . . . Am I any less called by God to do according to His purpose in my life because I am a woman?

Is this argument persuasive? Does God actually call some women to preach and teach his Word to men and women alike? Does he call some women to be pastors and elders?

God never calls people to disobey his Word. Our decision on this matter must be based on the objective teaching of the Bible, not on some person's subjective experience, no matter how godly or sincere that person is. This egalitarian claim is another form of the question, "Will we take Scripture or experience as our ultimate guide?"

I agree that people may have subjective experiences of God's presence and blessing that are genuine and real. But it is easy to make a mistake in understanding the meaning of those experiences. If a woman finds God's blessing and anointing when she preaches, then does that mean God is calling her to be a pastor, or does it mean that he is calling her to teach the Bible to women, in accordance with his Word, and that he will give much blessing in that task? If we had only the subjective experience alone to go on, it would be impossible to be certain that we had reached the right answer, because we would have only our own human interpretations of the event, not an interpretation given in God's own words.

What a woman perceives as a call from God to a pastoral ministry may be a genuine call to some other full-time ministry that is approved by Scripture. Many ministries that include Bible teaching are open to women. It may be that a strong sense of calling from God is in fact a calling from God to these kinds of ministries.

14. Putting Contemporary Prophecies Above the Bible

Another tendency leading toward a theologically liberal rejection of the supreme authority of Scripture is the claim of Cindy Jacobs and others who affirm that many contemporary prophecies are saying that God wants women to teach and preach to both sexes, or to be in pastoral leadership roles, and so the contemporary prophecies take precedence over the teaching of Scripture. Jacobs, who speaks widely in charismatic and Pentecostal circles, writes,

Of one thing I am certain: *God is calling women today in a greater way than He ever has before.* Major prophetic voices are prophesying all around the world that this is the time to find a way to release women into the ministry.¹²⁰

Even if there are prophecies from other Christians saying that a certain woman is gifted in Bible teaching, or even that she should become a pastor or elder, this does not mean we should accept these as genuine words from God. Paul commands that when Christians allow prophecies in the church, they are to "test everything" and to "hold fast what is good" (1 Thess 5:20–21). This implies that some prophecies, and some things in some prophecies, are not good. Mature charismatic and Pentecostal leaders recognize that it is difficult, even for someone who has a prophetic gifting and has used it effectively for many years, to be sure whether any specific prophecy is from God, and whether all of it or just parts of it are from God. This is why Paul adds a provision for testing by others who hear the prophecy, both in 1 Thess 5:20–21 and in 1 Cor 14:29.¹²¹ Prophecies must be tested especially for their conformity to Scripture.

The people who give prophecies saying it is time to release women into ministries of teaching and having authority over men may be sincere, committed Christians. But it is possible for sincere, committed Christians to make mistakes, and even to be led astray by their own desires or by evil spirits masquerading as "angels of light" and giving a subjective impression that feels so much like a genuine prophetic impulse: "even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Cor 11:14–15).

The only safe way to guard against this is to test prophecies by Scripture. Prophecies that contradict Scripture are in error. We return to the fundamental question: What does the Bible teach? No genuine prophecy from the Holy Spirit is going to lead people to contradict or disobey his Word.

15. Putting Unique Circumstances Above the Bible

Yet another rejection of the ultimate authority of Scripture is found in claims like that of John Arnott of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, that this is a unique time in history and therefore the old prohibitions against women being pastors or teaching the Bible to men no longer apply:

Women readers, be encouraged: your anointing will make room for you! The desperate need of the hour is not merely for people who are trained and educated, but for people of God who are anointed and can bring God's kingdom to a broken, hurting, desperate world through signs, wonders and the power of the Holy Spirit.

All Christians must come to terms with the fact that about 85 percent of the world's population is lost. And the lost are really lost! Under these desperate conditions, why would anyone stand in the way of another who felt called of God to help bring in the harvest?¹²²

In a similar vein Cindy Jacobs writes,

As I have traveled around the world and seen great revivals in places such as Colombia and Argentina, I have seen churches in major revival so busy trying to get the converts disciplined that they are happy for laborers—either men or women!¹²³

We are not free to say that “this is an unusual time, so we don't have to obey the Bible.” God knew that these days would come, and he has made provision in his Word for every period of history up until the day Christ returns. We are not free to disregard it.

We should also realize that the period recorded in the Book of Acts was a time of great revival and a great work of the Holy Spirit, yet there were no women pastors or elders. The Reformation in Europe and the Great Awakenings in the United States were times of great revival and blessing from God, yet they did not require Christians to disobey God's Word.

People who have said they can disobey God's Word because of unique circumstances have not been blessed by God. Think, for example, of Saul, who disobeyed the words of the prophet Samuel and offered a burnt offering himself (1 Sam 13:9) because he thought the circumstances were so pressing and he was going to lose the people who had gathered to him (see v. 8, 11–12). As a result, Samuel told Saul, “Now your kingdom shall not continue” (1 Sam 13:14). Abram decided that he had waited long enough without a child and chose (at the prompting of his wife Sarai) to have a child with Hagar, Sarai's Egyptian servant (Gen 16). But Abram's decision

not to wait and trust God, but to take matters into his own hands because of the apparent urgency of the situation, was not blessed by God. His lack of faith resulted in the birth of Ishmael, whose descendants continue to be at enmity with the people of Israel to this day.

This argument is just a way of saying that we are free to disobey Scripture. That can never be right. Again and again, we keep returning to this question: What does the Bible say? If it forbids women from taking the office of pastor or elder (as I have argued extensively above), then we have no right to say this is a “unique time” when we can disobey what God's Word says.

To conclude our examination of these fifteen categories, I must state that I am not saying that all egalitarian claims are effective rejections of the authority of Scripture in our lives. But a distressingly large number of egalitarian claims do fall in this category, and they indicate a deeply troubling trend toward a liberal rejection of the authority of the Bible. The claims that I have mentioned are promoted by influential egalitarian writers and published by leading evangelical publishers such as (most often) Baker Book House and InterVarsity Press. Equally troubling is the widespread silence from those egalitarian authors who do not deny the authority of Scripture in these ways but who refrain from renouncing the approaches of those who do. In fact, the influential egalitarian organization Christians for Biblical Equality promotes most of the evangelical books I have criticized in the previous section on their web site.

16. The result of rejecting the authority of the Bible in these ways

As evangelicals accept the validity of these claims one after the other, and as evangelical pastors preach sermons adopting the methods found in these claims, evangelicals are quietly and unsuspectingly being trained to reject this verse of Scripture and that command of Scripture, and this passage, and that teaching, here and there throughout the Bible. As this procedure goes on, we will begin to have whole churches who no longer “tremble” at the Word of God (Isa 66:2), and who no longer live by “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4), but who pick and choose the things they like and the things they don't like in the Bible, using the very same methods they have been taught by these egalitarian writers. The church will thus be led step by step, often without knowing what is happening, to a new liberalism for the 21st century. And in this way the authority of God's Word, and the ultimate authority of God himself over our lives, will be diminished and in principle rejected.

C. Promoting Untruthful or Unsubstantiated Claims as Established Fact

In addition to these fifteen ways that directly or implicitly deny the authority of Scripture, there is another whole category of egalitarian claims that should also trouble evangelical Christians today. This category does not concern a *direct* denial of the authority of the Bible, but it nullifies the authority of the Bible in another way, through promoting untruthful or unsubstantiated claims about what certain words in the Bible “really mean,” or about some historical facts that change our understanding of the situation to which a book of the Bible was written.

These egalitarian claims are significant because they contain several important historical and linguistic facts that egalitarian writers *allege* to be true, and these alleged facts *change* people’s understanding of what the Bible teaches. But *if those alleged facts are incorrect* and people believe them anyway, then people will think the Bible says something different from what it does, and then *they will no longer believe or obey what the Bible really says*. And thus in a different way, the effective authority of the Bible is undermined in our churches.

I am troubled to see that several of these egalitarian claims are repeatedly promoted to unsuspecting readers *as if they were established fact*, when actually no proof for them has ever been found in established historical facts, and several of the claims are even contradicted by the facts we have. If egalitarians regularly presented such claims as “an interesting idea that may turn out to be true if facts can be found to support it,” this would be a different matter. But very often these claims are presented as facts that have already been proven, when that is far from the actual situation.

Our God is a God of truth (Prov 30:5; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18), and he cares about truth (Exod 20:16; 2 Cor 4:2; Eph 4:25; Col 3:9). Therefore it is of utmost importance that readers and authors on both sides of this controversy never become careless with regard to truth or fail to exercise the greatest care for accuracy regarding the historical or linguistic data that we depend on in interpreting the Bible.

The following egalitarian claims are some examples of promoting as true something that is either *unsubstantiated* by actual historical data, or must be judged *untruthful* in the light of the actual data we have. In each case, I have given an abbreviated response, but fuller discussion can be found in my forthcoming book, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth*.¹²⁴

1. The claim that women were disrupting the worship service at Corinth

Several egalitarians claim that the reason Paul wrote that “the women should keep silent in the churches” (1 Cor 14:34) was that women were being disorderly and disrupting the church services at Corinth.¹²⁵ The problem is, there is no data in the book of 1 Corinthians itself to support this claim, nor is there any extra-biblical data to corroborate it. It is true that Craig Keener does cite some twenty-six extra-biblical references, and with such a long string of references, readers may imagine that there is abundant historical information to support his claim.¹²⁶ But when we actually look up these references, they are all references to Graeco-Roman and Jewish writings that talk about concerns for decency and order in public assemblies. Not one of them mentions women in the Corinthian church. Not one of them mentions women in any Christian church, for that matter! Proving that Greeks and Romans and Jews had concerns for order in public assemblies does not prove that women in the church at Corinth were being disruptive or disorderly!¹²⁷

This theory attempts to make the Corinthian situation a special one, when in fact Paul applies his rule to “all the churches” (1 Cor 14:33b).¹²⁸ Thus his rule cannot be restricted to one local church where there supposedly were problems. Instead, Paul directs the Corinthians to conform to a practice that was universal in the early church.

Moreover, this “noisy women” theory either does not make sense of Paul’s solution¹²⁹ or else it makes his remedy unfair.¹³⁰ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we should note the reason that the text does give. Paul does not give “noisy women” as a reason, but rather gives the Old Testament law. He says, “For they are not permitted to speak, *but should be in submission, as the Law also says*” (1 Cor 14:34). “Law” here most likely refers to teaching of the Old Testament in general on men and women, because Paul does not quote any specific Old Testament passage. He frequently uses “law” (Greek *nomos*) to refer to the Old Testament, and especially with this formula, “as the Law says” (see the other two instances in Rom 3:19 and 1 Cor 9:8).¹³¹ It is unlikely that “law” refers to Roman law or to Jewish oral traditions, for Paul does not elsewhere use *nomos* in those ways.¹³²

Paul therefore gives “the Law” as the reason for his statement, not “noisy women.” It is precarious to remove from our explanation the reason that Paul does give and replace it with a reason he does not give. Paul here is not saying,

“Let the women be silent *because they should not be asking disruptive questions*,” or
 “Let the women be silent *because God wants orderly worship services*,”
 but rather,

“As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. *For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says*” (1 Cor 14:33b–34).

Paul does not speak here about disorder but the principle of submission – in this case, submission to male leadership among God’s people.

So where is the actual *historical evidence* that women were disrupting the worship service at Corinth? None has been found. The idea is mere speculation supported by frequent repetition but not one shred of hard historical data.

2. The claim that women homeowners were overseers in early churches

Linda Belleville claims that “Mary (Acts 12:12), Lydia (16:15), Chloe (1 Cor 1:11), and Nympha (Col 4:15)” were “overseers of house churches,” and other egalitarians make similar claims.¹³³ The reason Belleville gives for this is that “the homeowner in Greco-Roman times was in charge of any and all groups that met under their roof.”¹³⁴ The example she gives is Jason, who was responsible to “post bond” in Acts 17:7–9.

The problem with this claim is that here, as elsewhere, Belleville goes beyond the text of Scripture and claims far more than it actually says. Jason was required by the city authorities to post some “money as security” (Acts 17:9, ESV), probably as a guarantee against any property damage or violence that the authorities suspected might happen. But that does not prove that Jason was ruling over the meetings of Christians in his house, and even over Paul and Silas when they conducted those meetings! Belleville would here have us believe that homeowners could bypass all the qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, and, simply by virtue of having a church meet in their home, become overseers or elders. She would also have us believe that Lydia, who was a brand new convert and who had just been baptized, became the overseer of the church at Philippi simply because she said to Paul, “come to my house and stay” (Acts 16:15). This claim is going far beyond the evidence in Scripture, and the extra-biblical references that Belleville cites do not prove anything about homeowners having such a leadership role in the churches either.¹³⁵ This claim is speculation with no facts to support it, and several factors in Scripture to contradict it.

3. The claim that women deacons had governing authority in early church history

Linda Belleville helpfully points out a number of writings from the early church fathers and other documents that give evidence of women serving as deacons in at least some

parts of the early church.¹³⁶ However, then she goes on to say, “*Canon #15 of the Council of Chalcedon (fifth century) details the ordination process for women deacons and places them in the ranks of the clergy.*”¹³⁷

Is it correct that some early church documents place women deacons “in the ranks of the clergy”? It is true that there was a “laying on of hands” to establish a woman in the role or office of deaconess, but there is no indication that this is parallel to what we today refer to as ordination for pastors or elders, and it is not true that this Canon places a woman “in the ranks of the clergy.” Here is what it says:

A woman shall not receive the laying on of hands as a deaconess under forty years of age, and then only after searching examination. And if, after she has had hands laid on her and has continued for a time to minister, she shall despise the grace of God and give herself in marriage, she shall be anathematized and the man united to her.¹³⁸

An explanatory note to this canon refers the reader to an excursus on deaconesses that says,

The principal work of the deaconess was to assist the female candidates for holy baptism. At that time the sacrament of baptism was always administered by immersion . . . and hence there was much that such an order of women could be useful in. Moreover they sometimes gave to the female catechumens preliminary instruction, but *their work was wholly limited to women, and for a deaconess of the Early Church to teach a man or to nurse him in sickness would have been an impossibility.* The duties of the deaconess are set forth in many ancient writings. . . .

[Then the author quotes Canon 12 of the Fourth Council of Carthage (398):]

Widows and dedicated women . . . who are chosen to assist at the baptism of women, should be so well instructed in their office as to be able to teach aptly and properly unskilled and rustic women how to answer at the time of their baptism to the questions put to them, and also how to live godly after they have been baptized.¹³⁹

In light of this evidence, it is misleading for Belleville to say they were placed “in the ranks of the clergy.” Women who were deacons in the early church were honored, and they performed valuable functions, but they did not teach or govern men, and they were not counted among the clergy.

(With regard to the question of whether there were

women deacons in the time of the New Testament, interpreters have legitimate differences, and the question is not easy to decide. But it does not make much difference regarding the question of whether women can be pastors or elders today, because in the New Testament the office of deacon does not include the governing and teaching authority that is reserved for elders.)¹⁴⁰

4. The claim that women were not educated in ancient Ephesus

According to many egalitarians, the reason that Paul prohibits women from teaching or exercising authority over men in 1 Tim 2:12 is that the women of ancient Ephesus were uneducated and therefore unqualified to be pastors or teachers. They often claim that 1 Tim 2:13 then alludes to a parallel situation in which Eve was uneducated about the prohibition not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁴¹ They then say that the prohibition against teaching men does not apply today, when both women and men are well educated.

But is it true that women were not sufficiently educated in ancient Ephesus? The actual historical evidence shows a much different picture:

1) Many men and women in the first century had basic literary skills, and very few men or women had education beyond this level. Steven Baugh, an expert in the history of ancient Ephesus, writes,

Because women's education in antiquity usually took place privately, we get only a glimpse of it here and there. As for women's literacy, daughters of the upper classes needed some level of education for their duties in managing large households. And though they were not commonly found in fields like philosophy, women did read and write literature and poetry during this period.¹⁴²

Baugh mentions that from Ephesus we have several examples of writing by women, including some poems and prayers.¹⁴³

Other sources indicate that in Greek culture, the "Hellenistic school" form of education "endured with but slight changes to the end of the ancient world," and, "girls, too, were educated at all age levels. In some cases they came under the control of the same officials as the boys and shared the same teachers. . . . In other cases separate state officials were responsible for them."¹⁴⁴

In Roman society, one of the factors of Roman schools was "the inclusion of girls in the benefits of education."¹⁴⁵ The

Oxford Classical Dictionary notes that both Plato and Aristotle "believed that men and women should have the same education and training."¹⁴⁶ And in earlier Greek society, "Papyri (private letters, etc.) show widespread literacy among the Greeks of Egypt" while in Rome, "upper-class Roman women were influential . . . many women were educated and witty."¹⁴⁷

In *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective*,¹⁴⁸ Clinton Arnold and Robert Saucy report further evidence of the significant educational achievements of women in ancient Ephesus:

In a very important recent study, Paul Trebilco has accumulated and presented the inscriptional evidence attesting to the role of women in civic positions in western Asia Minor. . . .¹⁴⁹

There is now inscriptional evidence that women served in some of the cities in a position that would be a close functional equivalent of our "superintendent of schools," that is, in the capacity of a gymnasiarch (*gymnasiarchos*). The "gymnasium" was the center for education in a Greek city. . . . The "gymnasiarch" had oversight of the intellectual training of the citizens and for the general management of the facility. Inscriptions dating from the first to the third centuries attest to forty-eight women who served as gymnasiarchs in twenty-three cities of Asia Minor and the coastal islands. This suggests that women not only had access to education, but also that in many places they were leading the educational system.

This evidence stands in contrast to what we generally know of the plight of women at the beginning of the Roman Empire. . . . But beginning in the late republic (2nd Century BC) and early Imperial Period, a much greater array of opportunities opened up for women. The famous British classicist, Michael Grant, observed that "The Roman women of the late republic possessed a freedom and independence almost unparalleled until the present century."¹⁵⁰

2) The Bible never requires advanced degrees for people who teach God's word or have governing authority in the church. The fact that many women as well as men had basic literacy skills in Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures is enough by itself to disprove the egalitarian claims about 1 Timothy 2. If absolutely *no* women and *only* men could read and write in ancient Ephesus, and if that practice had carried over into the church so that no Christian women learned the Bible, then the egalitarian claim would deserve some consideration. But that is simply not the case. Both women and men could read and write.

Formal academic training in Scripture (as in a modern

seminary, or in an ancient school for rabbis) was not required for leaders in the New Testament church. We even see that several of the apostles did not have formal biblical training or schooling as the rabbis did (see Acts 4:13). The ability to read and study Scripture was available to both men and women alike, and *both men and women learned and studied Scripture in the ancient church* (note Acts 18:26, where Priscilla and Aquila *together* instruct Apollos; also 1 Tim 2:11 which encourages women to “learn,” and Titus 2:3–4, where older women are to “teach what is good, and so train the young women”). This would have certainly been true in a major metropolitan center like Ephesus, where there would have been many literate, educated women in the church.

3) It is untrue to state that no women in the first-century churches possessed adequate education to be teachers or rulers in the church. The New Testament shows several women who had a considerable level of understanding Scripture. Many women accompanied Jesus and learned from him during his earthly ministry. (See Luke 8:1–3; 10:38–41; also John 4:1–27; 11:21–27). In this very passage in 1 Timothy, Paul says that women should “learn” (v. 11).

Perhaps the best example of a woman well trained in knowledge of the Bible is Priscilla. When Paul went to Corinth, he stayed with Aquila and Priscilla: “Because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade” (Acts 18:3). Paul stayed a year and six months at Corinth (Acts 18:11), and we may ponder just how much Bible and theology Priscilla would have learned while having the apostle Paul as a house guest and business partner during that time! Then Priscilla and Aquila went with Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:18–19). It was at Ephesus in 51 A.D. that Priscilla and Aquila together “explained” to Apollos “the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26). So in 51 A.D. Priscilla knew Scripture well enough to help instruct Apollos.

After that, Priscilla probably learned from Paul for another three years while he stayed at Ephesus teaching “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27; cf. 1 Cor 16:19, where Priscilla is called Prisca, and Paul sends greeting to Corinth from Aquila and Prisca and the church that meets “in their house”). By the end of Paul’s three-year stay in Ephesus, Priscilla had probably received four and a half years of teaching directly from the apostle Paul. No doubt many other women in Ephesus also learned from Paul – and from Priscilla!

Aquila and Priscilla went to Rome sometime later (Rom 16:3, perhaps around 58 AD), but they returned to Ephesus, for they were in Ephesus again at the end of Paul’s life (in 2 Tim 4:19, Paul writes to Timothy at Ephesus, “Greet Prisca and Aquila”). Now 2 Timothy was probably written in 66 or 67 A.D. (Eusebius says that Paul dies in 67 A.D.), and 1 Timothy a short time before that in perhaps 65 A.D. In addition, before he wrote 1 Timothy, Paul seems

to have been in Ephesus and it seems he had told Timothy to remain there when he left for Macedonia (see 1 Tim 1:3: “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus. . . .”). Therefore, both because 1 Timothy is near in time to 2 Timothy, and because Paul had last been in Ephesus to know who was there before he wrote 1 Timothy or 2 Timothy, it seems likely that they were back in Ephesus by the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy, about 65 A.D.

What is the point of this? Not even well-educated Priscilla, nor any other well-educated women of Ephesus who followed her example and listened to Paul’s teaching for several years, were allowed to teach men in the public assembly of the church. Writing to a church where many women had received significant training in the Bible, Paul said, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man” (1 Tim 2:12). Paul’s reason was certainly not lack of education.

4) Paul does give a reason—the creation order—for the restriction of teaching and governing roles to men, but it is not a lack of education. We should not deny the reason Paul gives and substitute a reason he does not give. Paul does not say, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet, *for women are not as well-educated as men.*” That is not the reason Paul gives. The reason he gives is the order that God established when he created Adam and Eve: “*For Adam was formed first, then Eve;* and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim 2:13–14).

5) If lack of education was the reason, it would be unfair and inconsistent for Paul not to prohibit teaching by uneducated men. Surely there were untrained men in the congregations at Ephesus, including new converts and perhaps some poorly educated and illiterate slaves or day laborers. But Paul does not mention them. Why does he focus on women? The egalitarian position is inconsistent at this point, for it cannot explain why Paul excludes all women (even the well-educated ones) and does not exclude any men (even the poorly educated ones).

6) Finally, the phrase, “Adam was formed first, then Eve,” cannot be made to mean that Eve had less education than Adam without doing violence to the text.¹⁵¹

So where is the historical evidence that women were not sufficiently educated to serve as pastors or elders in the church in Ephesus? It has not been found, and the idea is contrary to the evidence that does exist both from the ancient world and from the text of Scripture itself. Yet egalitarians continue to repeat it as if it were established fact.

5. The claim that women were teaching false doctrine in Ephesus

This egalitarian claim alleges that there was a unique situation in Ephesus in which women were teaching false doctrine, and as such, Paul's command would only be relevant for that particular situation.¹⁵²

But where is the hard evidence that women were teaching false doctrine at Ephesus? The evidence we do have points in another direction.¹⁵³ (1) The only false teachers named at Ephesus are men, not women.¹⁵⁴ (2) No clear proof of women teaching false doctrine at Ephesus has been found either inside or outside the Bible.¹⁵⁵ (3) If the fact that some people were teaching false doctrine disqualified everyone of the same gender, then all men would have been disqualified from teaching.¹⁵⁶ (4) Once again, Paul gives the reason for his command, and it is the creation order (1 Tim 2:13–14), not any false teaching by women.¹⁵⁷

6. The claim that a Gnostic heresy about Eve being created first was influential in first century Ephesus

Richard and Catherine Kroeger argue extensively for the presence of a Gnostic or proto-Gnostic heresy in Ephesus that taught that Eve was created before Adam and taught Adam spiritual knowledge.¹⁵⁸

Once again, where is the actual evidence? The Kroegers offer no proof from any first century material outside the New Testament, and their lack of care in the use of later sources has opened up their work to significant criticism. For example, Thomas Schreiner says,

Unfortunately, the Kroegers' reconstruction is riddled with methodological errors. They nod in the direction of saying that the heresy is "*proto-gnostic*," but consistently appeal to later sources to establish the contours of the heresy. The lack of historical rigor, if I can say this kindly, is nothing less than astonishing. They have clearly not grasped how one should apply the historical method in discerning the nature of false teaching in the Pauline letters.¹⁵⁹

Other reviews of the Kroegers' work by New Testament experts offer deeply troubling evaluations. Stephen Baugh, New Testament professor at Westminster Seminary (California) whose Ph.D. thesis is on the history of ancient Ephesus, wrote an extended review called "The Apostle Among the Amazons."¹⁶⁰ As Baugh's title indicates, the Kroegers rely heavily on non-factual myths (such as myths of Amazon women) to paint a picture of ancient Ephesus where women had usurped religious authority over men: a "feminist Ephesus"

in the religious realm. But their historical reconstruction is just not true. Baugh says, "the Kroegers . . . have painted a picture of Ephesus which wanders widely from the facts" (155). With his expertise in the history of Ephesus, Baugh affirms, "No one has established historically that there was, in fact, a feminist culture in first-century Ephesus. It has merely been assumed" (154). He says the Kroegers' foundational claim that the religious sphere of life could be led by women, but not the social-civic spheres, "betrays an astonishing innocence of how ancient societies worked" (160). After analyzing their data, he concludes, "It is difficult to imagine how such a momentous conclusion could have been erected upon such fragile, tottering evidence" (161). Other evidence used by the Kroegers is "wildly anachronistic," (163), and contains "outright errors of fact" (165). On the other hand, "they virtually ignore a vast body of evidence of a historically much more reliable and relevant quality: the approximately 4,000 Ephesian inscriptions and the burgeoning secondary literature surrounding them" (162).¹⁶¹

Another review of the book is by Albert Wolters, Professor of Religion and Theology/Classical Studies at Redeemer College in Hamilton, Ontario.¹⁶² Wolters first summarizes the Kroegers' argument that 1 Tim 2:12 should be translated, "I do not permit a woman to teach nor to represent herself as originator of man, but she is to be in conformity [with the Scriptures]," and that Paul was opposing a specific feminist heresy at Ephesus. He then says,

their proposal, both philologically and historically, is a signal failure. In fact, it is not too much to say that their book is precisely the sort of thing that has too often given evangelical scholarship a bad name. There is little in the book's main thesis that can withstand serious scrutiny, and there is a host of subordinate detail that is misleading or downright false.¹⁶³

Citing several specific examples, Wolters observes that the Kroegers

repeatedly misunderstand the sources they cite, and they fail to mention important recent literature which counts against their own interpretation. . . . Their scholarly documentation is riddled with elementary linguistic blunders. . . . Unfortunately, things are not much better with the Kroegers' historical argumentation. There is in fact no direct evidence that their postulated Gnostic sect ever existed in first-century Ephesus, or indeed that a Gnostic group fitting their description ever existed at all.¹⁶⁴

So where is the historical evidence that proves this claim? It has not been found. Yet a number of egalitarian

writers continue to affirm the Kroegers' claim as established fact.

7. The claim that the word *kephale* ("head") often meant "source"

According to many egalitarians, the word translated "head" (Greek *kephale*) in Eph 5:23 and 1 Cor 11:3 does not mean "person in authority over" but has some other meaning, especially the meaning "source." Thus, the husband is the *source* of the wife (an allusion to the creation of Eve from Adam's side in Genesis 2), as Christ is the *source* of the Church.¹⁶⁵ This is based on the egalitarian claim that the word *kephale* seldom meant "authority over" in ancient Greek, and often meant "source" (with no necessary sense of authority).

It is important to realize the decisive significance of these verses, and particularly of Eph 5:23, for the current controversy about male-female roles in marriage. If *head* means "person in authority over," then there is a unique authority that belongs to the husband in marriage, and it is parallel to Christ's authority over the church. If this is the true meaning of *head* in these verses, then the egalitarian view of marriage is wrong.¹⁶⁶ But if *head* means "source" here, then two Scripture texts significant to complementarians have been shown to have no impact on the controversy.

What is the actual evidence? Is there evidence that *kephale* frequently meant "source" in the ancient world, or even that it ever meant "source?" Is "authority over" an unproven meaning?

In fact, *kephale* is found in over fifty contexts where it refers to people who have authority over others of whom they are the "head." But it never once takes a meaning "source without authority," as egalitarians would like to make it mean.¹⁶⁷

Here are several examples where *kephale* is used to say that one person is the "head" of another, and the person who is called head is the one in authority:¹⁶⁸

1. David as King of Israel is called the "head" of the people he conquered (2 Sam [LXX 2 Kings] 22:44), "You kept me as the *head* of the nations; people whom I had not known served me;" similarly, Psalm 18 (LXX 17):43.
2. The leaders of the tribes of Israel are called "heads" of the tribes (1 Kings [LXX 3 Kings] 8:1, Alexandrinus text), "Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the *heads* of the tribes" (similar statements in the second-century A.D. Greek translation of Aquila, Deut 5:23; 29:9 (English verse 10); 3 Kings [LXX 1

Kings] 8:1).

3. Jephthah becomes the "head" of the people of Gilead (Jdg 11:11, "the people made him *head* and leader over them;" also stated in 10:18; 11:8, 9).
4. Pekah the son of Remaliah is the head of Samaria (Isa 7:9, "the *head* of Samaria is the son of Remaliah").
5. The father is the head of the family (Hermas, *Similitudes* 7.3; the man is called "the *head* of the house").
6. The husband is the "head" of the wife (Eph 5:23, "the husband is *head* of the wife even as Christ is *head* of the church").
7. Christ is the "head" of the church (Col 1:18, "He is the *head* of the body, the church"; also in Eph 5:23).
8. Christ is the "head" of all things (Eph 1:22, "He put all things under his feet and gave him as *head* over all things to the church").
9. God the Father is the "head" of Christ (1 Cor 11:3, "the *head* of Christ is God").

In related statements using not metaphors but closely related similes, (1) the general of an army is said to be "like the head" in Plutarch, *Pelopidas* 2.1.3: In an army, "the light-armed troops are like the hands, the cavalry like the feet, the line of men-at-arms itself like chest and breastplate, and the general is like the *head*." Similarly, (2) the Roman Emperor is called the "head" of the people in Plutarch, *Galba* 4.3: "Vindix . . . wrote to Galba inviting him to assume the imperial power, and thus to serve what was a vigorous body in need of a *head*" (compare a related statement in Plutarch, *Cicero* 14.4). And (3) the King of Egypt is called "head" of the nation in Philo, *Moses* 2.30: "As the *head* is the ruling place in the living body, so Ptolemy became among kings."

Then there are the additional (somewhat later) citations from Chrysostom (c. 344/354–407 A. D.) quoted in my 2001 article,¹⁶⁹ where (1) God is the "head" of Christ; (2) Christ is the "head" of the church; (3) the husband is the "head" of the wife; (4) Christ is the "head" of all things; (5) church leaders are the "head" of the church; and (6) a woman is the "head" of her maidservant. In all six of these cases, he uses language of rulership and authority to explain the role of the "head," and uses language of submission and obedience to describe the role of the "body."

In addition, there are several statements from various authors indicating a common understanding that the physical head functioned as the "ruling" part of the body: (1) Plato says that the head "reigns over all the parts within us" (*Timaeus*

44.D). (2) Philo says, “the *head* is the ruling place in the living body” (*Moses* 2:30), “the mind is *head* and ruler of the sense-faculty in us” (*Moses* 2.82), “*head* we interpret allegorically to mean the ruling part of the soul” (*On Dreams* 2.207), and “Nature conferred the sovereignty of the body on the *head*” (*The Special Laws* 184). (3) Plutarch says, “We affectionately call a person ‘soul’ or ‘head’ from his ruling parts” (*Table Talk* 7.7 (692.e.1)).

Moreover, the meaning “source” makes no sense in key passages like Eph 5:23, “the husband is the head of the wife.” I am not the source of my wife in any meaningful sense of the word “source.” And so it is with all husbands and wives. It is just not true to say, “the husband is the *source* of the wife as Christ is the source of the church.” It makes the verse into nonsense.

To my knowledge, no one has yet produced one text in ancient Greek literature where a person is called the *kephale* of another person or group and that person is not the one in authority over that other person or group. Nearly two decades after the publication of my 1985 study, the alleged meaning “source without authority” has still not been supported with any citation of any text in ancient Greek literature. Over fifty examples of *kephale* meaning “ruler, authority over” have been found, but no examples of the meaning of “source without authority.”

Finally, while all the recognized lexicons for ancient Greek, or their editors, now give *kephale* the meaning “person in authority over” or something similar, none give the meaning “source.”¹⁷⁰ Nor do any of these lexicons or any other ancient citation support other meanings claimed by egalitarians, such as the meaning “one who does not take advantage of his body” or “preeminent one.”¹⁷¹

Once again the question is, “where is the evidence?” Where is even one example of a statement that takes the form “person A is the head of person B,” in which person A is not in a position of authority over person B? But if all the lexicons and all the citations of this kind of expression contradict the egalitarian position, why do egalitarian writers go on affirming it as if it were proven fact?

8. The claim that the word *authentēo* (“exercise authority”) could mean “murder” or “commit violence,” or “proclaim oneself author of a man,” or could even have a vulgar sexual meaning

All of these proposals attempt to posit another meaning for the word *authentēo* in 1 Tim 2:12 in opposition to the established meaning of exercising authority. In other words, these claims argue that 1 Tim 2:12 does not mean simply, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over

a man,” but rather has *some wrongful practice, some abuse of authority*, in view.¹⁷² The force of this claim, if true, would be to limit Paul’s prohibition to whatever special situation he would have had in mind, whereas if *authentēo* has an ordinary, neutral meaning such as “have authority,” then it is more likely that Paul is making a general statement for all churches for all times.

So which interpretation is correct? The bottom line is that it comes down to a matter of the evidence. The most complete study of this word shows that its meaning is primarily neutral, “to exercise authority over.” In 1995 H. Scott Baldwin published the most thorough study of the verb *authentēo* that had ever been done. Several earlier studies had looked at a number of occurrences of this verb, but no one had ever looked at *all* the examples that exist from ancient literature and ancient papyrus manuscripts.¹⁷³ In addition, several earlier studies were flawed by mixing with the verb examples of two different nouns with the same spelling (*authentēs*).

Baldwin correctly limited his examples to the verb that is found here in 1 Timothy 2. He found eighty-two occurrences of *authentēo* in ancient writings, and he listed them all with the Greek text and English translation in a long appendix.¹⁷⁴ He found that in all uses of this verb, “the one unifying concept is that of *authority*.”¹⁷⁵ He only found one example in which the verb seemed to take a negative sense, but because language changes and meanings of words change over time, even that one Chrysostom quotation from 390 AD, coming more than three hundred years after Paul wrote 1 Timothy, is of limited value in understanding the meaning of what Paul wrote.

What is most striking about Baldwin’s exhaustive study is the complete absence of some of the other meanings that have been proposed, meanings that are unrelated to the idea of using authority.¹⁷⁶

Two additional reasons also support the positive meaning (“exercise authority”) of the verb *authentēo*. First, the grammatical structure of the sentence rules out any negative meaning (such as, “to misuse authority, to domineer, or to murder”) and shows that the verb must have a positive meaning (such as “to exercise authority”).¹⁷⁷ Second, a recent extensive and remarkably erudite study of cognate words now confirms that the meaning of *authentēo* is primarily positive or neutral.¹⁷⁸

Once again the question must be asked of the egalitarian claim, where is the evidence? Where are the actual examples of *authentēo* that show that it must take a negative meaning in 1 Timothy 2:12, when the positive or neutral sense is so well established? Should a claim without clear factual support be repeated so often as if it were proven fact?

9. The claim that the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son is contrary to historic orthodox Christian doctrine

Several egalitarians, such as Gilbert Bilezikian, have recently claimed that the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father (in role, not in being) is contrary to the historic Trinitarian doctrine of the church.¹⁷⁹ This claim, however, is simply not true.¹⁸⁰

It is not responsible scholarship, nor is it fair to readers who may have little knowledge of church history, for Gilbert Bilezikian to claim that the position he holds is the historical doctrine of the Trinity, for it is not. Bilezikian first denies any subordination of the Son to the Father prior to the Incarnation:

Because there was no order of subordination within the Trinity prior to the Second Person's incarnation, there will remain no such thing after its completion. If we must talk of subordination it is only a functional or economic subordination that pertains exclusively to Christ's role in relation to human history.

Then he says,

Except for occasional and predictable deviations, *this is the historical Biblical trinitarian doctrine* that has been defined in the creeds and generally defended by the Church, at least the western Church, throughout the centuries.¹⁸¹

But when Bilezikian denies the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father in their relationship (which exists along with equality in essence or being), he is denying the teaching of the church throughout history, and it is significant that he gives no quotations, no evidence, to support his claim that his view "is the historical Biblical trinitarian doctrine." This statement is simply not true.

The vast majority of the church has affirmed equality in being *and* subordination in role among the persons in the Trinity, not simply during the time of Incarnation, but in the eternal relationships between the Father and the Son. The great, historic creeds affirm that there is an eternal difference between the Father and Son, not in their being (for they are equal in all attributes and the three persons are just one "being" or "substance"), but in the way they relate to one another. There is an ordering of their relationships such that the Father eternally is first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third.

The doctrine of the "eternal generation of the Son" or the "eternal begetting of the Son" found expression in the Nicene Creed (325 AD) in the phrase "begotten of the Father before all worlds," and in the Chalcedonian Creed (451 AD) in

the phrase "begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead." In the Athanasian Creed (4th–5th century AD) we read the expressions "The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten" and "God, of the Substance of the Father; begotten before the worlds."¹⁸²

It is open to discussion whether these were the most helpful expressions,¹⁸³ but it is not open to discussion whether the entire church throughout history has in these creeds affirmed that there was an *eternal* difference between the way the Son related to the Father and the way the Father related to the Son; that in their relationships the Father's role was primary and had priority, and the Son's role was secondary and was responsive to the Father; and that the Father was eternally Father and the Son was eternally Son.

We may describe this difference in relationship in other terms, as later theologians did (such as speaking of the eternal subordination of the Son with respect to role or relationship, not with respect to substance), and still say we are holding to the historic Trinitarian doctrine of the church. Yet we may not deny that there is *any* eternal difference in relationship between the Father and the Son, as Bilezikian and others do, and still claim to hold to the historic Trinitarian doctrine of the church.

Bilezikian gives no explanation of how he understands "begotten of the Father before all worlds" or "eternal generation" or "eternal begetting." It is remarkable that Bilezikian, in denying *any* eternal difference in relationship between the Father and the Son, gives no explanation for why he thinks he has not placed himself outside the bounds of the great Trinitarian confessions through history. And it is simply irresponsible scholarship to accuse all those who hold to the historic doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father (in role, not in being) of "tampering with the doctrine of the Trinity" and coming close to Arianism and engaging in "hermeneutical bungee jumping."¹⁸⁴ It is Bilezikian, not complementarians, who is tampering with the doctrine of the Trinity. Bilezikian is certainly free to deny any eternal differences in the Father-Son relationship if he wishes, but he may not truthfully say that a denial of these eternal differences has been the historic doctrine of the church.

Bilezikian quotes no church historians, no creeds, no other recognized theologians when he affirms that his view is the historic doctrine of the church. But it is not difficult to find many theologians and historians of doctrine who differ with Bilezikian's unsubstantiated affirmation.

For example, concerning this inter-Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son, Charles Hodge (1797–1878), the great Princeton theologian whose *Systematic Theology* has now been in print for 140 years, wrote about the Nicene Creed:

The Nicene doctrine includes . . . the principle of the subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Spirit to the Father and the Son. But this subordination does not imply inferiority. . . . The subordination intended is only that which concerns the mode of subsistence and operation. . . . The creeds are nothing more than a well-ordered arrangement of the facts of Scripture which concern the doctrine of the Trinity. They assert the distinct personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit . . . *and their consequent perfect equality; and the subordination of the Son to the Father, and of the Spirit to the Father and the Son, as to the mode of subsistence and operation.* These are scriptural facts, to which the creeds in question add nothing; and it is *in this sense they have been accepted by the Church universal.*¹⁸⁵

The historic creeds affirm that there is an eternal difference between the Father and Son, not in their being (for they are equal in all attributes and the three persons are just one “being” or “substance”), but in the way they relate to one another. There is an ordering of their relationships such that the Father eternally is first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third.¹⁸⁶ The egalitarian claim that this is not the historic doctrine of the church is simply not true.

10. The claim that catacomb paintings show an early woman bishop in Rome

In a 1988 issue of the journal *Christian History*, Catherine Kroeger claims that a fresco on a Christian catacomb in Rome, dating from the late third century, shows a woman in “an amazingly authoritative stance, like that of a bishop.” She adds, “the shepherds on either side may represent pastors, in which case the woman may be in the role of a bishop, blessing pastors in her charge.”¹⁸⁷

But is this what the fresco shows? What this article does not reveal is that no expert in the study of ancient Christian art supports Kroeger’s interpretation, nor does the literature on such art even mention her interpretation as a possibility.¹⁸⁸ In addition, this idea is contrary to what we know of the role of women in the early church. Such “orant” paintings with different individuals portrayed on them are very common in early Christian art. If Kroeger’s theory is correct, it would mean that women bishops were also very common in the early centuries of the church. But that is highly unlikely. As far as I know, there is no historical record of any woman serving even as a pastor or an elder, to say nothing of a bishop, anywhere in the entire history of the early church.¹⁸⁹

11. Conclusion

These ten egalitarian claims are frequently promoted as fact, but upon investigation they turn out to be only unsubstantiated speculation. Therefore, I believe there are not only fifteen egalitarian claims that *directly* deny the authority of Scripture (section B above), but also at least ten others that in another way *effectively* undercut the authority of Scripture because they lead people to misunderstand what it teaches by promoting untruthful or at best unsubstantiated claims as established fact.

There is one more point: When we put these ten claims together with the fifteen in the previous section, we see that evangelical feminism, within the short space of less than thirty years since Paul Jewett’s book was published in 1975, has generated, published, and promoted at least twenty-five different ways of effectively nullifying the authority of Scripture for the lives of Christians today. Something should strike us as deeply troubling about such a movement. Is the authority of the Bible really primary for egalitarians? Or is there a deep-seated mentality that actually puts feminism first and the Bible second? The more I have read these egalitarian arguments, the more I have found myself wondering, are these writers actually operating from a deep conviction that says, “I know that egalitarianism is right, now let me see if I can find any ways to support it from the Bible. If one approach does not work, I’ll try another, and if twenty-five do not work, I will look for a twenty-sixth, because the one thing I cannot accept is that egalitarianism is wrong.”

I cannot say for sure. But I can say that I can think of no other viewpoint or movement within the whole history of the Christian church (except theological liberalism itself) that has generated so many novel and ultimately incorrect ways of interpreting the Bible.

D. The Disturbing Destination: Denial of Anything Uniquely Masculine

The egalitarian agenda will not stop simply with the rejection of male headship in marriage and the establishment of women as pastors and elders in churches. There is something much deeper at stake. At the foundation of egalitarianism is a dislike and a rejection of anything uniquely masculine.¹⁹⁰ This tendency is seen, for example, in Sarah Sumner’s claim that even asking, “What is biblical manhood?” is asking the wrong question, and in her attempts to deny every one of the characteristics that we say distinguish men from women, and in her limiting “masculinity” and “femininity” only to differences in our physical bodies.¹⁹¹ It is also seen in Rebecca Groothuis’s suggestion that Adam was a sexually undifferentiated being when he was first created.¹⁹² But why is it objectionable that God created Adam as a *man*? It makes one wonder if this

idea doesn't reflect some deeper dislike of human sexuality in general, some hostility toward the very idea of manhood and womanhood. This tendency is also seen in the emphasis, advocated by Stanley Grenz, that Jesus' humanity is what was really important for his incarnation, not his maleness.¹⁹³ But one wonders again if this does not represent an underlying desire to reject anything uniquely male. Why should we object that Jesus came as a *man*?¹⁹⁴

A writer in the egalitarian publication *Mutuality* suggested (humorously) that a better title for John Gray's book *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* would be

*Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus,
But Some Men Are from Venus and Some Women
Are from Mars, and All of God's Children Have
Both Mars and Venus Qualities Within Them So
Why Not Just Say that Men and Women Are from
the Earth, and Let's Get about the Business of
Developing the Unique God-Given Mars/Venus
Qualities that God Has Given All of Us for the
Sake of the Kingdom*¹⁹⁵

When I read that, I realized that egalitarians seem to feel compelled to oppose any kinds of differences between men and women other than those that are purely physical. Even when egalitarian author Rebecca Groothuis tried to answer the charge that egalitarians think that men and women are the same, the only clear differences she could point to were the sexually based physical differences between men and women and abilities that flow directly from those physical differences.¹⁹⁶

E. The Next Step: God our Mother

Following the denial of male headship in marriage, and the denial of any restriction of leadership roles in the church to men, and the denial of anything uniquely masculine other than the physical differences among human beings, it is to be expected that egalitarians would begin to blur and then deny God's identity as our Father. This is exactly what has recently happened in egalitarian writings. Ruth Tucker, in her book *Women in the Maze*, says,

We sing the words of John W. Petersen in worshipful praise, "Shepherd of love, you knew I had lost my way. . . ." Would it be worse, or blasphemous, to sing something like "Mother of love. . . ." Both are figures of speech. But because of our fear of taking on the trappings of radical feminism or goddess worship, we dare not sing those words—except perhaps in our closets of prayer.¹⁹⁷

We see a similar trend in literature sold by Christians for Biblical Equality through their web site. Their egalitarian-

advocacy website (www.cbeinternational.org) says that their bookstore contains books that further their mission: "Each resource we carry has first been evaluated by our team of reviewers to ensure that it furthers CBE's mission and vision."¹⁹⁸ Yet at least two books openly advocate praying to God as our Mother in heaven.¹⁹⁹

The bookstore carries a book by Paul R. Smith called *Is It Okay to Call God "Mother"? Considering the Feminine Face of God*. In this book Smith says, "In one sense I wrote this book so that our congregation could have a fuller explanation of why I believe it is important to call God "Mother" as well as "Father" in public worship."²⁰⁰

Smith introduces chapter 3 with a cartoon of Moses arriving in heaven, Ten Commandments under his arm, saying to God, "Gee, I didn't expect you to be a soprano!" Later in the book, Smith asks the question, "Will the next thing be to say that Jesus should have been a woman?" and though he affirms that Jesus did come as a man, he says, "Something is wrong when we cannot conceive of the Messiah coming from a different cultural setting or being of a different race or gender." He says he has a sculpture of "a female Jesus hanging on the cross" and he admits that some people "have violent reactions" to it.²⁰¹ Smith concludes this section by saying, "I personally try to avoid using masculine pronouns for the risen, transcendent Christ except when I am speaking of him during his time here on earth before his ascension."²⁰²

Smith does not explain how he can read the dozens or perhaps hundreds of passages in the New Testament epistles that refer to Jesus as "he" and "him" after he ascended to heaven, using masculine singular pronouns in Greek, such as this passage from Colossians 1:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by *him* all things were created, in heaven and on earth . . . all things were created through *him* and for *him*. And *he* is before all things, and in *him* all things hold together. And *he* is the head of the body of the church. *He* is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything *he* might be preeminent (Col 1:15-18).

Or this statement from Philippians, talking about Christ after his ascension into Heaven:

Therefore God has highly exalted *him* and bestowed on *him* the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. . . . (Phil 2:9-10).

How can Smith even read these passages if he tries to "avoid using masculine pronouns for the risen, transcendent

Christ"? So eager is Smith to deny the masculinity of Jesus that he has come to the point where he avoids using language like the New Testament itself.²⁰³

Another book sold on the CBE website is *God, A Word for Girls and Boys* by Jann Aldredge-Clanton.²⁰⁴ This book teaches us to pray prayers like, "God, our Mother, we thank you that you love us so much to want the best for us. Thank you for trusting us enough to let us do things on our own. . . . Stay near us and help us to become all that we can be. Amen."²⁰⁵

In the introduction to the book, Aldredge-Clanton says,

Masculine God-language hinders many children from establishing relationships of trust with God. In addition, calling God "he" causes boys to commit the sin of arrogance. . . . Calling the supreme power of the universe "he" causes girls to commit the sin of devaluing themselves. For the sake of "these little ones" we must change the way we talk about God and about human beings.²⁰⁶

Catherine Kroeger, one of the founders of Christians for Biblical Equality, has advocated calling God "Mother." In an article, "Women Elders . . . Sinners or Servants," Richard and Catherine Kroeger write:

So far we have referred to God as "He" and "Him" because most of us are used to employing these terms when we think of the Holy One. Indeed, it is sometimes asserted that those in holy office should be male to represent the Deity who is male. This is to ignore what the Bible has to say, for *God is pictured as both male and female*. Let us be clear that God does not possess sexuality—neither distinctive maleness nor femaleness; but to explain the love and work of God, both male and female imagery is used.

Consider these scriptures carefully: Psalm 131:2–3; Deut. 32:18; Isa. 49:15, 66:9–13, 42:13–14; and Matthew 23:37. Among other passages is James 1:17–18, which first speaks of God as Father and then says God brought us forth as Mother. Job 38:28–29, Isa. 63:15 and Jer. 31:20 speak of the womb of God, surely a valuable image when we think of new birth. God's likeness to a mother is an important aspect of the divine nature. Can Christians neglect any aspect of God's being as it is revealed in Scripture? *There is good biblical reason, then, to speak of God as both Father and Mother, both "she" and "he."* This is particularly important for evangelicals to remember when they seek to witness to people turning to goddess worship in their desire for a deity with feminine attributes. It is also essential

to remember when ministering to those with bad father images, who may have positive feelings about their mothers. Women as well as men are made in God's image! (Gen. 1:26–27, 5:1–2).²⁰⁷

Liberal Protestants have traveled this route before. In 2002 the United Methodist Church published a supplement to its hymnal called *The Faith We Sing*, which included some new hymns such as "Bring Many Names," in which Methodists are to sing praise to "Strong Mother God, working night and day." The author of the lyrics, Brian Wren, professor of worship at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, supports these lyrics with an argument that sounds very much like the arguments egalitarians have used on other subjects. According to reporter Maura Jane Farrelly,

Professor Wren says the Bible uses the word "Father" because it was written in a place and time when only men were in positions of authority. And because this isn't the case anymore in many Christian nations, Dr. Wren says there is no need to cling so literally to the "Father" image.²⁰⁸

A similar trend has been seen among disillusioned Southern Baptists who left the denomination in protest over the conservative control of the SBC and formed something called the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF).²⁰⁹ At the CBF annual meeting that began June 28, 1991, in Atlanta, songs of praise to God as Mother were prominent:

With songs and prayers to "Mother God," an auxiliary organization of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship opened its annual meeting at the CBF General Assembly Thursday with a clear message—the current controversy is about more than women pastors. The annual Baptist Women in Ministry breakfast was rife with stridently feminist God language, culminating in a litany read by BWIM members about their discomfort at calling God "Father," "Lord," and "King." . . . The group sang a hymn to "strong mother God." . . . Feminist language for God continued throughout the two-hour long business session and worship service. BWIM treasurer Sally Burgess told the crowd . . . "I believe God is good, and She knows what She's doing". . . . The CBF exhibit hall bookstore displayed a new Methodist "gender inclusive" hymnal . . . with a hymn written from the point of view of the earth entitled, "I am your Mother". . . . Preacher Elizabeth Clements read a sermon about her spiritual experiences in the presence of starry skies, winding rivers, and "trees older than Jesus."²¹⁰

What then is the doctrinal direction to which

egalitarianism leads? To an abolition of anything distinctively masculine. An androgynous Adam. A Jesus whose manhood is not important, just his “humanity.” A God who is both Father and Mother, and then a God who is Mother but cannot be called Father.

F. The Final Step: Approval of Homosexuality

No leading evangelical egalitarians up to this time have advocated the moral validity of homosexual conduct, as far as I know. And I am thankful that the egalitarian organization Christians for Biblical Equality has steadfastly refused pressures to allow for the moral rightness of homosexual conduct.

However, we would be foolish to ignore the trend set by a number of more liberal Protestant denominations, denominations that from the 1950s to the 1970s approved the ordination of women using many of the same arguments that evangelical egalitarians are using today.²¹¹ While the United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church–USA, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have all resisted internal movements that attempted to pressure them to endorse homosexuality, they still have significant minorities within each denomination who continue to push in this direction.

1. Episcopal Church

Most recently, the Episcopal Church in the United States has approved the appointment of V. Gene Robinson as its first homosexual bishop, by a vote of 62 to 45 in their House of Bishops.²¹² As recently as 1998, this same denomination had approved a resolution calling homosexual activity “incompatible with Scripture.”

Even secular newspapers pointed out that there were parallels to earlier decisions of the Episcopal Church. The *New York Times* reported:

Bishop-elect Robinson’s opponents said he would bring to the broader church schism, pain and confusion. . . . Other people called the warnings overblown. Look, they said, at other controversies that were also predicted to split the church *like the ordination of women in 1976 and the ratifying of a woman, Barbara Harris, as Bishop, in 1989*. This evening, Ms. Harris . . . said the church had survived and would once more. “I remember well the dire predictions made at the time of my election consent process,” she said. “The communion, such as it is, a loose federation of autonomous provinces, has held.”²¹³

Therefore the advocates of homosexual ordination were not worried about a split in the church. Conservatives who did not leave when a woman was ordained as an Episcopal priest, and who did not leave when a woman was selected as a bishop, would probably not leave at the approval of a homosexual bishop either, or so the supporters of Bishop Robinson claimed.

A day after the House of Bishops approved this appointment, the leaders of the Episcopal Church approved a “compromise” resolution at the insistence of conservatives within the denomination. The compromise allowed local dioceses the option of whether to bless same-sex unions in their churches or not!²¹⁴ But what this meant was that the denomination as a whole was allowing any local church to give a blessing to homosexual unions (they stopped short of officially calling it homosexual “marriage”).

As I am writing this chapter, it remains to be seen whether conservatives will finally leave the denomination, or whether the worldwide Anglican communion will exercise disciplinary measures against the Episcopal Church in the United States. But what has happened in the denomination in the U.S. has still happened, and it is the culmination of a trend to reject the Bible’s teachings on manhood and womanhood that began a few decades ago.

2. Presbyterian Church–USA

At least 113 PCUSA congregations in 30 states have designated themselves “More Light Presbyterians” (MLP). Membership in the group, which seeks “full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people of faith in the life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.),” is up 20 percent from three years ago, according to retired MLP board member Gene Ruff.²¹⁵

3. Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and other denominations, similar groups are growing:

Meanwhile, 280 churches and 21 synods in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) participate in a similar program called “Reconciling in Christ” (RIC). During RIC’s first 18 years, 250 congregations across North America joined, but 30 new churches have joined this year alone. Other denominations have gay-affirming programs such as the Rainbow Baptists, the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, and the United Methodist Reconciling Congregation Program.²¹⁶

The ELCA has established a task force to formulate a recommendation regarding homosexuality, but some observers think the membership of the task force almost guarantees a liberalization of its current policy opposing homosexual activity:

In April, the ELCA Task Force on Human Sexuality met in Chicago for its second conference. The denomination commissioned the task force “to guide” the ELCA’s decision making on gay clergy and the blessing of same-sex relationships. But its expert panels may actually be a series of stacked decks. For example, task force science panelists included a pair of Lutheran clinical psychologists who offered as fact the opinion of the gay-friendly American Psychological Association: “[Sexual] orientation is not a choice, it cannot be changed, [and] efforts to attempt to modify it may even be harmful.” Another science panelist cited the discredited Kinsey Report as support for legitimizing homosexuality.

Roanoke College religion professor Robert Benne, a biblical conservative and task force panelist, told *World* the ELCA task force “certainly is weighted toward those who are open to revising basic teaching on homosexual relations.” In addition, he said the presence of open homosexuals at every discussion “makes it difficult for folks who are uncertain or just plain nice to voice objections or even reservations about the revisionist agenda. Most church people like to be polite and accepting, so they often accept that agenda out of the desire to ‘keep the peace in love.’”²¹⁷

4. United Methodist Church

As I noted at the beginning of this article, in April, 2004,

a clergy jury in the [United Methodist Church’s] Pacific Northwest regional unit voted to retain the ministerial credentials of Karen Dammann, a self-avowed lesbian who recently ‘married’ her partner Church members looking to their bishops for a decisive response in defense of church discipline didn’t get one. In a wobbly statement, the 15-member executive committee of the UMC Council of Bishops in effect said that the bishops are committed to upholding the church’s laws but what regional conferences do is their own business.²¹⁸

The denomination’s General Conference (the nationwide meeting of the denomination) does not have authority to overturn this regional decision, but when they met in May they voted 579-376 (61% - 39%) to affirm a policy statement against homosexual practice which said, “The

United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching,” and they voted 674-262 (72% - 28%) to retain a ban on the ordination and placement of practicing homosexuals as ministers.²¹⁹ The votes show significant minorities in the General Conference (somewhere around one-third) advocating the approval of homosexuality, but these vote margins suggest that they are unlikely to win majority approval in the near future.

5. Christian Reformed Church

Nor is this movement confined to liberal denominations. The Christian Reformed Church (CRC) is still thought to be largely evangelical, and it was only in 1995 that the CRC approved the ordination of women. But now the First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto has “opened church leadership to practicing homosexual members ‘living in committed relationships,’ a move that the denomination expressly prohibits.”²²⁰

In addition, Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the college of the Christian Reformed Church, has increasingly allowed on its campus expressions of support for homosexuals to be evident on campus. *World* magazine reports:

Calvin has since 2002 observed something called “Ribbon Week,” during which heterosexual students wear ribbons to show their support for those who desire to sleep with people of the same sex. Calvin President Gaylen Byker . . . [said], “. . . homosexuality is qualitatively different from other sexual sin. It is a disorder,” not chosen by the person. Having Ribbon Week, he said, “is like having cerebral palsy week.”

Pro-homosexuality material has crept into Calvin’s curriculum. . . . At least some Calvin students have internalized the school’s thinking on homosexuality. . . . In January, campus newspaper editor Christian Bell crossed swords with Gary Glenn, president of the American Family Association’s Michigan chapter, and an ardent foe of legislation that gives special rights to homosexuals. . . . In an e-mail exchange with Mr. Glenn before his visit, Mr. Bell called him “a hate-mongering, homophobic bigot . . . from a documented hate group.” Mr. Bell later issued a public apology.²²¹

This article on Calvin College in *World* generated a barrage of pro- and con- letters to the editor in the following weeks, all of which can still be read on-line by interested readers.²²² Many writers expressed appreciation for a college like Calvin that is open to the expression of different viewpoints but still maintains a clear Christian commitment.

No one claimed the quotes in the article were inaccurate, but some claimed they did not give a balanced view. Some letters from current and recent students confirmed the essential accuracy of the *World* article, such as this one:

I commend Lynn Vincent for writing “Shifting sand?” (May 10). As a sophomore at Calvin, I have been exposed firsthand to the changing of Calvin’s foundation. Being a transfer student, I was not fully aware of the special events like “Ribbon Week.” I asked a classmate what her purple ribbon meant and she said it’s a sign of acceptance of all people. I later found out that “all people” meant gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. I have been appalled by posters advertising a support group for GLBs (as they are called) around campus. God condemned the practice, so why cannot God’s judgment against GLB be proclaimed at Calvin? I am glad Calvin’s lack of the morals it was founded on is being made known to the Christian community outside of Calvin. Much prayer and action is needed if a change is to take place. —Katie Wagenmaker, Coopersville, Mich.²²³

This does not indicate that the Christian Reformed Church has approved homosexuality (it has not), but it does indicate the existence of a struggle within the denomination, and the likelihood of more to come.

G. What is Ultimately at Stake: The Bible

As I have spent more and more time analyzing egalitarian arguments, I have become more firmly convinced that egalitarianism is becoming the new path to liberalism for evangelicals in our generation.

The pioneers of evangelical feminism are liberal denominations. The arguments now being used by egalitarians were used by these liberal denominations when they were approving the ordination of women. Many of the current leaders of the egalitarian movement either advocate positions that undermine the authority of Scripture or at least advertise and promote books that undermine the authority of Scripture and lead believers toward liberalism. The hints we now have of the doctrinal direction in which evangelical feminism is moving predict an increasing emphasis on an abolition of anything that is distinctly masculine. Egalitarianism is heading toward an androgynous Adam who is neither male nor female, and a Jesus whose manhood is not important. It is heading toward a God who is both Father and Mother, and then only Mother. And soon the methods of evading the teachings of Scripture on manhood and womanhood will be used again and again by those who advocate the moral legitimacy of

homosexuality.

The common denominator in all of this is a persistent undermining of the authority of Scripture in our lives. My conclusion at the end of this study is that we must choose either evangelical feminism or biblical truth. We cannot have both. ■

¹This article is an adapted excerpt from Wayne Grudem’s forthcoming book *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, forthcoming), © 2004. Used by permission of Multnomah Publishers, Inc. I wish to thank Chris Cowan and Rob Lister of the CBMW staff, for doing most of the work to adapt this article for publication.

²See Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997).

³A more precise statement of a clear dividing line between liberals and evangelicals is found in the statement of faith of the Evangelical Theological Society, which says, “The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.”

⁴The American Lutheran Church and The Lutheran Church in America are presently combined into a single denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

⁵Chaves, *Ordaining Women* 16-17. Chaves lists many other denominations, such as Baptist and Pentecostal denominations, that were ordaining women much earlier and were not affected by theological liberalism. Many of these other groups placed a strong emphasis on leading and calling by the Holy Spirit (such as Pentecostal groups) or placed a strong emphasis on the autonomy of the local congregation (such as many Baptist groups) and therefore these denominations were not adopting women’s ordination because of theological liberalism. But my point here is that when liberalism was the dominant theological viewpoint in a denomination, from 1956 onward it became inevitable that that denomination would endorse women’s ordination.

⁶Chaves, *Ordaining Women* 35.

⁷A much stronger action than the resolution Chaves mentions was taken in June 2000, when the SBC added to “The Baptist Faith and Message” (its official statement of doctrine) the following sentence: “While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture” (added to Article VI, “The Church”).

⁸See “CRC reverses decision . . . again” in *CBMW News* 1:1 (August 1995) 5.

⁹Chaves, *Ordaining Women* 86.

¹⁰*Ibid.* 84–85 (italics added).

¹¹*Ibid.* 89–91. Chaves strongly favors the ordination of women and goes on to argue that the Bible does not prohibit it.

¹²Conservatives regained control of the Southern Baptist Convention beginning with the election of Adrian Rogers as president of the denomination in 1979 (see Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* [Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2000] 99).

¹³The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod had been drifting toward a liberal view of Scripture for perhaps twenty or thirty years when conservatives within the denomination effectively regained control with the election of J. A. O. Preus as the denomination’s president

in 1969. The denominational convention in 1973 in New Orleans affirmed its clear adherence to biblical inerrancy and with this victory the denominational leadership suspended the president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, John Tietjen, on January 20, 1974. In February 1974, forty-five of the fifty faculty members at Concordia Seminary left in protest, but new faculty members were appointed, and the seminary and the denomination after that remained in the control of conservatives who held to biblical inerrancy. (See Harold Lindsell, *The Bible in the Balance* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979] 244–74, especially 259–70.)

¹⁴The Presbyterian Church in America was formed by conservatives who left the Presbyterian Church in the United States (“The Southern Presbyterian Church”) in 1973 (see Susan Lynn Peterson, *Timeline Charts of the Western Church* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999] 248).

¹⁵Personal letter from William D. Mounce to Wayne Grudem, received May 14, 1987, quoted by permission.

¹⁶Personal letter from William D. Mounce to Wayne Grudem, received July 23, 1987, quoted by permission.

¹⁷In the United Methodist Church, however, in April, 2004, “a clergy jury in the [United Methodist Church’s] Pacific Northwest regional unit voted to retain the ministerial credentials of Karen Dammann, a self-avowed lesbian who recently ‘married’ her partner. . . . Church members looking to their bishops for a decisive response in defense of church discipline didn’t get one. In a wobbly statement, the 15-member executive committee of the UMC Council of Bishops in effect said that the bishops are committed to upholding the church’s laws but what regional conferences do is their own business” (Edward E. Plowman, “None of Our Business,” in *World* 19:15 (Apr. 17, 2004), quoted from www.worldmag.com/world/issue/04-17-04/national_5.asp). This is an indication that the United Methodist Church in one large region has reached point 6 in the seven-point sequence noted above, though the denomination’s national governing body, the General Conference took steps in May to minimize the impact of that decision (see section F.4 at the end of this article for further details). (The Methodist Church approved the ordination of women in 1956.)

¹⁸Rebecca Groothuis, *Good News for Women: A Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997) 124.

¹⁹See Raymond C. Ortlund, “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship in Genesis 1–3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991) 98.

²⁰See William Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001). The back cover includes endorsements from Darrell Bock of Dallas Theological Seminary, Craig Evans of Trinity Western University, Craig Keener of Eastern Seminary, and Stephen Spencer of Dallas Theological Seminary (but now of Wheaton College).

²¹Ibid. 135.

²²Ibid. 142–43 (italics added).

²³Ibid. 143 (italics added).

²⁴Ibid. 143 (italics added). Webb explains in a footnote that the “main point” of the creation narrative “is that Yahweh created the heavens and all that is in them, and Yahweh created the earth and all that is in it—God made everything” (143, n. 46).

²⁵Ibid. 144.

²⁶This is a fairly standard view among evangelical scholars, but Webb does not even consider it. See Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 412, and the relevant pages given

for other systematic theologies (434–35).

²⁷The serpent, the act of deception, and Satan are connected in some New Testament contexts. Paul says, “I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be lead astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor 11:3, in a context opposing false apostles whom he categorizes as servants of Satan who “disguise themselves as servants of righteousness,” v. 15). Revelation 12 describes Satan as “that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world” (Rev 12:9). See also John 8:44 and 1 John 3:8, with reference to the beginning stages of history.

²⁸Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals* 142–43.

²⁹Ibid. 145 (italics added); repeated (151, n. 55).

³⁰Ibid. 83.

³¹Ibid. 73.

³²Ibid. 36.

³³Ibid. 87.

³⁴Ibid. 80–81.

³⁵Ibid. 36–39.

³⁶Ibid. 60.

³⁷Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 708.

³⁸See Ibid. 699–708.

³⁹Ibid. 705.

⁴⁰See the discussion in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 1148–50, with particular reference to an article by C. Niccum, “The Voice of the Manuscripts on the Silence of Women: The External Evidence for 1 Cor 14:34–35,” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997) 242–55. Thiselton says Niccum’s article “seems overwhelmingly convincing” (1149, n. 342). See also D. A. Carson, “‘Silent in the Churches’: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b–36,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 141–45.

⁴¹Ibid. 705.

⁴²*The Greek New Testament*, 4th rev. ed., eds. Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft and United Bible Societies, 1994) (abbreviated as UBS⁴) 601.

⁴³UBS⁴, 3*.

⁴⁴Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 702.

⁴⁵Fee himself lists—but then rejects—several ways people have interpreted 1 Cor 14:34–35 so as not to contradict 1 Cor. 11.

⁴⁶Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).

⁴⁷Ibid. 112–13, 119, 134 (italics added).

⁴⁸Thomas 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*, eds. Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 107, with reference to Clarence Boomsma, *Male and Female, One in Christ: New Testament Teaching on Women in Office* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993). In a review of Boomsma’s book, Al Wolters writes, “I do not believe that anyone else in the Reformed tradition has ever dared to suggest that the scriptural argumentation of an apostle is clearly mistaken and unacceptable” (Al Wolters, review of Clarence Boomsma, *Male and Female, One in Christ*, in *Calvin Theological Journal* 29 [1994] 285).

⁴⁹David L. Thompson, “Women, Men, Slaves and the Bible: Hermeneutical Inquiries,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 25/3 (March,

1996) 326–49.

⁵⁰Ibid. 346, 347.

⁵¹Ibid. 347.

⁵²R. T. France, *Women in the Church's Ministry: A Test Case for Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 78 (italics added).

⁵³Ibid. 91 (italics added).

⁵⁴Ibid. 94–95.

⁵⁵Thompson, “Women, Men, Slaves and the Bible,” 326–49. For a more detailed response to Thompson’s article, especially his hermeneutical principles and his approach to the authority of Scripture, see Wayne Grudem, “Asbury Professor Advocates Egalitarianism but Undermines Biblical Authority: A Critique of David Thompson’s ‘Trajectory’ Hermeneutic.” *CBMW News* 2:1 (Dec., 1996) 8–12 (also available at www.cmbw.org).

⁵⁶Thompson, “Women, Men, Slaves and the Bible” 338–39.

⁵⁷Chapter 3, Paragraph 6 (italics added).

⁵⁸Article V, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 21:4 (Dec. 1978) 290–91.

⁵⁹www.etsjets.org (italics added).

⁶⁰France, *Women in the Church's Ministry* 17–19.

⁶¹Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals* 36 (italics added).

⁶²Ibid. 39.

⁶³Ibid. 243.

⁶⁴Ibid. 241.

⁶⁵For a detailed critique of Webb’s book, see Wayne Grudem, “Should We Move Beyond the New Testament to a Better Ethic? An Analysis of William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001),” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47/2 (June 2004): 299–347; to be reprinted as an appendix in Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming). See also Thomas R. Schreiner, “Review of *Slaves, Women, and Homosexuals*,” *JBMW* 7/1 (Spring, 2002) 41–51. (His review was originally published in *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6/1 [2002] 46–64).

⁶⁶Ibid. 39–41, 250–52, and many other places in the book.

⁶⁷Ibid. 212.

⁶⁸Ibid. Webb does not consider the far simpler possibility that first century readers would have understood the word “children” (Greek *tekna*) to apply only to people who were not adults, and so we today can say that Ephesians 6:1 applies to modern believers in just the same way that it applied to first century believers, and no “cultural filters” need to be applied to that command.

⁶⁹Ibid. 34.

⁷⁰Ibid. 60.

⁷¹Ibid. 31.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid. It is surprising to me that Webb’s book has endorsements on the back cover by such recognized evangelical leaders as Darrell Bock of Dallas Seminary (who wrote the foreword), Stephen Spencer (formerly a theology professor at Dallas Seminary, but now teaching at Wheaton College), Craig Keener (of Eastern Seminary), and Craig Evans (of Trinity Western University). Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), says Webb’s book is “the most helpful book I know” on discerning which passages are culturally bound and which are transcultural (213).

⁷⁴Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals* 37.

⁷⁵The following citations are from the 1838 edition: Theodore Weld, *The Bible Against Slavery* (4th ed. New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1838). The book was first published in Boston in 1837. See

also several essays in Mason Lowance, ed., *Against Slavery: An Abolitionist Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

⁷⁶Ibid. Webb does not explain what he means by “wages maximized for all,” but readers might wonder if it means that profits and capital investment would be minimized in order for wages to be maximized? Or does it mean that all would have equal wages, since “all” would have maximized wages and this must mean that none would have lower wages than others? He does not make clear in what sense he thinks wages would be “maximized for all.”

⁷⁷Ibid. 247 (italics added).

⁷⁸Ibid. 35.

⁷⁹Ibid. 53 (italics added).

⁸⁰Ibid. 37.

⁸¹France, *Women in the Church's Ministry* 93–94.

⁸²Stanley Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995) 106–7.

⁸³Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* 128; see also 256–257.

⁸⁴Ibid. 249. She also says that our viewpoints are often the result of traditional assumptions inherited from church history: see 275, 285, 292–293.

⁸⁵Cindy Jacobs, *Women of Destiny* (Ventura, Cal.: Regal Books, 1998) 175. Later she compares arguing about 1 Tim 2:11–15 and 1 Cor 14:34–35 to arguing about “other obscure passages” such as “the verse that deals with baptism for the dead (see 1 Cor 15:29)” (234).

⁸⁶Ibid. 178 (Jacobs says she got this principle from Robert Clinton of Fuller Seminary).

⁸⁷Taken from http://ag.org/top/beliefs/position_papers/4191_women_ministry.cfm paragraph 2.

⁸⁸Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* 248.

⁸⁹Rich Nathan, *Who Is My Enemy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) 142–144.

⁹⁰However, it is interesting that both Sumner and Nathan elsewhere say that they have decided that 1 Tim 2:12 means that women who are teaching false doctrine in the church at Ephesus should be silent.

⁹¹For example, see appendices 3 and 7 in Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming), where I give in English translation with context over fifty examples of the word *kephale* (“head”) used to mean “person in authority over” and all eighty-two extant examples of the verb *authenteo* (“to exercise authority”). Even readers with no technical training in Greek can read these examples and decide whether they think certain egalitarian claims or complementarian claims are supported by the relevant evidence.

⁹²For one example, see Cindy Jacobs’s statement about 1 Tim 2:11–15: “In my study of this passage, I have found Richard and Catherine Clark Kroegers’ book *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992) was particularly enlightening for understanding the historical and religious setting of Ephesus at the time 1 Timothy was written. Their study reveals a world of idolatrous paganism based upon a matriarchal society and goddess worship” (Jacobs, *Women of Destiny* 235).

Compare Jacobs’s trust in the Kroegers’ writings to the scholarly analyses of Thomas Schreiner, “An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15,” in *Women in the Church* 109–110; Robert W. Yarbrough, “I Suffer Not a Woman: A Review Essay,” *Presbyterion* 18 (1992) 25–33; Albert Wolters, “Review: *I Suffer Not a Woman*,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993) 208–13; S. M. Baugh, “The Apostle Among the Amazons,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994) 153–71. These New Testament scholars do not simply say they disagree with Kroeger (for scholars will always differ in their about

the *interpretation* of data), but that she is not even telling the truth about much of the historical data that she claims:

For example, as Baugh's title indicates, the Kroegers rely heavily in non-factual myths (such as myths of "Amazon" women who were super-warriors) but Baugh (who wrote his Ph.D. on the history of ancient Ephesus) says, "the Kroegers . . . have painted a picture of Ephesus which wanders widely from the facts," (55) "betrays an astonishing innocence of how ancient societies worked," (160) is "wildly anachronistic" (163), and contains "outright errors of fact" (165).

Wolters says of the Kroegers, "their proposal, both philologically and historically, is a signal failure. In fact, it is not too much to say that their book is precisely the sort of thing that has too often given evangelical scholarship a bad name. There is little in the book's main thesis that can withstand serious scrutiny, and there is a host of subordinate detail that is misleading or downright false" (209-210).

Wolters cites several specific examples to show that the Kroegers "repeatedly misunderstand the sources they cite, and they fail to mention important recent literature which counts against their own interpretation. . . . Their scholarly documentation is riddled with elementary linguistic blunders. . . . Unfortunately, things are not much better with the Kroegers' historical argumentation. There is in fact no direct evidence that their postulated Gnostic sect ever existed in first-century Ephesus, or indeed that a Gnostic group fitting their description ever existed at all" (211).

⁹³Even among those evangelical denominations that had women pastors, such as the Assemblies of God, the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, and the Church of the Nazarene, women pastors constituted a small minority.

⁹⁴In fact, egalitarian author J. Lee Grady rejects this idea. He writes, in the context of talking about women who have public preaching ministries, "And in many cases, leaders have innocently twisted various Bible verses to suggest that a woman's public ministry can be valid only if she is properly 'covered' by a male who is present" (J. Lee Grady, *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women* [Lake Mary, Fla.: Creation House, 2000] 89).

⁹⁵Missionaries who hold to believer's baptism would baptize only those who make a profession of faith, and those who hold to infant baptism would also baptize the infant children of those who make a profession of faith, but in both cases they are seeking to follow what they think the New Testament teaches. No one is saying, "We are not a church, so what the New Testament teaches about baptism does not apply to us."

⁹⁶I realize that the military chaplaincy includes chaplains from many denominations, including those that ordain women. The military should accept such women chaplains if denominations send them, I think, because the decision to ordain and endorse them for the chaplaincy does not belong to the military but instead falls to the different denominations. Freedom of religion in a country includes freedom to hold different views on whether women should be ordained. What I am advocating here, however, is that denominations that wish to be faithful to Scripture should not ordain or endorse women as chaplains, in my judgment.

⁹⁷Theological seminaries have reached different decisions on this question. Both Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, where I taught for twenty years, and Phoenix Seminary, where I now teach, have women on their governing boards. I did not object to this, since governing the activities of a seminary is sufficiently different from governing a church. The boards met rather infrequently and made decisions regarding broad policies and budgets. They exercised

almost no direct authority over me or over my conduct in the seminary, nor did I think of them as having the kind of pastoral responsibility for my life that I think my pastor and elders do. Some board members even attended an adult Sunday school class that I taught and where I was in charge. One board member was also a student in one of my classes, and neither of us ever thought there was any kind of elder-like authority functioning in that situation (except perhaps in a reverse sense, in that I as a teacher felt some responsibility for the spiritual lives of my students). On the other hand, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia decided that the role of a board member was similar in many respects to the role of an elder in the church, and it decided to require its board members to be ordained to consist only of people who had previously been ordained as elders in Presbyterian or Reformed churches, subject to the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Within the conservative Reformed circles that Westminster serves, this rule effectively meant that all board members would be men. (The seminary at one point was threatened with loss of accreditation by the Middle States Accrediting Association unless it added women to its board. The seminary decided to fight this in court on First Amendment freedom of religion grounds, but before the matter could go to court, the accrediting agency, under pressure from the U. S. Department of Education, backed down.)

⁹⁸For example, Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia specifies that their academic dean must be an ordained elder in a church.

⁹⁹Kevin Giles, *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2002).

¹⁰⁰Ibid. 25.

¹⁰¹Ibid. 10.

¹⁰²Ibid. 25.

¹⁰³Ibid. 9.

¹⁰⁴Ibid. He argues that the traditional view of the Trinity was right and should be followed, but the traditional view of male headship was wrong, and should not be followed, since on that matter no other reading was open to people in earlier centuries (9-10).

¹⁰⁵Peter Schemm, "Kevin Giles's *The Trinity and Subordinationism*: A Review Article," *JBMW* 7/2 (Fall, 2002) 67-78. For Giles's inaccuracies, see p. 74 (also available online at www.cbmw.org). For further discussion of the historic view of the church regarding the subordination of the Son to the Father (in role, not in being), see section C.9 below.

¹⁰⁶Jacobs, *Women of Destiny* 176. Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church*, argues that "Every generation produces gifted women who minister effectively to women and men" (49), women whose ministry God blesses (and she has no hesitation about frequently using herself as a primary example: see 15, 17-19, 20-21, 49, 51-53, 73-74, 95-96, 104, 187, 195-197, 226, 308-309, 315).

¹⁰⁷Ruth A. Tucker, *Women in the Maze* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992) 187.

¹⁰⁸C. M. Robeck Jr., "Aimee Semple McPherson," in *International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and expanded ed., eds. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard van der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) 858.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. 856-59.

¹¹⁰Tucker, *Women in the Maze* 184.

¹¹¹The information in this chart was compiled for me by my teaching assistants Travis Buchanan and Steve Eriksson from *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1990 and Religious*

Congregations and Membership in the United States 2000 (Nashville: Glenmary Research Center, 2002), and from reference material compiled by Justin Taylor of Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Numbers for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America use the combined totals for the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church of America for 1971 and 1980.

- ¹¹²Others could object that such statistics are not conclusive because some Pentecostal and charismatic groups have seen rapid growth even though they ordain women. I agree that groups such as the Assemblies of God and the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel have experienced remarkable growth, but pastors within those groups also tell me that the larger and more rapidly growing churches in those denominations have men as pastors.
- ¹¹³To take one example, I saw this happen at an influential evangelical church in Libertyville, Illinois, in 1996 and 1997. The pastor attempted over a period of months to add women to the governing board of the church, and as a result perhaps ten or more of the most conservative, most active families in the church left and joined the other main evangelical church in town, a Southern Baptist Church where I was an elder and where the pastor and church constitution clearly supported a complementarian position.
- ¹¹⁴See Leon Podles, *The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity* (Dallas: Spence, 1999), who notes that in 1952 the adult attenders on Sunday morning in typical Protestant churches were 53 percent female and 47 percent male, which was almost exactly the same proportion of women and men in the adult population in the U.S. But by 1986 (after several decades of feminist influence in liberal denominations) the ratios were closer to 60 percent female and 40 percent male, with many congregations reporting a ratio of 65 percent to 35 percent (11–12). Podles focuses primarily on Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant churches in his study, and he concludes that, if present trends continue, the “Protestant clergy will be characteristically a female occupation, like nursing, within a generation” (xiii).
- ¹¹⁵Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966).
- ¹¹⁶J. I. Packer, “Liberalism and Conservatism in Theology” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, eds. Sinclair B. Ferguson and David F. Wright (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1988) 385.
- ¹¹⁷Millicent Hunter, as quoted in *Charisma*, May 2003, 40.
- ¹¹⁸Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* 27.
- ¹¹⁹Ibid. 318.
- ¹²⁰Jacobs, *Women of Destiny* 173.
- ¹²¹I have written about the gift of prophecy at some length in *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, rev. ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000). For a brief summary of my conclusions, see Grudem, *Systematic Theology* 1049–61.
- ¹²²John Arnott, “All Hands to the Harvest,” in *Spread the Fire* 3/5 (Oct. 1997) 1; this journal was published by the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship: www.tacf.org. The article argued that old restrictions on women in ministry should not be followed today because of the great needs today.
- ¹²³Jacobs, *Women of Destiny* 234.
- ¹²⁴Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming).
- ¹²⁵For representative egalitarian statements of this position see, Craig Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992) 70; Grenz, *Women in the Church* 123–124; Grady, *Ten Lies* 61–64; and Linda L. Belleville, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, eds. James Beck and Craig

Blomberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 116.

- ¹²⁶Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* 89, note 4.
- ¹²⁷For a more detailed response to this claim and other variations of it see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 7.7a.
- ¹²⁸See Ibid. Section 7.7b for my discussion of how the phrase “as in all the churches of the saints” (v 33b) relates best to verse 34. But even if someone thinks that phrase goes with the preceding sentence, Paul still says, in v. 34, “the women should keep silent *in the churches*.”
- ¹²⁹If women were being disruptive, Paul would just tell them to act in an orderly way, not to be completely silent. In other cases where there are problems of disorder, Paul simply prescribes order (as with tongues or prophecy in verses 27, 29, 31 and as with the Lord’s supper in 1 Cor 11:33–34). If noise had been the problem in Corinth, he would have explicitly forbidden *disorderly* speech, not all speech.
- ¹³⁰With this view, Paul would be punishing all women for the misdeeds of some. If there were noisy women, in order to be fair, Paul should have said, “The *disorderly* women should keep silent.” But this egalitarian position makes Paul unfair, for it makes him silence all women, not just the disorderly ones. It is unlike Paul, or any other New Testament writer, to make unfair rules of this sort. Also, Paul would be unfair to punish only the disorderly women and not any disorderly men. And to say that only women and no men were disorderly is merely an assumption with no facts to support it.
- ¹³¹This was pointed out by Carson, “Silent in the Churches” 148.
- ¹³²Linda Belleville says “law” here refers to Roman law (“Women in Ministry” 119). As evidence, she says, “Official religion of the Roman variety was closely supervised,” but the only proof she gives is a reference to her book, *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000) 36–38. On those pages, we look in vain for any reference to Roman law regulating anyone’s conduct within any religious service. She mentions the Emperor Tiberias’s attempt to abolish the Cult of Isis, but that proves nothing about attempts to regulate Christian conduct or any other religious activity within a worship service. Belleville asks us to believe, without proof, the rather remarkable position that Roman laws prohibited women from asking disruptive questions *within a worship service such as found in a Christian church*. And she gives not one shred of proof.
- Paul never uses “law” (Greek *nomos*) to refer to Roman law, but often uses it, as here, to refer to the teachings of the Old Testament taken as a whole.
- Walter Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1988) 36, claims that “the law” here means Rabbinic teaching, but he provides no supporting evidence, and, again, Paul does not use the word “law” in that way.
- ¹³³Belleville, “Women in Ministry” 95. See also Judy Brown, *Women Ministers According to Scripture* (Springfield, Ill.: Judy L. Brown, 1996) 170, 175, and Jacobs, *Women of Destiny*, 200. Jacobs says that the “presiding elder” of a house church “was also the head of the household where the church met.” Therefore she concludes that “Lydia and Mary . . . and others very possibly functioned as ‘presiding elders’ (or at least the deacons) of the churches in their houses. In fact, if this is so, most of the house churches listed in Scripture were ‘pastored’ by women!” (200). A few pages earlier she quotes with approval a comment of C. Peter Wagner that there were no church buildings as we know them in the early church, and therefore meeting in private homes was the “norm” (197). Thus, reasoning from one unsubstantiated assumption about the role of a woman who owned a house, Jacobs suddenly has women pastors in most of the house churches in the New Testament.

¹³⁴Ibid. 83; also 96.

¹³⁵For additional comments concerning this claim see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 7.14b.

¹³⁶Belleville, "Women in Ministry" 89–90.

¹³⁷Ibid. (italics added).

¹³⁸Quoted from *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 14 vols. (repr., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994) 14:279. Hereafter, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, will be indicated by the abbreviation *NPNF*².

¹³⁹"Excursus on the Deaconess of the Early Church," unsigned article in *NPNF*², 14:41 (italics added).

¹⁴⁰For further discussion of the question of women as deacons, see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 7.15.

¹⁴¹For example, see Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 180–81. Bilezikian concludes from this understanding that Paul's abiding principle here is not a prohibition of female instruction and authority over men, but one designed to prohibit the incompetent and uneducated from exercising these functions. Hence Bilezikian states, "According to Paul's principle, neither men nor women should be appointed to positions of leadership in the church until they can show evidence of maturity and competency." See also Jacobs, *Women of Destiny* 230; and Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* 116.

¹⁴²S. M. Baugh, "A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century," in *Women in the Church* 46, with reference to H. I. Marrou, *Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956) 46.

¹⁴³Ibid. 47, footnote 140; additional evidence from several other sources is given on p. 46, notes 136, 138, and 139.

¹⁴⁴F. A. G. Beck, "Education," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., eds. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 371.

¹⁴⁵Ibid. 372.

¹⁴⁶Walter K. Lacey, "Women" in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. 1139.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, eds., *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001).

¹⁴⁹Arnold and Saucy at this point referred to Paul Trebilco, *Jewish Communities in Asia Minor*, SNTSMS 69 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) especially chapter 2, "The Prominence of Women in Asia Minor" 104–26. (Information taken from Arnold and Saucy, 366, note 4.)

¹⁵⁰Arnold and Saucy, "The Ephesian Background of Paul's Teaching on Women's Ministry," in *Women and Men in Ministry* 281–83. The quotation from Michael Grant at the end of this statement has an endnote indicating that it was taken from Michael Grant, *A Social History of Greece and Rome* (New York: Scribner, 1992) 30–31.

¹⁵¹Contra, e.g. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* 180. The problem with this "lack of education" interpretation of, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve," is that the Greek word that Paul uses, *plasso*, does not mean "educated" anywhere in the Bible. Paul is quoting the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) which uses the verb *plasso* four times in the very story of creation Paul is referring to (Gen 2:7, 2:8, 2:15, 2:19). The word *plasso* is commonly used in the Septuagint to refer to God's act of creation (31 of 49 instances of *plasso* in the Septuagint refer to creation). In no case in the Septuagint does this word mean "educate." So how could Paul

mean "educate" when he used *plasso* in this very passage? Paul's words clearly and simply refer to the creation of Adam first, and then Eve, as the usage of *plasso* in the Greek translation of Genesis 2 indicates. That is surely what the original readers would have understood by Paul's words. See Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 8.2f for further discussion.

¹⁵²For representative egalitarian statements of this claim see, Kroeger and Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* 65–66; Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives* 111–112; Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* 259.

¹⁵³For more detailed treatments of this objection, see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 8.1, and the complementarian works cited below in response to the next claim.

¹⁵⁴1 Tim 1:19–20 (Hymenaeus and Alexander), 2 Tim 2:17–18 (Hymenaeus and Philetus), and Acts 20:30 (men, Greek *andres*). All three of these references are clearly to men, as all three are marked with masculine gender in the Greek text. Yet, the Kroegers nevertheless conjecture that there must have been false female teachers in addition to these men teaching false doctrine. Kroeger and Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* 59–60.

¹⁵⁵For elaboration of this point see, Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 8.1b. But even if this egalitarian claim could be established, it would not be persuasive because it does not show that women were *primarily* responsible for spreading the false teaching – of which the only named proponents are men. And unless women were *primarily* responsible for spreading the false teaching, Paul's silencing of the women (in the egalitarian view) would not make sense.

¹⁵⁶The egalitarian argument simply is not consistent. Even if *some* women were teaching false doctrine at Ephesus, why would that lead Paul to prohibit *all* women from teaching? It would not be fair or consistent to do so. As we saw above, the only false teachers we know about with certainty at Ephesus are men, not women. Therefore if the egalitarian argument were consistent, it would have Paul prohibiting *all men* from teaching, just because some men were teaching false doctrine! But Paul does not do that, and this shows the inconsistency of the egalitarian argument.

¹⁵⁷It is precarious to substitute a reason Paul does not give for what he does give. Paul does not mention false teaching by women as a reason for his command. He does not say, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet *for some women are teaching false doctrine there at Ephesus*." Rather, Paul's reason is the creation order: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." We should be reluctant then, to accept a position based on a reason Paul does not give, especially when it minimizes, ignores, or presents an eccentric interpretation of the reason Paul actually does give (as several egalitarian positions do).

¹⁵⁸Kroeger and Kroeger, *I Suffer not a Woman* 59–66, 119–125.

¹⁵⁹Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9–15" 109–10.

¹⁶⁰Baugh, "Apostle Among the Amazons" 153–71.

¹⁶¹The response to Baugh's analysis in the egalitarian journal *Priscilla Papers* by Alan Padgett is to say that Baugh "nowhere even considers, much less refutes, the idea that a small group of philosophers (like the Gnostics) might have been teaching the equality of women, contrary to the rest of society" Alan Padgett, "The Scholarship of Patriarchy (On 1 Timothy 2:8–15)," *Priscilla Papers* (winter 1997) 25–26. The word "might" in this statement reveals a desperate grasping at straws when there is no supporting evidence. I suppose someone could say there "might" have been people at Ephesus supporting all sorts of different doctrines, but a bare "might have been" in the absence of facts is hardly a sufficient

basis on which to justify rejecting present-day obligations to obey the instructions of 1 Tim 2:12. People can believe something that has no contemporaneous facts supporting it and hundreds of facts against it if they wish, but it will be for factors other than evidence and rational analysis.

¹⁶²Wolters, "Review: *I Suffer Not a Woman*" 208–13.

¹⁶³Ibid. 209–10.

¹⁶⁴Ibid. 211. For further discussion, see Yarbrough, "I Suffer Not a Woman: A Review Essay" 25–33.

¹⁶⁵Egalitarian writings holding that *kephale* means "source" are numerous. Some of the most influential are Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen, "What Does *Kephale* Mean in the New Testament?" in *Women, Authority, and the Bible*, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986) 97–110; Philip B. Payne, "Response," in *Women, Authority, and the Bible* 118–32; Bilezikian, "A Critical Examination of Wayne Grudem's Treatment of *kephale* in Ancient Greek Texts," Appendix to *Beyond Sex Roles*, 215–52; Catherine Clark Kroeger, "The Classical Concept of *Head* as 'Source,'" Appendix III in *Equal to Serve* by Gretchen Gaebelein Hull (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1987) 267–83; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* 501–5; Catherine Kroeger, "Head," in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993) 375–77; Brown, *Women Ministers* 213–15, 246.

¹⁶⁶I realize that a few egalitarians claim that Paul's teaching only applied to his time in history, and is not applicable to us today. This position is not affected by disputes over the meaning of *head* but it is very difficult to sustain in light of the parallel with Christ and the Church, and in light of Paul's tying it to the statements about marriage before there was sin in the world (Eph 5:31–32, quoting Gen 2:24).

¹⁶⁷See Wayne Grudem, "Does *kephale* ('head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples" *Trinity Journal* 6 NS (Spring 1985) 38–59; Idem, "The Meaning of *kephale* ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies," *Trinity Journal* 11 NS (Spring, 1990), 3–72; Idem, "The Meaning of 'Head' (*kephale*) in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* 145–202; and Idem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Sections 6.6a–g.

¹⁶⁸These texts are discussed in my two previous articles on *kephale* (mentioned above).

¹⁶⁹Grudem, "The Meaning of *kephale* ('head')" 25–65.

¹⁷⁰For elaboration see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 6.6e.

¹⁷¹Ibid. Sections 6.6f–g.

¹⁷²For various nuances of this "abuse of authority" interpretation see, David M. Scholer, "The Evangelical Debate over Biblical 'Headship,'" in *Women, Abuse, and the Bible*, eds. Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) 50; Groothuis, *Good News for Women* 215; Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* 253; Leland Wilshire, "1 Timothy 2:12 Revisited: A Reply to Paul W. Barnett and Timothy J. Harris" *Evangelical Quarterly* 65:1 (1993) 47–48, 52; Grady, *Ten Lies* 58; Kroeger and Kroeger, *I Suffer Not a Woman* 103 and 185–188. Note that the two page citations from the Kroeger volume indicate two separate variations of this proposal.

¹⁷³H. Scott Baldwin, "A Difficult Word: *Authenteo* in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church* 65–80 and 269–305.

¹⁷⁴Ibid. 269–305.

¹⁷⁵Ibid. 72–73. On page 73, Baldwin summarized his findings on the

range of possible meaning for *authenteo* in a table. What becomes evident from his chart is that there are no negative examples of the word *authenteo* at or around the time of the New Testament.

¹⁷⁶See Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Sections 8.8b–d, for responses to the specific alternative proposals for understanding *authenteo* mentioned in the heading over this section.

¹⁷⁷Note especially Andreas Köstenberger's study, "A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12," in *Women in the Church* 81–103. His study examined one hundred parallel examples (52 in the NT, 48 from literature outside the NT ranging from the third century BC to the end of the first century AD) to the construction found in 1 Tim 2:12. In all of these cases where two activities or concepts were joined according to the construction found in 1 Tim 2:12, then both activities were either viewed positively or negatively. No exceptions were found. (Cf. Dan Doriani's observation that when an activity that is viewed positively is joined with another viewed negatively, a different construction is used. E.g. Matt 17:7; John 20:27; Rom 12:14; 1 Tim 5:16. Dan Doriani, *Women and Ministry* [Wheaton: Crossway, 2003] 179). The importance of this for 1 Tim 2:12 is that if the activity of "teaching" is viewed positively in the context of 1 Timothy, then the activity of "having authority" must also be viewed positively. Köstenberger goes on to demonstrate that, in fact, "teaching" is viewed positively by Paul in 1 and 2 Timothy (1 Tim 4:11, 6:2, 2 Tim 2:2).

¹⁷⁸Al Wolters, "A Semantic Study of *authentes* and its Derivatives," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 1 (2000) 145–175. This journal is so far only available online. See <http://divinity.mcmaster.ca/pages/jgrchj/index.html>.

¹⁷⁹Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Church as Community of Oneness* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 191–192. But when Bilezikian denies the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father in their relationship (which exists along with equality in essence or being), he is denying the teaching of the church throughout history, and it is significant that he gives no quotations, no evidence, to support his claim that his view "is the historical Biblical trinitarian doctrine."

¹⁸⁰For further discussion of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Sections 10.2a–j.

¹⁸¹Ibid. 191–92.

¹⁸²Other creeds with similar affirmations include the Thirty-nine Articles (*Church of England, 1571*): "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father" and the Westminster Confession of Faith (1643–46): "the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father" (Chap 2, para. 3).

¹⁸³For further discussion of the phrase "only begotten" and the Greek term *monogenes* on which it is based, see Wayne Grudem, "The *Monogenes* Controversy: 'Only' or 'Only Begotten'?" Appendix 6 in *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) 1233–34. (This appendix is in the revised printing only, from 2000 onward.)

¹⁸⁴For these accusations see Gilbert Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (1997) 57–68. The same article is found in Bilezikian, *Community 101* 187–202.

¹⁸⁵Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970 [reprint]) Vol. 1, 460–62 (italics added). A survey of historical evidence showing affirmation of the eternal subordination of the Son to the authority of the Father is found in Stephen D.

Kovach and Peter R. Schemm, Jr., "A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son," in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42 (1999) 461–76. See also Grudem, *Systematic Theology* 248–52.

¹⁸⁶For an extensive documentation of the history of this doctrine see Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming) Section 10.2f. Among the theologians affirming an eternal difference in role between the Father and the Son are Augustine (354–430), Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274), Calvin (1509–1564), Charles Hodge (1797–1878), Augustus H. Strong (1836–1921), Louis Berkhof (1873–1957), and Lorraine Boettner (1901–1990). Specialists in the history of Christian doctrine who see this as the historic Nicene doctrine include Philip Schaff (1819–1893), J. N. D. Kelley, and Geoffrey Bromiley.

¹⁸⁷Comments by Catherine Kroeger in *Christian History*, Issue 17 (1988) 2. The fresco is said to come from the Coemeterium Majus arcosolium in Rome.

¹⁸⁸Paul Corby Finney, "Orant" in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed., ed. Everett Ferguson (New York and London: Garland, 1997) 831; J. Beaudry, "Orans," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Berard L. Marthaler (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2002) 621; A. M. Giuntella, "Orans," in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo DiBerardino, trans. Adrian Walford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) vol. 2, 615. The procedure followed in this egalitarian claim troubles me even more than most of the other claims that I consider in this article. When no explanations or disclaimers are made alerting readers to the uniform lack of support from scholarly specialists for such an interpretation, this wild speculation (or so it seems to me, after reading these other articles) is taken as truth by unsuspecting readers.

¹⁸⁹Probably the first woman to have such a recognized public role was Margaret Fell in the sectarian Quaker movement in 1667. If there ever had been a woman bishop in Rome in the late third century, as Kroeger supposes, it would have prompted widespread comment, and even opposition and conflict. In fact, the Roman Catholic church has a high interest in the historical succession of bishops in Rome! But there is no record of a woman bishop, to say nothing of dozens of women bishops, all of which also makes Kroeger's speculation highly unlikely.

¹⁹⁰For further discussion of this trend, see Daniel R. Heimbach, "The Unchangeable Difference: Eternally Fixed Sexual Identity for an Age of Plastic Sexuality," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002) 275–89; and Peter R. Jones, "Sexual Perversion: The Necessary Fruit of Neo-Pagan Spirituality in the Culture at Large," in *Ibid.* 257–74.

¹⁹¹See for example, Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* 86, 98.

¹⁹²Groothuis, *Good News for Women* 124.

¹⁹³Grenz, *Women in the Church* 207–9.

¹⁹⁴For responses to the claims of Sumner, Groothuis, and Grenz, see Grudem *Evangelical Feminism* (forthcoming).

¹⁹⁵Jim Banks article in *Mutuality* (May 1998) 3.

¹⁹⁶Groothuis, *Good News for Women* 47–49.

¹⁹⁷Tucker, *Women in the Maze* 20–21.

¹⁹⁸See www.cbeinternational.org, in the "About CBE's Bookstore" section.

¹⁹⁹An extensive discussion of this tendency in egalitarian writings, and an analysis of why it is contrary to Scripture, is found in Randy Stinson, "Our Mother Who Art in Heaven: A Brief Overview and Critique of Evangelical Feminists and the Use of Feminine God-Language," *JBMW* 8/2 (Fall, 2003) 20–34. Stinson notes that there are several metaphors in Scripture that use feminine language to

describe God in metaphorical ways, such as "the God who gave you birth" (Deut 32:18) or "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you" (Isa 66:13), or "For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor" (Isa 42:14). But these never say God is a mother and they never call God by the name "Mother." Stinson writes, "There are . . . figures of speech: similes, metaphors, analogies, or personifications. There are no cases in which feminine terms are used as names, titles, or invocations of God. There are no instances where God is identified by a feminine term" (28). He quotes with approval John Cooper's statement, "God is never directly said to be a mother, mistress, or female bird in the way he is said to be a father, king, judge, or shepherd" (28). (See John Cooper, *Our Father in Heaven: Christian Faith and Inclusive Language for God* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998] 89). In short, we should not name God with names that the Bible never uses and actually avoids using. God's name is valued and highly protected in Scripture.

²⁰⁰Paul R. Smith, *Is It Okay to Call God "Mother"? Considering the Feminine Face of God* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993) 1.

²⁰¹*Ibid.* 134, 137, 140, 141. Page 142 suggests that this sculpture, like another picture he has, is hanging on his office wall.

²⁰²*Ibid.* 143.

²⁰³Stinson also notes that Smith is an openly professing homosexual pastor, and cites Smith's writings on homosexuality ("Our Mother Who Art in Heaven" 25–26).

²⁰⁴Jann Aldredge-Clanton, *God, A Word for Girls and Boys* (Louisville: Glad River Publications, 1993).

²⁰⁵*Ibid.* 23.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.* 11.

²⁰⁷This statement can be found at <http://firstpresby.org/womenelders.htm>. (italics added).

²⁰⁸Maura Jane Farrelly, "Controversial Hymns Challenge U.S. Methodists' View of God," in *Voice of America News*, July 5, 2002 (www.voanews.com).

²⁰⁹The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was accepted into full membership as an independent denomination by the Baptist World Alliance in July of 2003, according to *World*, Aug. 2, 2003, 23.

²¹⁰"Mother God" worshipped at group's gathering for CBF annual meeting," in Baptist Press news, June 29, 2001 (www.bpnews.net).

²¹¹The widely influential book by Krister Stendahl, *The Bible and the Role of Women*, trans. Emilie Sander (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) contained many of the arguments that persuaded liberals to ordain women, and it is amazing to see how closely these arguments parallel the arguments being made by egalitarians today. (I am grateful to my former student, David Jones, for pointing out to me this parallel between Stendahl's writings and current egalitarian arguments.)

²¹²"Episcopal Church Elects First Openly Gay Bishop," at www.foxnews.com, Tuesday, August 5, 2003.

²¹³*New York Times*, August 6, 2003, A12 (italics added).

²¹⁴"Episcopal Vote Allows Blessings of Gay Unions," www.washingtonpost.com, August 7, 2003, A-1.

²¹⁵"Go forth and sin: A growing mainline movement seeks to affirm homosexuality as biblical," *World*, Aug. 2, 2003, 20. The same issue of *World* reports the results of a similar trend in Australia: "By a large margin, the 267 delegates to the national assembly of the 1.4 million-member Uniting Church of Australia (UCA) July 17 formally approved the ordination of homosexual men and women on a local-option basis by presbyteries and congregations. Evangelical clergy and congregations immediately began heading for the exits.

. . . The UCA was formed by a merger of Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational churches in 1977, making it the country's third-largest denomination at the time" (*World*, Aug. 2, 2003, 23).

²¹⁶Ibid. 20.

²¹⁷Ibid. 21.

²¹⁸Plowman, "None of Our Business" 15 (Apr. 17, 2004), quoted from www.worldmag.com/world/issue/04-17-04/national_5.asp.

²¹⁹Edward E. Plowman, "Four More Years," in *World* 19:20 (May 22, 2004), quoted from www.worldmag.com/world/issue/05-22-04/national_5.asp.

²²⁰"Reformed Congregation OKs Gay Leaders," *Christianity Today*, December 9, 2002, 19.

²²¹"Shifting Sand?" *World*, May 10, 2003, 41–42.

²²²See www.worldmag.com. A search for the phrase "Calvin College" turned up letters in the "Mailbag" section of *World* for June 7, June 14, June 21, June 28, and July 3, 2003. Calvin's president, Gaylen Byker, posted a response to the *World* article on the Calvin web site, under "Calvin News" for May, 2003: see www.calvin.edu/news/releases/2002_03/calvin_letter.htm. He defends the diversity of the campus as well as its steadfast Christian orientation and academic excellence. He also says that the *World* article failed to give a balanced representation of the entirety of the college campus, which is excellent in many ways. Regarding homosexuality, he says, "Despite what *World's* story might lead people to believe, homosexuality is not a preoccupation on Calvin's campus. We are working as a college to follow the call of our denomination's Synod (the Christian Reformed Church's highest ruling body) which in 1999 said the entire denomination is 'called as a Church to repent for our failures' in this area. 'Ribbon Week' is one way of reaching out with love and compassion to Calvin students who are gay. . . ." He goes on to affirm that homosexual conduct is wrong. Interested persons may read the letter themselves and notice both what he says and what he does not say about the positions that are advocated on the campus. In another letter responding to the *World* article, professor Quentin Schultze says, "The fact is that the Christian Reformed Church, which 'owns and operates' Calvin College, has encouraged the entire denomination to love gays and lesbians even while not accepting the sinful practices of some of them." (Quoted from http://www.calvin.edu/news/releases/2002_03/schultze_letter.htm, Oct. 24, 2003.) His expression "the sinful practices of some of them" seems consistent with the picture of Calvin College indicated by the other quotations in the article: The repeated theme is that there are some people who just "are" gays and lesbians, and if they refrain from putting their same-sex inclinations into practice, our attitude toward them should be one of love and acceptance. Hence, the campus-wide week-long emphasis on raising student awareness of gays' and lesbians' need for acceptance and support. At one level, who can object to showing love and support for any other human being? However, at another level, one suspects a larger agenda here on the part of homosexual advocates, an agenda of gaining acceptance by degrees. What would we think of a Christian campus, for example, that sponsored a week-long campaign to show acceptance and support of people who had lustful and adulterous desires, or were alcoholics, or who were addicted to gambling, or were always tempted to lie or curse, or who struggled with constant greed or envy? It seems from reading these comments from Calvin faculty, administrators, and students, that homosexuality is being made into a special cause at Calvin.

²²³"Mailbag," *World*, June 7, 2003, copied from www.worldmag.com on Oct. 23, 2003.

The Role of Men and Women in the Church¹:

A Sermon on Titus 2:1-8

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We live in a culture that is drowning in gender confusion. The lines have become blurred and we are groping about trying to understand what it means for a man to be a man and a woman a woman, what it means for a man to be masculine and a woman feminine.

A recent presidential candidate referred to himself as “metrosexual,” a word that refers to a heterosexual male who is in touch with his feminine side. The candidate went on to say, “I’ve heard the term, but I don’t know what it means” (Newsweek, Nov. 19, 2003, p. 23).

It is transparently clear that the cultural engineers that dominate the media, our educational system (from the preschools to the universities) and other strategic places of influence want to neutralize, if not eliminate, the gender distinctions and differences that God has hardwired into human beings (Gen 1:26-27). This is the consistent drumbeat heard again and again and unfortunately, the church has not been immune to the sound.

Practicing homosexuals are now ordained as bishops. Divorced ministers continue in places of service as if nothing significant occurred when their marriage covenant was broken. Women (married, divorced, single, heterosexual and lesbian) now flock to seminaries and fill pulpits across the land declaring their liberation from the “oppressive” writings of the Bible. Even within evangelical fellowships women aspire to teaching positions that place them over men in Sunday Schools, Bible studies and local church worship services. The secular culture is shaping the Church more than sacred Scripture.

Never has the church needed more desperately to hear the words of Titus 2:1-8, a text that makes plain and clear God’s plan, God’s assignment, God’s role for men and women in the Church. In this passage of Scripture Paul outlines God’s expectations for each of the 4 major groups in the Church in terms of gender and age. Though the word itself does not appear, the driving concept in these verses can be summed up in one important word: “mentoring.” Older men need to mentor younger men and older women need to mentor younger women. In that context, and for teaching purposes, verses 1-8 can be viewed as something of a semantic chiasm, an ABBA structure (older men-older women-younger women-younger men).

I. Pursue God’s Assignment As An Older Man. (2:1-2)

Paul begins this section of Scripture by drawing a contrast between Titus in particular, and older men in general, and the false teachers who were harassing the church at Crete (1:10-15). These troublemakers were insubordinate, mouthy and deceptive. They were motivated by money, liars and lazy. They listened to the words of men, of popular culture, more than to the Word of God. They were infected with a defiled mind and a defiled conscience, professing to know God but by their actions denying Him. They were detestable, disobedient and “unfit for doing anything good” (NIV). Paul challenges Titus (v. 1) and the older, mature men (v. 2) to pursue a different path, a path that would please God and provide a pattern for others to follow. He quickly defines seven essential characteristics.

1) Be A Teacher. (2:1)

Godly men are called by God to teach, recognizing that their teaching can take different and varied forms. “But you” is emphatic in the original language. “Speak” is a present imperative (cf. 2:15). Here it means to teach or instruct. We are to teach things that are proper, in accord, fitting with sound doctrine (lit. “healthy teaching”). We must be true to the gospel of Jesus Christ and true to the Word of God both in belief and behavior. What follows in verse 2 provides the foundation that will insure that we do not fail in this crucial task.

2) Be Sober. (2:2)

The more mature men (Gr. *presbutas*) in the church are admonished to be “temperate” (NIV), clear-headed (cf. 1 Tim 3:2, 11). This man is wise in his decision-making and careful when making judgments. He is clear on what really matters and decisive in making godly choices. He uses smartly his God-given talents and gifts, his time, his money and his energy. He is a man with right and godly priorities and he has as his motto for life one simple dictum: “all that matters in life is that you please God.”

3) Be Reverent. (2:2)

This idea describes a person of dignity and “respect” (NIV). This man goes after that which is noble and morally valuable and worthy. It is a character trait that God expects of the deacon (1 Tim 3:8) and his wife (1 Tim 3:11). This is the man who, while not being a prune or a Pharisee, takes no delight in inappropriate off colored humor, vulgarity, or anything else that is suspect, questionable or clearly out of bounds. He himself is worthy of honor and respect, particularly by younger men, because of the purity and integrity of his life.

4) Be Self-Controlled. (2:2)

This word is translated as “temperate” in the New King James Version. It is probably the key idea in this section of Titus. Some form of the word appears to each of the 4 key groups of the church that Paul addresses: verse 2 to the older men; verse 4 as the verb “teach” (NIV) to the older women; verse 5 as the word “sensible” (NIV) to the younger woman; and verse 6 as the word “self-controlled” or “sober-minded” (NKJV) to the younger men. This person has his passions under control and is self-disciplined. He is not careless or foolish with his words or in his behavior.

John MacArthur summarizes well this quality of life, saying that this man “should have the discernment, discretion, and judgment that comes from walking with God for many

years. They control their physical passions and they reject worldly standards and resist worldly attractions” (74). They refuse to be conformed to this world but are transformed daily by a renewed mind bathed in Scripture (Rom 12:2).

5) Be Sound In The Faith. (2:2)

Paul, in the last 3 terms in this verse, brings to our consideration the Christian triad of faith, love and patience (the natural outgrowth of hope). Mature godly men are to be sound (Gr. *hygianontas*), healthy in their confidence and trust in the Lord. This kind of personal faith is rooted in a daily walk with God as Father and an immersion of one’s life in the Scriptures. This man not only know what he believes and why he believes it, he knows who he believes. This is the man who says of His God, “even when I cannot trace His hand, I can always trust His heart.”

6) Be Loving. (2:2)

Jesus said in John 13:35 to His disciples on the night he was betrayed, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Love is mentioned in a general sense here in Titus. We are to love God supremely, fellow-believers genuinely and lost humanity fervently. The kind of love, beautifully portrayed in 1 Cor 13:4-8, is to be the standard we strive to obtain day in and day out.

7) Be Patient. (2:2)

The Christian of all people, because of the hope that is within him, should be patient, steadfast, and he should exhibit “endurance” (NIV). Because we know how it will all come out in the end, we can endure testing, work through hardship, accept disappointment, and not give up under pressure and adversity. The mature godly man does not lose heart, throw in the towel or drop out of the race. Rather, he runs the race with endurance, fixing his eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith (Heb 12:1-2).

My granddaddy Gallaway was a Titus 2:1-2 kind of man. A Georgia dirt farmer raised by a harsh stepmother, he had only a 5th grade education. And, he was without question one of the godliest men I’ve ever known. Not well-educated, afflicted with severe arthritis in his legs, and done wrong on more than one occasion because of his trusting nature, he never lost faith in his Lord and he never questions the plans and workings of God in his life. He lived simply on a day-by-day basis trusting in the Lord. He set an example any mother or father could have pointed to and said to their son, “I hope you grow up someday to be like Charley Gallaway in the way you love and serve the Lord.” This is God’s assignment for the older men.

II. Pursue God's Assignment As An Older Woman. (2:3)

Several years ago Elisabeth Elliott wrote an article entitled, "Where Are The WOTTs?" (*Pulpit Helps*, May 1997, p. 10). She was moved to write the article after speaking to a group of pastor's wives and discovering that 80% of them were working outside of the home. The question Elisabeth asked is simple and to the point, "Where are the godly older women who are to teach young mothers how to manage their children and homes? Where are the WOTTs, the Women of Titus Two?" Well, those women are described here in verse 3, and Paul provides them with a fourfold job description in terms of their own character that gives them the basis for their assignment of "mentoring" younger women as described in verses 4-5.

1) Be Reverent.

The word "likewise" means in the same way. These (Gr. *presbutidas*, only here in the New Testament) women have a task that is parallel to that of the older men. The first character trait that they should pursue is "reverence," a word that literally means "temple fitting" or appropriate for behavior in a temple. The basic meaning is that this woman should live in such a way as is benefiting a godly person. Hers is a life of holiness, reflecting the very character of the Lord she loves and lives for.

2) Be Truthful.

Godly women speak the truth, they do not "slander" (Gr. *diabolous*), make false and unfounded accusations. This Greek word is the word from which we get our English word "devil" and is used to refer to our archenemy 34 times in the New Testament. A mature woman in Christ is not devilish in her speech, picking up gossip and spreading it abroad. This woman has a control, a governor, on her tongue. She knows that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names (or words) will never hurt me" is not true. When she speaks, she speaks the truth, and she speaks it in love (Eph 4:15).

3) Be Sober.

This daughter of God is not to be given to much wine, much alcohol. The original is quite strong, admonishing her not to have become enslaved (perfect tense verb) to too much wine so that it owns and dominates and controls her. Mounce points out that, "Alcoholism must have been a severe problem since it is an issue in the appointment of church leaders in every list (1 Tim 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; cf. 1 Tim 5:23). While this is true in almost every culture (cf. 1 Cor 11:21) . . . it was especially true in Crete [where they viewed] heavy drinking as a virtue" (410). It is of course certain and nondebatable

that if one never takes the first drink they will never have to worry about drunkenness or alcoholism, and all the misery that follows in the footsteps of drink. A godly person controls both their tongue and their appetites.

4) Be A Teacher.

Like their godly counterpart, the older men, these mature disciples of Christ, are to be adept at teaching. Indeed they are to be teachers of good things (*kalodidaskalos*). This is a unique word in all of Greek literature and may have been coined by Paul himself. The focus, in light of what follows in verses 4-5, is the informal, one-on-one or small group instruction that these mature women pass on to their younger spiritual sisters. Issues of marriage, family, and child rearing are set alongside basic matters of spiritual life in Christ.

This mentoring of the young by the more mature is a biblical pattern we have neglected to our great hurt and harm. These younger women desperately need the role modeling, teaching, insight and practical wisdom that these older ladies can provide. Being more experienced in life and the Lord, they can pass on a godly legacy that will hopefully reproduce itself for generations. A godly home will orbit around a godly wife and mother. This "blessed disease" is as much caught as taught.

III. Pursue God's Assignment As A Younger Woman. (2:4-5)

Cultural pressure and expectations have robbed many women of the blessings and joys of homemaking and motherhood. The Feminist Movement made promises on which it could not deliver. The fallout has been mammoth and disastrous, and we are still in the midst of the whirlwind. It is obvious from this text that a feminist agenda and the resulting confusion and rejection of God-ordained roles is not restricted to the late 20th and early 21st centuries. The 1st century suffered from this malady as well, and so Paul confronts it head on. He has laid down God's assignment for the older woman as it relates to the younger: be "teachers of good things." What "good teaching" did Paul have in mind? He answers that question in verses 4-5.

1) Love Your Husbands. (2:4)

Older women are to "admonish" or "train" (NIV), to encourage or advise the younger women "to love their husbands." Interestingly, this is the only time in the Bible where a woman is encouraged to love her husband, the man in her life. Husbands of course receive multiple and detailed instruction in this regard (Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:19). Paul is concerned that a woman's first commitment under the lordship

of Jesus Christ is to her husband and her marriage. The way a couple loves each other will model for the children the way they should love their future spouses. The fact is we do not so much “fall in love” as we “learn to love.”

2) Love Your Children. (2:4)

Few things are more natural for a mother than loving her children. However, a young mother must move beyond her natural innate affection to a specific lifestyle and plan of action that will cultivate in her children godly character and affection. Proverbs 29:15 says, “The rod and the rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”

The most important way a mother can love her children is to love them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. As she loves them physically, emotionally, educationally, morally, socially and spiritually, she always has her eye on their need for Christ. By what she does and says, she gently and with sensitivity puts before them the love of God and the work of Christ. She speaks to her child with grace and wisdom sharing with him or her the grace, mercy and claims of Jesus Christ. Her greatest joy and most awesome heritage is godly children devoted to Jesus and His plan and purpose for their lives.

3) Be Self-Controlled. (2:5)

Young women should be “discreet,” sensible, “self-controlled” (NIV). Paul again challenges a particular group in the church to exercise common sense and good judgment. The best way to learn this is to see it up close and personal in the life of another. Young women will best learn to exercise balance and wisdom in their lives as they observe it in the lives of older, more mature women.

4) Be Pure. (2:5)

God calls a young woman to be chaste, “pure” (NIV). Her moral life is above reproach, and she is by life and reputation a one-man kind of woman. She is faithful to her marriage vows and sexually gives herself to only one man, her husband. The man in her life trusts her and is confident in her. The God she serves sees His own character reflected in her life as it radiates forth from a heart surrendered to Jesus.

5) Be A Homemaker. (2:5)

This lady is “busy at home” (NIV), a home worker. Her home is her primary base of operation and the main focus of her attention. Proverbs 31:10-31 teaches us that a diligent

homemaker may be involved in a wide range of activities and interests. She is not lazy or a busybody, nor is she distracted by outside pursuits and responsibilities that eat up her precious time and attention. This woman is not seduced by the sirens of modernity who tell her she is wasting her time and talent as a homemaker, and that it is the career woman who has purpose and is truly satisfied.

The recent turn in women leaving the workplace and returning home has become too noticeable to be ignored. It is a reflection of what God planted in the heart of a wife and mother when He made her a female in His image. The blessings and joy she will discover as a wife, mother and homemaker can never be matched by a career that in the end cannot make good on its promises. Being a homemaker is not an institutionalized form of bondage and slavery. It is the greatest context for a woman to experience liberation and liberty as she is set free by the plan of God to be the woman God created and saved her to be.

My father in the ministry Paige Patterson says the second greatest calling in life is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. The first he says is to be a homemaker who raises up a generation of godly children to the glory of God. I find it difficult to disagree with Dr. Patterson on this.

6) Be Good. (2:5)

A young woman should be good, “kind” (NIV). Simply said, they are to be Jesus-like. They are to be gentle and considerate, gracious and merciful, even to those who may not treat them the same way.

7) Be Subject To Your Husband. (2:5)

In keeping with what is said consistently throughout the New Testament (Eph 5:21-24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1-5), wives are encouraged to “be subject to their own husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God” (NIV). Submission means to yield in one’s will to the leadership and direction of another. It is more of an attitude than an action, though one’s attitude will certainly determine one’s actions.

Contrary to popular misconceptions, there is no inferiority in submissiveness. We see this plainly in the Trinity where Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all equally God, and yet for the purpose of redemption the Son submits in His assignment to the Father.

Note also that a wife submits to her “own husband,” not every man. This charge is quite specific. Indeed, unless a husband asks his wife to do something that is unbiblical, illegal, immoral, or unethical, she is to follow his leadership. By doing this she will honor God and His Word, and reach, in a

more effective manner, the heart of her husband.

IV. Pursue God's Assignment As A Younger Man. (2:6-8)

Paul now addresses the fourth group, younger men. The implication is that they will be instructed in the way they should live by the older men who will provide the encouragement and example they need. Younger men need strong healthy role models provided by older men.

In an article in the South China Post it was pointed out, "What a real man needs is another man to talk to and reinforce his maleness and help him be a better husband . . . without such a friend, men risk reverting to a mother-child relationship with a spouse." Dr. Peter Karl writes, "Men become helpless and insecure and increasingly revert to the classic overgrown kid who expects to be mothered . . . men have few positive role models" (South China Post, April 23, 2000).

Paul recognizes the need younger men have for godly mentoring, and so he instructs them in a pattern of discipleship that will promote godly character, conviction and commitment.

1) Be Sober. (2:6)

"Likewise" again means in the same way (as in verse 3). "Exhort" is a present imperative giving it the force of a command that is to continually be set before the younger men. Like the others, they are encouraged to be "sober," "self-controlled" (NIV), in control of their lives, thoughts and passions. Proverbs 23:7 reminds us that "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he." The self-controlled man actively engages the battle for the mind, knowing that he must control and discipline his thought life if he is to win the battles of the Christian life.

2) Be A Good Example. (2:7)

Addressing Titus once again as he also speaks to the younger men, Paul tells him to be a "pattern" (Gr. *tupos*), an example "of good things." *Tupos* is a word that gives us our English word "type." Titus is to be a type or mold "into which others can be impressed and therefore bear a likeness to him." (Mounce, 413).

The great preacher from Antioch, John Chrysostom said, "Let the luster of your life be a common school of instruction, a pattern of virtue to all."

Young men should be on the lookout for godly men they can emulate, men they can pattern their life after.

3) Be Sound In Doctrine. (2:7)

Young men must not be fooled into following false doctrine. They must show integrity and reverence (NIV, "seriousness"). The focus falls here more on "how" one teaches than "what" one teaches. Both are essential of course, but purity in motive and authenticity in manner is what Paul is after. A life of moral integrity must accompany the teaching ministry. Content and character, logos and ethos go together and must complement one another if the truth is to be taught without compromise and corruption.

4) Be Sound In Speech. (2:8)

Integrity in doctrine comes from a pure vessel that pours forth sound or healthy (Gr. *hygie*) speech. The pure word from a pure vessel is not subject to legitimate condemnation or criticism. In fact those who criticize such faithful and holy teachers will eventually shame themselves, because their accusations are without merit or substance.

Kent Hughes says, "there should be a multiplication of silencers as the godly influence of Titus spreads among the young men and helps to heal the embattled church" (332). The gospel in our own day has been subjected to a great deal of ridicule. Far too often the cause of offense has not been the message, but the messenger. If persons refuse to come to Christ let it be the message that they say "no" to, not the messenger who because of a shameful life clouds the purity of the Word of salvation.

Conclusion

When we carefully consider the whole of biblical revelation and its implications for the role of men and women in the church and the work of the Lord, several important conclusions need to be affirmed and applauded.

- 1) Both man and woman are created in God's image, equal before Him as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
- 2) Differences in masculine and feminine roles both in the home and the Church are ordained by God as part of His plan for His Creation. This is intended for God's glory and our good.
- 3) The Fall in Genesis 3 introduced distortions into the relationship between men and women with tragic consequences. As it relates to the church, sin leads men toward a worldly love of power on the one hand, or the abdication of spiritual responsibility on the other. With respect to women, sin inclines them to

either resist the parameters established by God for their assignments, or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate and God-honoring ministries.

- 4) Redemption through the perfect atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse and the Fall.
- 5) In the Lord's church, redemption in Christ gives men and women equal rights and an equal share in the blessings of salvation. These rights and blessings are in perfect accord with the leadership and teaching assignments within the church given only to men. The role of the pastor-teacher is an office restricted to men.
- 6) The God-given desire to serve the Lord that resonate both in men and women should never be used to set aside the clear biblical pattern for ministry established by God in His Word.
- 7) With billions of persons living without the knowledge of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ; with countless other lost people in those cultures that have heard the gospel; with the heartbreak and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, aging, drug and alcohol addictions, crime, incarceration, depression and loneliness, no man or woman, boy or girl, who has a God-given passion to make God's amazing grace known in word and deed need ever live without a vital and fulfilling ministry for the glory of God and the good of others in this fallen world.

Every child of God is called to proclaim the gospel to the lost. Every child of God is called to minister the Word. Every child of God is called to help the hurting. Every child of God at some time needs a mentor and is called to be a mentor. For the honor of Jesus and the sake of human souls, let us all be about the business of doing what God created us and saved us to be, doing His work, His way, and always for the praise of His Name.² ■

¹This sermon is reprinted by permission from *The Tie* 71/4 (Winter 2003) 6-9.

²Concluding remarks summarized from portions of The Danvers Statement from the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW).

Cultural Commentary¹: Do Wife-Beaters Need Better Therapy Groups? Spouse Abuse and the End of Sin

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It is hard to muster up sympathy for a wife-beater. That's even true in a culture where everyone is a victim, and lines between good and evil are blurred beyond distinction. After all, is anything more clearly and pathetically evil than a man who would terrorize his wife or, more typically, his girlfriend and her children? Even so, when personal responsibility leaves the arena of public policy, anything's possible—even victim status for abusive men.

A recent book by feminist attorney Linda Mills, *Insult to Injury: Rethinking Our Response to Intimate Abuse*, calls for a reform of the criminal justice system, directing policies away from incarceration and toward “intimate abuse circles.” In case you're not familiar with the concept of an “intimate abuse circle,” think of a small group therapy session where abusers “talk through” the psychological roots of their violent behavior. As lawyer C. Douglas Kerns writes in the March 8 issue of *National Review*, it is “the punishment no criminal dreads: hours of harmless blather.”

Kerns rightly lambastes Mills' proposal for its reliance on dubious psychotherapeutic fads, along with its naïve understanding of human nature. “Will ill-socialized men feel anything but contempt toward covens of experts yammering about ‘communication’?” he asks. “Such efforts will indeed earn the contempt of the more inarticulate abusers, most of whom are no strangers to the lectures of well-meaning professionals with degrees in social work. And the crafty, manipulative abusers will learn from these Intimate Circles a new lexicon of buzzwords and catchphrases with which to dazzle judges and probation officers at future sentencing hearings.”

Ridiculous proposals like that of Linda Mills can only come in a culture that has tossed aside a doctrine of sin. As such, the concept of personal responsibility is barred from the discussion of how to address the ugly reality of spousal abuse. Without some understanding of the Adamic fall, society can only understand the wife-beater through the prism of pop psychology. Why engage abuse through criminal sanctions if domestic violence is the result of hardwired genes or a dysfunctional family background? The answer to such abusive men, surely then, is education and, yes, “communication.”

But it is not just the personal responsibility of the abuser that is lost in the contemporary world. The sense of corporate responsibility to protect women seems meaningless in post-feminist America. In previous generations, an abusive husband would face the sanction of his fellow men. A wife-beater might find himself called to the door to face a group of community men wishing to speak to him—outside—about his treatment of his wife and children. One could call this an “intimate abuse circle,” I suppose. This strong sense of community responsibility may not have prevented spousal abuse, but it at least recognized it as a societal evil—not just an issue of family therapy. It also recognized a responsibility of men to care for and protect women—a notion long since jettisoned by a culture shaped by the gender theory of Gloria Steinem and the feminized violence of Lara Croft Tomb Raider.

For evangelical Christians, the issues raised in this debate are about more than just the criminal justice system. A society's response to wife abuse is about justice itself. And a society that has replaced justice with social work is alienated

from a central point of contact with the gospel—namely, the understanding that the God of Jesus Christ is a God of both justice and justification (Rom 3:26). This means churches must care for abused women and children, protecting them from the predators who seek to harm them. It also means that churches must call on our governments to maintain their God-ordained responsibility to wield the sword of punishment against evildoers (Rom 13:3-5)—including abusive men.

Most importantly, this means that churches must proclaim the ancient truths of human sin and personal responsibility, pointing wife-beaters—and all other sinners—to the coming Day of Christ (John 16:8). And, strange as it may sound to our contemporaries, we must remind them that the figure on the throne will not be a social worker but a Judge. ■

¹This article is reprinted by permission from Russell Moore's March 26, 2004 column on The Henry Institute website (www.henryinstitute.org). Check the aforementioned site as well as CBMW's website (www.cbmw.org) for regular commentaries by Dr. Moore.

Guest Editorial¹: A Call for Courage on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

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The fault lines of controversy in contemporary Christianity range across a vast terrain of issues, but none seems quite so volatile as the question of gender. As Christians have been thinking and rethinking these issues in recent years, a clear pattern of divergence has appeared. At stake in this debate is something more important than the question of gender, for this controversy reaches the deepest questions of Christian identity and biblical authority.

For too long, those who hold to traditional understandings of manhood and womanhood, deeply rooted in both Scripture and tradition, have allowed themselves to be pushed into a defensive posture. Given the prevailing spirit of the age and the enormous cultural pressure toward conformity, traditionalists are now accused of being woefully out of step and hopelessly out of date. Now is a good time to reconsider the issues basic to this debate and to reassert the arguments for biblical manhood and womanhood.

The most basic question in this controversy comes down to this: Has God created human beings as male and female with a revealed intention for how we are to relate to each other? The secular world is now deeply committed to confusion on these matters. Denying the Creator, the secular worldview understands gender to be nothing more than the accidental byproduct of blind evolutionary process. Therefore, gender is reducible to nothing more than biology and, as the feminists famously argued, biology is not destiny.

This radical rebellion against a divinely-designed pattern of gender has now reached the outer limits of imagination.

If gender is nothing more than a biological accident, and if human beings are therefore not morally bound to take gender as meaningful, then the radical gender theorists and homosexual rights advocates are correct after all. For, if gender is merely incidental to our basic humanity, then we must be free to make whatever adjustments, alterations, or transformations in gender relationships any generation might desire or demand.

The postmodern worldview embraces the notion of gender as a social construct. That is, postmodernists argue that our notions of what it means to be male and female are entirely due to what society has *constructed* as its theories of masculinity and femininity. Of course, the social construction of all truth is central to the postmodern mind, but when the issue is gender, the arguments become more volatile. The feminist argument is reducible to the claim that patriarchal forces in society have defined men and women so that all the differences ascribed to women represent efforts by men to protect their position of privilege.

Of course, the pervasiveness of this theory explains why radical feminism must necessarily be joined to the homosexual agenda. For, if gender is socially constructed, and therefore differences between men and women are nothing more than social convention, then heterosexuality becomes nothing more than a culturally-privileged form of sexuality.

The utopia envisioned by ideological feminists would be a world free from any concern for gender—a world where *masculinity* and *femininity* are erased as antiquated notions, and an age in which the categories of male and female

are malleable and negotiable. In the postmodern view, all structures are plastic and all principles are liquid. The influence of previous ages has molded us to believe that men and women are distinct in significant ways, but our newly liberated age will promise to free us from such misconceptions and point us toward a new world of transformed gender consciousness.

As Elizabeth Elliot once reflected, “Throughout the millennia of human history, up until the past two decades or so, people took for granted that the differences between men and women were so obvious as to need no comment. They accepted the way things were. But our easy assumptions have been assailed and confused, we have lost our bearings in a fog of rhetoric about something called equality, so that I find myself in the uncomfortable position of having to belabor to educated people what was once perfectly obvious to the simplest peasant.”

In response to this, secular traditionalists argue that the historical experience of the human race affirms important distinctions between men and women and differing roles for the two sexes in both the family and in the larger society. The secular traditionalists have history on their side and their claim to authority is rooted in the accumulated wisdom of the ages. For evidence, these traditionalists would point to the consistent pattern of heterosexual marriage across cultures, and the undeniable historical reality that men have predominated in positions of leadership and that the roles of women have been largely defined around home, children, and family. Thus, these traditionalists warn that feminism poses a threat to social order and that the transformed gender consciousness that the feminists demand would lead to social anarchy.

Clearly, the traditionalists come to the debate with a strong argument. They *do* have history on their side and we must acknowledge that the historical experience of the human race is not insignificant. Some of the most honest feminist thinkers acknowledge that their very aim is to reverse this historical pattern and much of their scholarship is directed at identifying and excising this patriarchal pattern in the future. The problem with the secular traditionalist is that their argument is, in the end, essentially secular. Their argument is reducible to the claim that the inherited wisdom of human experience points to an oughtness and a moral imperative that should inform the present and the future. In the end, this argument, though powerful and seemingly meaningful, fails to persuade. Modern individuals have been trained from the cradle to believe that every generation makes itself anew and that the past is really *past*.

The modern ethic of liberation, now so deeply and thoroughly embedded in the modern mind, suggests that the traditions of the past may indeed be a prison from which the present generation should demand release. This is where biblical traditionalists must enter the debate with vigor. We do share much common ground of argument with the secular

traditionalists. Biblical traditionalists affirm that the historical experience of mankind should be informative of the present. We also affirm that the enduring pattern of differing roles between men and women, combined with the centrality of the natural family, does present a compelling argument that should be understood as both descriptive and prescriptive. Nevertheless, the biblical traditionalist’s most fundamental argument goes far beyond history.

In this age of rampant confusion, we must recapture the biblical concept of manhood and womanhood. Our authority must be nothing less than the revealed Word of God. In this light, the pattern of history affirms what the Bible unquestionably reveals—that God has made human beings in his image as male and female, and that the Creator has revealed his glory in both the sameness and the differences by which he establishes human beings as male and female.

Confronted by the biblical evidence, we must make a vitally important interpretive decision. We must choose between two unavoidable options: either the Bible is affirmed as the inerrant and infallible Word of God, and thus presents a comprehensive vision of true humanity in both unity and diversity, or we must claim that the Bible is, to one extent or another, compromised and warped by a patriarchal and male-dominated bias that must be overcome in the name of humanity.

For biblical traditionalists the choice is clear. We understand the Bible to present a beautiful portrait of *complementarity* between the sexes, with both men and women charged to reflect God’s glory in a distinct way. Thus, there are very real distinctions that mark the difference between masculinity and femininity, male and female. Standing on biblical authority, we must critique both the present and the past when the biblical pattern has been compromised or denied. Likewise, we must point ourselves, our churches, and our children to the future, affirming that God’s glory is at stake in our response of obedience or disobedience to His design.

For too long, those who hold to the biblical pattern of gender distinctions have allowed themselves to be silenced, marginalized, and embarrassed when confronted by new gender theorists. Now is the time to recapture the momentum, force the questions, and show this generation God’s design in the biblical concept of manhood and womanhood. God’s glory is shown to the world in the complementarity of men and women. This crucial challenge is a summons to Christian boldness in the present hour. ■

¹This article is reprinted by permission from Albert Mohler’s December 16, 2003 weblog commentary on the Crosswalk website. This site can be accessed by going to <http://www.crosswalk.com/news/weblogs/mohler>. Dr. Mohler posts a commentary on the aforementioned site every weekday. For more resources from Albert Mohler, also visit www.albertmohler.com.

Celebrating Biblical Womanhood: Godly Garments¹

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Editor's Note: The following is the second in a series of columns on the issue of modesty by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. This series on modesty originally aired in the form of a three week radio broadcast, beginning June 16, 2003. Her radio program—"Revive Our Hearts"—is heard on more than 250 stations.

Clothing can make life hard. Whose idea was it to wear clothes anyway? Do clothes really matter?

To answer these questions we need to go back to the beginning—to the first three chapters of Genesis—and see how all this "clothing stuff" got started. In this passage, we see a four-part progression, a sequence of events that took place back in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve. This narrative has a lot of bearing on how we got to where we are today.

Now in Genesis chapter one and in the first part of chapter two, we have the whole story of creation. At the end of chapter one we are told that God looked at everything He had made and said it was "very good."

Then, beginning in Gen 2:20, there's a description of God making a helper suitable for the man. God made the woman and gave her to the man. That was good, too, for after the man and woman had been united, we read in Gen 2:25: "And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (ESV).²

Here's the first phase in the whole development of clothing: Originally, there was no clothing and there was no shame and no guilt. Adam and Eve were in a sinless condition,

so there was no shame. They had no knowledge of evil, so nakedness prior to the Fall was innocent. It was not shameful.

Now then, we come to Genesis 3, and we see the entrance of the enemy. The serpent challenges the woman and then the man, who follows suit, to disobey God's commandment not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In verse 5 the serpent said to the woman: "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened." So, verse 6 tells us that "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." This was the first human sin.

God said, "No."

Eve said, "Yes."

God said, "Don't."

Eve said, "I will."

Now what's the very next thing that happened? Immediately in verse 7, "Then the eyes of both were opened."

And isn't that what the serpent had said would happen? "Your eyes will be opened." But their eyes were opened in a way that they had not anticipated. Their eyes were opened to experience evil and shame for the first time. Their consciences were rudely awakened because they had gone

against the Word of God.

What happened as soon as their eyes were opened? “They *knew* that they were naked.” According to the Hebrew used here, this was not a dawning or gradual realization. They had instant perception. All of a sudden they looked and they realized, “We’re naked.” Innocence was replaced with shame and guilt.

So now we come to the second phase in the development of clothing. At this juncture there are still no clothes, but now there’s shame, guilt, and embarrassment. Just consider your natural reaction when you’re not fully dressed and someone accidentally walks in on you. How do you feel when that happens? One word: embarrassed.

And that’s exactly what Adam and Eve were at that point. The first thing they learned after they ate from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was that they were naked. And this knowledge brought them shame. From this point on in Scripture, nakedness is always referred to as something that is shameful, except in the context of a husband and wife.

Following the realization of their nakedness and the onset of their shame, we see Adam and Eve come to the third stage of development, in which, according to Gen 3:7, “they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings” (NASB). The first thing they did was to try and deal with their shame or their guilt by covering up their nakedness.

Now the word for “loin covering” is translated differently in different translations, but essentially it is a word that means “aprons.” It’s a belt for the waist. So, what Adam and Eve did, in effect, was to cover up their private parts. That was man’s plan. And it was man’s plan without God. They did this entirely of their own initiative. They didn’t ask God, “What should we do about this problem?”

However, as we go on in the passage we discover that, apparently, Adam and Eve realized those fig leaves were not adequate for covering, because when we come to verses 8 – 10, they’re still embarrassed and afraid.

Verse 8 reads: “And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” Adam and Eve did instinctively what we would do today if someone were accidentally to walk in a room when we were not fully dressed. Just as we would try to cover ourselves, Adam and Eve, in their embarrassment and fear, attempted to hide from God.

Verses 9 and 10 then tell us: “The LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was

naked, and I hid myself.’” So, even though they were covered with fig-leaf aprons, they still felt that they were naked, and they instinctively concluded that they needed to hide from God.

Now, it’s interesting to note that though nakedness was the first thing that Adam and Eve were concerned about, their nakedness does not appear to be the first thing that God was concerned about. Why is that? Because it was not the heart of the matter. We do indeed see that God was concerned about their clothing situation, and he did do something about it. But it wasn’t the first thing God was concerned about.

As Christian women, we need to remember this as we try to reach women, in our secular culture, who aren’t adequately clothed. Let’s keep in mind that what they’re wearing or not wearing is not the heart of the matter. It needs to be dealt with in its time, but it’s not the first or most important issue.

In the Garden, we see that God was most concerned about the relationship that had been broken. “Where are you” (v 9)? “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat” (v 11)? He was concerned about the fact that they had disobeyed his Word and broken his commandment.

And so God dealt first not with their nakedness but with the newly broken relationship between them and their Maker. In the rest of chapter three then, we find God talking to Adam and Eve and the serpent about the consequences and curses for their disobedience. In an astonishing display of grace though, God not only declares his judgment, but he also announces the gospel—the wonderful promise that a Savior would come, who would redeem them out of their fallenness (Gen 3:15).

The issue of Adam and Eve’s clothing—which is not to be ignored—only comes up for treatment in the wake of the gospel promise. In Gen 3:21, God finally makes provision for their nakedness: “The LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin and clothed them.” This is God’s provision. In a manner of speaking, this is God saying, “You cannot solve your sinful problems on your own. Your plan—those fig-leaf aprons—won’t work. But I am going to make provision for you.”

The word “garments” is the same word that is translated elsewhere in the Bible as “coats” or “tunics.” It’s a word that consistently refers to an item of clothing that covers the body from, at least, the neck to the knees, sometimes going down to the mid-calf or even all the way to the feet.

You see, Adam and Eve covered their private parts. But what did God cover? Their bodies. God said that it wasn’t enough that their private parts should be covered. Now that they had sinned, their bodies needed to be covered. Of course,

this passage foreshadows that when Christ would come he would be the Lamb of God who would be slain so that we could be covered in his righteousness.

The dominant theme is certainly the gracious work of God that both required and provided a sacrifice. But I think there's also an application here that relates to the issue of clothing, and it is partially seen in the fact that cultures built on godly principles understand the need to cover the body.

In drastic contrast, contemporary culture has its own idea of clothing, and typically that idea is simply to uncover as much of the body as possible. "Just take it off." That's the broader cultural motto when it comes to clothing. But the godly woman is counter-cultural. She's willing to go against what is typical and say, "Look, these fig-leaf aprons are not sufficient. That's man's plan, not God's." The godly woman is willing to submit to God's plan, accept his provision, and say, "God's provision is what is really good." ■■

¹Excerpted from Nancy Leigh DeMoss, *The Look: Does God Really Care What I Wear?* (Niles, Mich.: Revive Our Hearts, 2003). For information on Nancy's three week radio series on Modesty, the Modesty Packet (including two booklets) and other great resources, please visit www.ReviveOurHearts.com.

²All subsequent citations of Scripture will be taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

The State of Marriage in the State of Oregon

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Mount Hood, City of Roses, coffee shops, and Multnomah Falls typically come to mind for those who are familiar with Portland, Oregon. March 3, 2004, brought an entirely different set of images to associate with the city. On this day, residents of Portland awoke to find that their county had thrust them square into the center of the culture war, with the news that Multnomah County had begun issuing marriage licenses to gays and lesbians. Portland is by no means a bastion of conservatism. In fact, the Pacific Northwest city has carved out a niche for itself as ecologically driven and libertarian, with a large and vocal lesbian population that is aggressive and influential.¹ Still the announcement from the County Commissioners' office shocked the citizenry. Gays and lesbians, most from Portland, but many from all over the western United States, began streaming to the county office to receive a marriage license. After the first five business days, Multnomah County had issued marriage licenses to over 3,400 gays and lesbians.

What transpired in Portland was not a first. San Francisco had begun issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples one month earlier. What does make the Portland events worth recapping is what they reveal about the power and strategy of the gay and lesbian political machine and the struggle by Christians to articulate a coherent and compelling response.

The drama actually began two months previous when Massachusetts courts opened the way to gay marriages. Encouraged by the progress made in Massachusetts, a pro-homosexual interest group, Basic Rights Oregon, began to lobby the Multnomah County Commissioners' office. The

county is governed by five elected commissioners, two of whom had each previously received awards from gay-rights groups. These two commissioners were the initial targets of the lobbying efforts of Basic Rights Oregon. Persuaded that Oregon law was sufficiently vague to allow the question of gay marriage to be pressed, the two commissioners then enlisted the support of the County Chairwoman and a fourth commissioner.

Knowing that the majority of Oregonians do not support gay and lesbian marriage, secrecy became the highest priority. The state's open meeting law forbids the discussion of public business by three or more commissioners. Even though the commissioners' offices are within shouting distance of each other, to maintain the illusion of following state law, the four commissioners were careful to only meet in groups of two to discuss strategy. Furthermore, they made the decision not to notify the fifth commissioner, Lonnie Roberts, who was outspoken in his opposition to gay marriage. The four conspirators feared that Roberts would make the discussions public, which they could ill-afford.

Ultimately, the four commissioners, working with carefully selected county lawyers, received the legal opinion they sought. Because the Oregon Constitution does not explicitly define marriage as being between a man and a woman, the county concluded that it could not defend itself against a lawsuit if it rejected an application for a marriage license from a same-sex couple. Basic Rights Oregon began notifying potential marriage candidates that the county would begin issuing marriage licenses to gays and lesbians. By

Wednesday morning a line had formed outside the county building and the circus had begun.

The response was predictable. Local and national media converged on the scene, careful to focus their attention on the smiles of the “couples” as they emerged with marriage license in hand and the applause of those who came to support them. There were also more than enough shouts of angry individuals carrying vitriolic signs, claiming to speak for Jesus.

The response of the Oregon state government was one of confusion and impotent outrage. Democratic governor Ted Kulongoski, who opposes homosexual marriages, although he supports civil unions, said that he felt “blindsided by the county’s secret decision” to grant marriage licenses.² After receiving its own nonbinding legal opinion from the Oregon Attorney General that “gay marriage was illegal under state law but banning such unions probably would violate Oregon’s constitution,”³ the governor’s office requested that Multnomah County cease issuing licenses until such time as the Oregon Supreme Court could rule on the issue. The Multnomah County commissioners refused, claiming that they would continue to act in *accordance* with the state constitution—or at least their interpretation of it. Ultimately, the State of Oregon refused to file the marriage licenses issued to same-sex couples, sending them back to the county. In late April, a circuit court judge ordered Multnomah County to stop issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples until the issue is resolved by the Oregon Supreme Court or the voters. At this time, petitions are circulating to place a constitutional amendment on the November ballot that would specifically define marriage as being between one man and one woman. In a demonstration of the moral confusion that currently reigns in Oregon, another county, poised to follow the lead of Multnomah County before the State’s decision, stopped issuing marriage licenses to *all* people, whether heterosexual or homosexual, until the issue is resolved. So much for the state of marriage in the state of Oregon.

The machinations of this process demonstrate the unrestrained zeal with which homosexual advocates are currently willing to press the fight—unrestrained by biblical norms, unrestrained by state law, and unrestrained by public opinion. When such misguided zeal is combined with an utter lack of moral vision by elected officials and a complicit media, then the stage is set for an overhaul of cultural norms—which is exactly what is happening.

The majority of Americans, as many as two-thirds in some polls, oppose homosexual marriage.⁴ However, this commitment is tenuous at best due to the lack of conviction that girds this opinion. In post-Christian America, the best reason many can give for opposition to same-sex marriage is that homosexuality is distasteful.⁵ But this argument has a rapidly diminishing weight. The homosexual community

has strategically flooded the airwaves with portrayals of homosexuality as part of the everyday fabric of life. Popular television shows such as *Will and Grace* and *Spin City* have been highly successful at making homosexuality appear mainstream, even normal. Starting in elementary school grades, many public education curricula teach that it is *intolerance* toward homosexuality that is the vice, not the behavior or disposition itself. The result: whereas a vast majority of older Americans are strongly opposed to same-sex marriage, younger generations are evenly split.⁶ Homosexual advocates are playing for keeps and their strategic target is the nation’s youth.

At this point in time, the church must do far more than condemn homosexual marriage. As long as the discussion of the defense of marriage is framed in the context of same-sex marriage, then the battle is being fought on the terms established by the homosexual community. And it is a losing battle. What is needed is an elevation of marriage as an institution; a biblical vision of all that marriage is intended to be. It must be proclaimed from the pulpit and lived out in the lives of believers. It is precisely at this point that the church has failed its mandate to be salt and light in the world. The recent rebellious decisions by denominations such as the Anglican Church and Episcopal Church endorsing homosexuality have granted a veneer of religious credibility to same-sex marriage and have given the erroneous impression to the public that the Bible equivocates on homosexuality. But it is not the church’s theology of homosexuality that is most problematic. It is the church’s theology of marriage, articulated and lived out, that has put us in the position in which we find ourselves.

Advocates of homosexual marriage question whether there is any sanctity in marriage to defend. Where is this so-called sanctity of marriage in our present culture of divorce? When there is little discernable difference between the rate of divorce of those who claim to be Christians and those who do not, where is the platform from which the church can proclaim the holiness of marriage? When Christians fail to speak out against the absolute mockery of marriage in “reality” television shows such as *My Big, Fat, Obnoxious Fiancé* and *Married by America*, they diminish their ability to offer a Christian critique of other perversions of marriage. It is hard, if not impossible, for a society whose picture of marriage is informed by the debauchery and voyeurism of *The Bachelor* and *Joe Millionaire* to argue against same-sex unions which describe themselves with such words as “committed,” “monogamous,” and “loving.”

Despite how marriage is portrayed on television or lived out in the general populace, the institution of marriage is profoundly theological and therefore deeply practical.

The Bible teaches that when God looked upon Adam, he

said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18). To meet the needs of the man, God then created woman. That there is nothing else in creation so perfectly suited for man is evident from Adam's proclamation upon seeing the woman: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:23). Scripture describes the nature of marriage, the union of the man and the woman made for him, as the man leaving his father and mother and holding fast to his wife. A man and woman united in marriage are "one flesh" (Gen 2:24); a union so profound and so wonderful that this creation ordinance has withstood millennia of sinful assaults and yet echoes through the portals of time as being "very good." Its irreplaceable utility in society is evident when Adam names his wife Eve, "the mother of all living" (Gen 3:20). Adam would know his wife and she would conceive children; the first father and the first mother engaged in the propagation of the human race in the image of Adam, who was created in the image of God (Gen 5:1-3). From this incredible beginning, the marriage relationship has been universally recognized as the proper pattern for family life and an essential building block for stable and fruitful societies.

But the wonder of marriage, and its importance to society, does not rest in its utility to propagate the human race. The importance of marriage to society is also theological. A recurring New Testament metaphor for the church is that of the "Bride of Christ." Paul likens his watchcare over the Corinthian church to that of a father betrothing his daughter to one husband (2 Cor 11:2). The culminating event in God's revelation of redemptive history is the marriage of the Lamb, where the Bride has been made ready, clothed in the fine linen of righteousness (Rev 19:7-9). That the Lord is like a beaming groom is evident from the invitation in the end times, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9). What becomes of such wonderful imagery when the institution of marriage is trivialized, mocked, and perverted?

Marriage is not an *ad hoc* image of Christ and the church. Scripture teaches that husbands are to love their wives "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:25). The sanctifying nature of Christ's love-in-action for the church is to be the model for a husband's love for his wife. He is to love, nourish, and cherish his wife as he loves his own body, in the same manner that Jesus loved the church, which is his body (Eph 5:28-29). Paul writes that the "one flesh" relationship between a husband and a wife, instituted by God at Eden, is a profound mystery and "it refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32). This means that the relationship between Christ and the church is logically prior to that of marriage. God instituted marriage in Eden because "it is not good that the man should be alone," but he did so with a mind toward giving the world a picture of the loving and sacrificial relationship that Christ has with the church.

Marriage was created, defined, and instituted by God. Therefore, it cannot be redefined by local governments, state constitutions, federal judiciaries, the FOX Network or *People Magazine*. Christians cannot sit idly by and allow governments to attach the social and religious weight of marriage to what is decidedly not Christian. But neither can Christians ignore popular culture's perversion of the understanding of heterosexual marriage, and they certainly cannot take part in that perversion. When this happens, we lose all moral credibility on the subject of marriage and do not have an audience when facing the controversy surrounding homosexual marriage. To be silent voluntarily on the one is ultimately to mute ourselves on the other.

Our task is far more than to argue against gay and lesbian marriage and against homosexual lifestyles. We must proclaim with our words while we demonstrate through our marriages the God-ordained relationship between a husband and wife. When husbands love their wives as themselves and wives respect their husbands (Eph 5:33), the world sees how Christ loves the church and the church loves her Lord. When the world hears this proclamation of true marriage and sees it lived out to the glory of God in Christian families, then any alternative will be exposed for the hollow perversion that it is. ■

¹Multnomah County has the third highest percentage of female-female couples in the United States among large urban counties according to the 2000 census. (Laura Gunderson, "Gay Marriage: Who Did, Didn't, and Why." *The Oregonian* (March 28, 2004) B1.

²David Austin and Laura Gunderson, "Ties that Bind and Divide: Multnomah County Recognizes Gay Marriage Amid Joy, Protest." *The Oregonian* (March 4, 2004) A1.

³AP Wire Service, March 16, 2004.

⁴"American Public Opinion About Gay and Lesbian Marriage" <http://www.gallup.com/poll/focus/sr040127.asp> Internet: Accessed March 8, 2004.

⁵For example, "In The Dalles, a more conservative town, longtime resident Ollie Brunt says: 'To me it's repulsive. I think our world is going downhill.'" Bill Graves and Betsy Hammond, "Marriages Test Traditional Tolerance of Oregonians." *The Oregonian* (March 4, 2004) A10.

⁶Ibid.

J. Lee Grady's 25 Tough Questions About Women and the Church¹: A Review Article

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J. Lee Grady—a staunch proponent of egalitarianism—wrote *25 Tough Questions About Women and the Church* as a way of publicly responding to the kinds of gender role questions that he is frequently asked to address. As it unfolds, the book is presented as something of a popularly written egalitarian field manual (xi), addressing questions that range from matters of interpretation to assessing the value of moms staying home with children to counsel on how and when to defy the authority of church leaders. In all of this, Grady's underlying thesis seems to be that one's gifting and calling are the only relevant factors for discerning roles in ministry and in the home (ix). According to Grady then, any consideration of gender—be it for the office of elder in the church, for leadership in the home, or for other related considerations—is an evidence of unbiblical gender prejudice and therefore ought to be eliminated entirely from our thinking (viii).

Before proceeding to a detailed analysis of Grady's proposal, however, several preliminary observations need to be highlighted. In the first place, it should be noted that Grady is an evangelical and an inerrantist (ix), which means that he has committed himself not to dismiss key passages that are inconvenient for his view. This is, of course, a commendable starting point. What's more, several of his concerns are entirely valid and shared by complementarians. For example, biblical complementarians wholeheartedly agree with Grady's identification of the abuse of women as an intolerable injustice (4). He also appropriately counsels those who have been sinned against, even in this terrible way, not to harbor unforgiveness in their hearts (5). Grady even recognizes that "[g]ender differences are part of the creation order" (16).²

Despite those commendable acknowledgements, however, Grady's central aim in this book is the advancement of an egalitarian thesis, and it is this complex of interwoven arguments that calls for a response. The fact that the book is popularly written—and therefore likely to receive a wider reading—only heightens the need for a response. In offering this review then, it is my judgment that Grady, though undoubtedly well intended, has produced a line of argument that runs counter to the Bible's teaching and that will ultimately prove harmful to the health of the church. I note the unhealthy effect on the church not to be mean-spirited, but merely as an observation that any time someone counsels—even unwittingly—disobedience to what God has authoritatively laid down in the Scriptures, it will prove to have an unhealthy effect.

Evaluation of Grady's Case

In what follows, I will not attempt an exhaustive point-by-point interaction with Grady's book. Rather, my more limited aim will be to identify and evaluate several pivotal weaknesses that mark Grady's case. As I have already mentioned, it seems that, in one form or another, most of Grady's exegetical and theological arguments serve to support his claim that gifting and calling—but not gender—are the only applicable factors for discerning home and churchly leadership roles. Since this argument appears to have the status of a cumulative conclusion, it will be considered last.

A. Misrepresentations and Unhelpful Tone

In terms of the actual content of Grady's arguments for an egalitarian view of gender roles, this factor is the least significant. That is to say that the contents of many of these criticisms of complementarianism are irrelevant, because they attack misrepresentations and not the real thing. And, since they are irrelevant, it is fair to conclude that they are of no *formal* significance to the debate between complementarians and egalitarians. This formal observation, however, does not necessarily neutralize the potentially detrimental effect of such continual misrepresentations on a reader.

Allow me to expand on this point a bit. Of course everyone makes mistakes, but when an author writes a book, readers generally assume—and should be able to assume—that the author has a sufficient basis to support each of his claims. This obligation is further magnified when a given claim involves the criticism of another position. In other words, criticism of other views is entirely appropriate, but readers ought to be able to trust that the author is accurately representing the opposing view when he brings it in for criticism.³ When accurate representation does not take place, then readers are susceptible to being led to believe something about another view that is not actually true.⁴

Having said that, we need to consider a few examples of Grady's misrepresentations and unhelpful tone. Accordingly, we note how Grady routinely suggests that the “traditional” or “hierarchical”⁵ view is so deeply prejudiced against women that it actually encourages abuse and other harmful effects. Consider the following samples:

“. . . the church seems powerless to protect women because its misguided theology actually encourages abuse” (viii).

“This *pagan*, hierarchical view of marriage has resulted in a skyrocketing divorce rate among Bible-believing Christians, as well as a growing problem with domestic abuse that Christian leaders don't like to talk about” (xi-xii, italics added).

“This *warped view* has created a fragile foundation in many Christian homes, leading to strife, mistrust and, in some cases, abuse” (10, italics added).

“It may take another generation before we rid the church of this *crippling spirit of gender prejudice*—an attitude that continues to slow the advancement of the gospel” (91, italics added).

“I am grateful today that so many women are rejecting the unhealthy religious mind-sets that have been set up like roadblocks *by Satan himself*” (96, italics added).

“What an army of women we could release today—if the church would discard *silly notions* about headship that *cripple* our efforts to evangelize the world” (99, italics added).

“Why has the church silenced women? Why have we urged them to settle for less? Why have we coaxed them to avoid the spiritual battlefield? I believe *the devil* is behind this strategy” (167, italics added).

What these examples reveal is a harsh polemic against and consistent misrepresentation of the complementarian view.

With respect to the issue of abuse, for instance, it is true that some persons in what we might call the “abusive male dominance” camp have claimed male superiority as a basis for beating their wives (4). But what Grady should have noted is that the abusive male dominance view and the complementarian view are clearly *not* the same. Biblical complementarians do not claim that men are superior to women, and they vigorously oppose all forms of spouse and child abuse.⁶ Such abuse clearly violates Paul's command for husbands to love their wives “as Christ loved the church” (Eph 5:25).⁷ Hence, a distinction—which Grady appears not to make—is in order between an abusive notion of male dominance and a complementarian notion of male headship. Viewed in this manner, the ultimate solution to the problem with spouse abuse turns out not to be the elimination of gender role distinctions; rather, the ultimate solution stems from the embrace of a truly biblical complementarity, whereby the husband leads and sacrificially loves his wife as Christ loves church and the wife graciously submits herself to her husband's leadership just as the church submits to Christ (Eph 5:22-33).⁸

With respect to Grady's claim about divorce, two brief observations will suffice. First, Grady does not document the unlikely claim that complementarian marriages lead to higher divorce rates. Second, and more importantly, a moment's reflection should demonstrate the claim's implausibility. It is certainly the case that we are all sinners; it is also true that even the godliest marriages experience difficult times. Nevertheless, when a husband and a wife—equal in worth and dignity—seek, by God's grace, to live out their respective roles of servant leadership and gracious submission, we would probably be hard-pressed to find many prognosticators ready to project the ultimate doom of this marriage.⁹

Finally, Grady's most startling comments may well be those that link complementarianism to the hindrance of evangelism and other Satanic oppressions of women. Here again, two observations are in order. First, Grady's comments about demonic opposition to women are not really germane to biblical complementarianism. It is not the case, for instance, that complementarians urge women “to settle for less” or “to

avoid the spiritual battlefield” (167). But insofar as Grady’s comments resist any room for a God-given distinction in roles (85), the distressing reality is that he is labeling as Satanic what God deems good. Second, Grady seems to suggest that complementarians oppose virtually any form of female initiative in ministry.¹⁰ This is simply not the case, however. The Bible is replete with manifold depictions of women in ministry. Complementarians celebrate this reality, and seek to empower godly women to fulfill every ministry capacity that is biblically available to them.¹¹ That being the case, it is difficult to see how biblically limiting the office of elder (and other elder-like roles) to otherwise qualified men factors in as an impediment to world evangelization.

In regard to the quotations above, one sometimes wonders if Grady actually has complementarians in mind as the recipients of his criticism. For, these criticisms either involve a misrepresentation of the complementarian view, or they are only valid as criticisms of the abusive male dominance position. But, neither the misrepresentations nor the abusive male dominance position depict complementarianism accurately. Lumping these views together, as Grady often appears to do, would seem to indicate one of two things. Either, he does not differentiate between complementarianism and abusive male dominance, because he does not understand the complementarian view; or he does understand the complementarian view but misrepresents it as abusive male dominance anyway.¹² If it is a case of the former scenario (i.e., misunderstanding), then Grady’s book is severely handicapped by virtue of not considering the most biblically viable alternative to his own position. If the latter scenario (i.e., misrepresentation) proves to be the case, then Grady’s book is hampered by virtue of distorting the complementarian view.

In either case, the complementarian position is not depicted as it actually stands. Consequently, I fear that trusting readers, who may be less familiar with the gender role debate, might conclude from Grady’s book that the only two options pertinent to this discussion are either egalitarianism or the abusive misogyny of male dominance. If readers come away with that conclusion, then they will fail to see God’s wonderful design of biblical complementarity.¹³

B. Exegetical and Theological Errors

The errors under consideration in the remaining sections do not so much misrepresent complementarianism as they misinterpret biblical data and draw incorrect theological conclusions. Since spatial limitations prohibit an exhaustive interaction with the contents of Grady’s book, my purpose in these sections is simply to interact with representative examples of these types of errors. Along these lines, I find that many of Grady’s most significant exegetical and theological errors often involve: imposing a meaning on a given text that the biblical

author did not intend, arguing from silence, or basing an interpretation not on what is specifically stated in a passage but on a speculative suggestion about the unspoken mental frame of reference behind the biblical author’s argument. In this section then, we will give sustained attention to two sets of errors that broadly represent many kinds of the exegetical and theological mistakes committed by Grady in his book.¹⁴

1. We begin by noting that Grady—in a common egalitarian approach—has removed the biblical category of “male headship” and replaced it, instead, with an appeal to “mutual submission.” He gets at this issue in a variety of ways.

For one, he observes (correctly) that Eph 5:22—“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord”—depends for its verb on Eph 5:21, which in the NASB reads “. . . be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (13). Even though the rest of the Pauline household code—Eph 5:22-6:9¹⁵—and the rest of the Bible, for that matter, nowhere calls upon husbands to submit to wives,¹⁶ Grady nevertheless concludes that the passage does not really place an emphasis on male leadership. Rather, in Grady’s view, what Eph 5:22 really calls for is a sense of “mutual submission” whereby “the husband and wife have equal authority in Christ” (13).¹⁷

Another way that Grady seeks to undermine “male headship” is by defining the Greek word *kephale* as “source” instead of “head” in 1 Cor 11:3 and Eph 5:23 (14, 95-96, 150).¹⁸ The force of this claim, if true, would be to indicate that the term *kephale* in these contexts has no connotation of authority. Rather, in Grady’s view, the term “is about intimacy, mutuality and the unique connection that exists between a husband and wife” (150).

Finally, Grady opposes the doctrine of male headship by speculating about the backdrop to Paul’s comments in Ephesians 5:22-33. Here he suggests that Paul was not endorsing the husband’s marital leadership so much as he was nullifying the authority of the bride’s father. Grady reasons that this was necessary, because fathers in that first century culture viewed their daughters as property and sought to exert continued control over them even after they were married (15, 22). In further support of this theory, Grady also proposes that Paul deviates from the common usage of the Greek term *hupotasso* in Eph 5:21-24, such that he is not calling for a wife’s “submission” to her husband, but is simply pointing out that, upon marriage, a wife is now “attached” or connected to her husband as opposed to her father (22).

What of these attempts to replace male headship with mutual submission? Minimally, the following responses are in order.

First, the claim that Eph 5:22 teaches mutual submission, because it depends on verse 21 for its verb, is unsustainable in context. For, as a transitional verse, Eph 5:21 introduces

the entire household code in Eph 5:22-6:9. Therefore, if one is going to interpret Eph 5:21 in such a way that it necessitates mutual submission in the wife's relationship to her husband in verse 22, then consistent interpretation requires applying the same conclusion to all of the relationships specified in this passage.¹⁹ That, in turn, would mean that Paul disavowed roles of leadership and instead expected mutual submission in the relationships between: parents and children (Eph 6:1-4), slaves and masters (Eph 6:5-9), and (most shockingly of all) Christ and the church (Eph 5:23-32). But to suggest—in the first century no less—that parents submit to their children or that masters submit to their slaves²⁰ or, especially, that Christ submits to the church just shows the absurdity of the claim. In short, Grady's interpretation imposes a meaning on the text of Eph 5:21-6:9 that Paul did not intend. A more contextual interpretation recognizes that, in 5:22ff. Paul unpacks the spheres of submission that he intends in 5:21. Hence, we are told that wives are to submit to their husbands, the church to Christ, children to their parents, and slaves to masters. But, while husbands, fathers, and masters are called upon (and Christ is seen) to lead lovingly and sacrificially, none of these parties are called on to submit to their counterparts.²¹

Second, though common among egalitarians, the claim that *kephale*, in 1 Cor 11:3 and Eph 5:23, means “source” without any connotation of authority cannot withstand the evidence. Wayne Grudem has repeatedly and conclusively demonstrated both that “authority over” is a common meaning for *kephale* in ancient Greek and that, as yet, no one has produced an uncontested example of the meaning “source” without authority from ancient Greek literature.²² Additionally, contextual exegesis requires that a sense of authority be retained in Eph 5:23 since the wife's submission to her husband is paralleled by the church's submission to Christ (5:24). And clearly, Christ stands in a position of authority as the *kephale* of the church. To claim otherwise is, once again, to impose a meaning on the passage that Paul did not intend.

Third, Grady seeks to advance the cause of mutual submission by speculating about the backdrop of Paul's mental frame when he wrote Eph 5:22-33. Recall Grady's suggestion that Paul's purpose in this passage was not to endorse the husband's role as leader but to nullify the authority that first century fathers hoped to continue exerting over their married daughters (15, 22). The problem with this theory, however, is that it is not the reasoning that Paul gives. Paul does not say that “the husband is the ‘head’ of wife, as the father was formerly the ‘head’ of his daughter.” He says “...the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church. . .” (Eph 5:23, NASB). The parallel of the husband's authority in marriage is not with a father's former authority over his children, but with Christ's perpetual authority over the church.²³ To be sure, Paul does emphasize, in this passage, the “one flesh” relationship and the necessity of a young husband to leave his parents and cleave to his new bride (5:31, quoting Gen

2:24). But even here, Paul explains that the deeper “mystery” of the one flesh marital union points to the relationship between Christ and his church (5:32). In contrast, Grady's interpretation of male headship in Eph 5:22-33 replaces Paul's self-stated reasoning with a line of argument that Paul does not actually give.²⁴

2. We now turn to consider a second set of errors, by which Grady attempts to undo the force of Paul's prohibition of women “teaching or exercising authority over a man” in 1 Timothy 2:11-15.²⁵ While all the details cannot be rehearsed here, Grady essentially employs all of the following arguments: (1) First Timothy 2:12 is the only the verse in the Bible that can possibly be construed to prevent women from functioning as elders, but such a reading actually misinterprets the passage (173). (2) Elsewhere in the NT, we find Paul encouraging women to teach (e.g., Titus 2:3-5). Therefore, 1 Tim 2:12 does not really prohibit a woman's elder-like teaching authority over men (160, 173). (3) Instead, Paul was simply prohibiting uneducated Ephesian women from taking on teaching roles (141-142, 159). (4) Or, perhaps, he was attempting to restrain women who were teaching false doctrine—especially a Gnostic heresy that Eve was created before Adam (143-144, 159-160). (5) In either case—argument 3 or 4—Paul's prohibition was culturally and situationally bound, and therefore cannot be timelessly applicable (143).

We may begin our brief response, by stating the obvious point that Grady has gone to great lengths—as egalitarians frequently do—to contest the meaning of this passage. Taking his comments in order, however, we may evaluate them as follows.

(1) Grady's claim, that the traditional interpretation of 1 Tim 2:12 is askew, depends on his subsequent arguments that speculatively attempt to reconstruct the background to the epistle, and those points will be considered in turn. But this particular argument suffers from another major defect, viz., the claim that 1 Tim 2:12 is the only biblical text that can even be remotely construed to tilt in the direction of complementarianism. This observation is simply not true. The whole tenor of Scripture—going all the way back to creation, as Paul points out in 2:13—points us in the direction of male leadership.²⁶

(2) The fact that Paul elsewhere endorses women's teaching cannot be used to silence his intention in the present passage. That said, I surely agree that the prohibition in 1 Tim 2:12 does not bar women from all forms of teaching. Indeed, many women are gifted teachers. Certainly, Paul instructed older women to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-5). And perhaps most famously Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, privately instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26). What Paul's command has in view then, is the type of regular teaching and authority exercised by elders, which is to say that the pastoral office should be reserved for otherwise qualified men.²⁷ Again, the reason I say this is because the two activities—teaching and exercise of authority over men—that Paul prohibits women

from exercising in 1 Tim 2:12 correspond to the two activities that are uniquely required for the NT office of elder/pastor/overseer (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

(3) Here we come to the first of Grady's attempts to reconstruct the background to 1 Timothy 2:11-15, when he suggests that Paul was really just prohibiting uneducated Ephesian women from exercising teaching roles. His argument is that women in that culture were essentially sequestered at home and therefore ignorant (141-142), with the result that Paul forbade such women from teaching, not because they were women, but because they were not qualified educationally. Consequently, the cultural limitation of this prohibition is understood to be removed in societies where both men and women are educated.

The problem with this interpretation is that it is an argument from silence based on a speculatively reconstructed background. What's more, the following indicators show that Grady's suggested background is deficient: a) It has actually been shown that "many men and women in the first century had basic literary skills, and very few men or women had education beyond this level."²⁸ Hence, it is not likely that Paul was singling out Ephesian women as being particularly unintelligent. b) When we consider that many of the apostles lacked formal training, it becomes clear that formal academic education was not a requirement to teach the Bible in the first century. c) If ignorance was the issue, then we would expect Paul to prohibit such uneducated women from teaching anyone at all, and not just men. d) Again, if lack of education was the underlying issue, it would be inconsistent of Paul to prohibit uneducated women from teaching while not also prohibiting uneducated men from teaching.²⁹ In view of all this, Grady's proposal is found wanting. For his interpretation removes the reasoning that Paul actually gives—the creation order (2:13)—for his prohibition, and replaces it with an unsustainable hypothesis concerning lack of education that Paul nowhere states.

(4) If the previous theory is shown to fail, that is evidently of little consequence. For, Grady is ready with another speculative reconstruction of the background to 1 Tim 2:11-15. This time he advances the thesis that Paul's prohibition was intended to restrain women from teaching some form of false doctrine, most likely a Gnostic heresy about Eve being created first (143-144, 159-160). Once again, the force of this claim, if true, would be to limit the application of this passage, since the abiding element of Paul's restriction would pertain, not to the issue of women teaching men, but to the issue of anyone teaching heresy. In the Ephesian situation, according to Grady, it just happened to be the case that women were the particular purveyors of false teaching.

In addressing my response to this hypothesis, I will attend mainly to the broader suggestion concerning false teaching rather than to the specifics of the Gnostic heresy to which Grady appeals.³⁰ Consider the following points: a) Once again,

if false teaching was the issue, then we would expect Paul to prohibit such female heretics from teaching anyone at all, and not just men. b) Interestingly, however, the only false teachers ever mentioned in Ephesus are men (1 Tim 1:19-20; 2 Tim 1:15; 2:17-18; Acts 20:30). Hence, if Paul's point was to disqualify false teachers, one is left to wonder why he singled out women. c) Finally, Grady's interpretation yet again removes the reasoning that Paul gives—creation order—for his prohibition, and replaces it with a thesis about false teaching that Paul nowhere states.³¹ Paul does not say that he restricts women from teaching men, because they are teaching heresy. Instead, he argues that his prohibition is intended to reflect the complementarity that was built into the creation order (1 Tim 2:13).

(5) All of the arguments offered by Grady on 1 Tim 2:12 attempt, in one way or another, to attach cultural limitations to the range of the command's applicability. Despite all of his efforts, however, the one feature of the passage that Grady never seriously considers is the reason Paul gives for his command in 2:13. Paul explicitly grounds his command on the divine ordering of creation—"But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve" (NASB, underline added). The logic of the passage then, is actually fairly simple. Paul's prohibition has nothing to do with poorly educated women or female heretics. He prohibits a woman from exercising elder-like teaching authority over men, because he does not want to contravene God's purpose for men and women in creation. Since the command is grounded in creation it is necessarily trans-cultural.

C. Argument from Experience

Here, we can afford to be brief and simply point out that Grady frequently appeals to the evident success of women serving in pastoral roles as a basis for claiming that God favors this practice (91, 177, 192-195). He even asserts that complementarians will find it "increasingly difficult . . . to ignore the anointing that is on prominent female preachers, pastors and Bible teachers today" (91).

This argument must face an obvious question, however. We might put it this way: Is experience—even the experience of evident success—an adequate basis for concluding that the affirmation of female pastors is right? Surely, as self-professing evangelicals, we should only acknowledge Scripture as our ultimate authority. So, our decision on this issue must finally come down, not to a set of experiential observations, but to a glad-hearted embrace of whatever Scripture teaches. And, of course, the view here articulated is that the Scripture teaches a complementarian understanding of gender roles.

What's more, we should be careful about jumping immediately to the conclusion that the Lord approves of female

pastors just because we find some evident blessing on their ministries. Indeed, we should never be surprised to find a measure of blessing attached to the preaching of God's word, regardless of who is doing the preaching. For the Lord has promised to be faithful to his word (Isa 55:11), and that promise is not compromised by the disobedience of any given pastor. In fact, this reality is so sure that Paul was able to rejoice in the proclamation of the gospel by his enemies, when their singular motivation for preaching was the desire to increase Paul's hardship in prison (Phil 1:12-18).³² Clearly then, the blessing that attends the proclamation of God's word does not necessarily indicate that the Lord approves of everything about the one preaching. Surely, for instance, God did not approve of the motives of Paul's enemies in their preaching (Phil 1:15, 17). It does not follow from the fact that the Lord has blessed the preaching of some female pastors, that he is therefore an egalitarian proponent of female pastors. Experience does not decide this issue. Scripture alone does.

D. Grady's Conclusion: Gifting and Calling Only

As mentioned above, it seems to me, that all of Grady's aforementioned arguments funnel toward one overarching conclusion, viz., that the only regulative feature for discerning leadership in the home and church is a privatized understanding of how one has been gifted and called (viii, ix, 40, 42, 78, 81, 152, 160). In Grady's view, it seems that a personal sense of calling cannot be questioned—not even by Scripture. Therefore, according to Grady's logic, any woman who senses a call to the pastoral office is not only allowed to do so, but must do so lest she risk disobedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Once again, though, this issue finally comes down to a question of whether or not we are ultimately subject to biblical authority. The simple fact is that we are never "called" to disobey Scripture. So if the Bible is correctly understood to teach complementarianism, then God will not "call" women to disobey that teaching.³³ Undoubtedly, Scripture makes it clear that God does call and gift women to teach and lead in certain contexts (Titus 2:3-5; Acts 18:26). But Scripture is equally clear that certain teaching and leadership activities are reserved for otherwise qualified males (1 Tim 2:11-15, 1 Cor 14:34-35). So we take our stand with Scripture and affirm that complementarity is part of God's good design for men and women.

Conclusion

In this review of J. Lee Grady's *25 Tough Questions About Women and the Church* I have attempted to point out several of the most significant errors in his defense of egalitarian gender roles. To review briefly, Grady routinely misrepresents

—intentionally or unintentionally—complementarianism. For his exegetical and theological conclusions, Grady often appeals to speculative theories that the text does not mention to the exclusion of reasons that the text does give. Finally, he seems willing to allow personal experience and a subjective sense of calling to trump biblical authority.

Unfortunately, these errors hinder Grady's ability to see the beauty of complementarianism's twin truths (xi, 18-19, 96), viz., the full personal equality of men and women *and* the divinely ordained differences in role whereby men are specially charged with providing sacrificial leadership and love in the church and home, and women are specially called to submit graciously and support lovingly the godly male leadership in the home and church. In the end, I believe that this discussion of Grady's errors is sufficient to demonstrate the unconvincing nature of his overall argument. ■

¹J. Lee Grady, *25 Tough Questions About Women and the Church* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2003).

²Later in the book Grady states this point even more forcefully: "Of course, Scripture requires men to be men, and women to be women. God does not endorse androgyny, homosexuality, or any form of gender bending. God is glorified when men act masculine and women act feminine" (87, cf. 155, 161). This is an excellent statement, but in view of the whole book it is significantly watered down. Indeed, one may easily come away from the reading with the impression that Grady sees the only essential gender distinctives as being physical in nature. In any event, it is certainly the case that Grady sees these creation-based gender differences—whatever he understands them to be—as entirely unimportant to questions of role and leadership in ministry and the home.

³When opposing views are accurately represented, then the validity of the criticisms can be debated. But this level of discussion cannot be achieved until the various views are correctly depicted.

⁴When a book, such as this one, is aimed at a popular audience, the reader's dependence on the author's representations of various views is maximized. In popular writing, authors often provide less documentation, so it is not as easy to track down the supposed support behind the criticisms. What's more, non-specialists—no matter how intelligent—often will not have the time or the resources at their disposal to track down the citations that are given.

⁵My perception is that Grady is using the terms "traditionalist" (e.g., 13, 85, 90, 100, 102) and "hierarchical/hierarchy" (e.g., xi, 9, 65) to denote the complementarian position. To the best of my memory, Grady only specifically uses the term "complementarian" once (154) even though he did cite *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, on several other occasions (110, 173). If my perception about terminology is correct, then Grady has significantly misrepresented the complementarian position. If Grady means something else by these terms, then an equally significant—though different—problem remains. I will return to flesh out this point after listing and interacting with these examples.

⁶See, for instance, Russell Moore's cultural commentary in this issue of *JBMW*, "Do Wife-Beaters Need Better Therapy Groups? Spouse Abuse and the End of Sin."

⁷Curiously, Grady himself points out that abusing one's wife would

not measure up to the command for husbands to love wives “as Christ loved the church” (21). But he appears to suggest that egalitarians would affirm this principle while complementarians would not!

⁸It should also be noted that, contrary to Grady’s apparent supposition (18, 21, 65), an appeal to gracious submission on the part of a wife in no way requires her to suffer silently as the victim of spouse abuse or to follow her husband blindly into sin. See affirmation number seven of CBMW’s “The Danvers Statement”: “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).”

⁹The assessment would surely be different if a marriage of abusive male dominance were under consideration. Once again, however, that is an entirely different issue. Though Grady labels this view of marriage “pagan” (xi-xii) there is no real indication in the context that he has anything other than the complementarian view in mind.

¹⁰For instance, right after Grady’s comment on “the unhealthy religious mind-sets that have been set up like roadblocks by Satan himself” (96), he profiles several women who have taken initiative in ministry. The first woman, Jackie Holland, started an outreach to prostitutes and strippers, and she plans to open a shelter for battered women (97). Danita Estrella opened an orphanage in Haiti (97-98). Grady mentioned a couple of other women who had expressed burdens to evangelize the lost (98-99). Now, the juxtaposition of the “roadblock” comment and these profiles would seem to imply that Grady believes his view can accommodate these examples of female initiative while complementarianism cannot. But as I read these profiles of women opening shelters, starting orphanages, and practicing evangelism, I could not think of a contemporary complementarian who would oppose these women on the basis of their gender.

¹¹For one statement of this see, Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991) 209-224. Hereafter, citations of this book will be referred to as *RBMW*.

¹²In summation of my judgment on this issue, it is difficult at times to know exactly which view Grady envisions as the recipient of his criticism. Nevertheless, my overall impression is that he generally has the complementarian position in view. This would seem to be the case given his citations of *RBMW* (110, 154, 172-173) and his overarching use of the “traditionalist” and “hierarchical” labels for the view that he opposes. For instance, Grady uses the label “traditionalist” in his discussion of role differentiation, which—when properly understood—is a common feature of complementarianism (85-87). As mentioned above, however, it is beyond my ability fully to discern if Grady is intentionally misrepresenting complementarianism or if, instead, he simply lacks a thorough understanding of it.

¹³Given spatial limitations, every case of misrepresentation cannot be fully explored here. Additional examples, however, include the following: 1) Grady insinuates that complementarian women, who would resist taking certain positions of ecclesial leadership out of biblical conviction, are “smug,” “self-righteous,” and “rebellious” (96). 2) He also implies that to acknowledge differences in gender roles is to deny the full equality of women (xi, 18-19, 96). But this is precisely *not* what the complementarian view teaches. Rather, complementarianism explicitly affirms *both* the full personal equality of men and women as bearers of God’s image *and* the divinely

ordained differences in role whereby men are specially charged with providing sacrificial leadership and love in the church and home, and women are specially called to submit graciously and support lovingly the godly male leadership in the home and church.

¹⁴Once again, given spatial limitations, there are several errors of an exegetical/theological nature that I will be unable to discuss. Two of these errors, however, are substantial enough to merit at least a brief mention here. The first one involves Grady’s treatment of 1 Cor 14:34-35, where Paul requires women to “keep silent in the churches.” Grady makes his case by appealing to the “inserted comment theory” (129-134), according to which, Paul is not giving his own view in verses 34-35, but is instead quoting the view of the Corinthians, which he immediately rejects in verse 36. Here, it will more than suffice to refer the reader to the relevant portion of Don Carson’s *RBMW* chapter, which exposes the weaknesses of this theory. D. A. Carson, ““Silent in the Churches”: On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36,” in *RBMW* 147-151.

The second error involves Grady’s various efforts to validate female elders and even apostles biblically. Here he routinely strains to assert that since women filled “senior positions of authority” the pastoral office must also be open to them today (88-89, 91, 108, 196-199). By “senior positions of authority,” he usually seems to point to prophetesses in the OT and NT, Deborah in Judges 4, or Priscilla (along with her husband) privately instructing Apollos in Acts 18:26. His shortcoming here is in defining any of these capacities as a functional equivalent to the office of elder/pastor/overseer in the NT. (More will be said below on the pivotal nature of this office for the gender role debate.) Grady also argues that female patrons of house churches actually pastored those churches (121-122, 173-174). He seems to suggest that Junia, in Rom 16:7, was an apostle on par with Paul and the Twelve (121). And he points out several passages that, in his judgment, establish female elders (Rom 16:2; 1 Tim 3:11; Titus 2:3-5). His appeal to 1 Tim 3:11 in support of female elders is particularly interesting. Assuredly, there is a debate over whether this verse refers to “wives of deacons” or “women deacons.” But contextually, it cannot be understood as a reference to “female elders.” The interesting feature in Grady’s treatment of 1 Tim 3:11 is that he acknowledges the “deaconess” debate when he criticizes the translation “wives of deacons” (123). Later on in the book, however, Grady suddenly asserts—with no explanation—that 1 Tim 3:11 is a reference not to women deacons but to “female elders” (180). By way of a brief response to Grady’s case for female elders and apostles, we may fairly conclude that his arguments are exegetically unconvincing. For an extended critique of the types of claims Grady makes for female elders and apostles, I here refer the reader to Thomas R. Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, eds. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 188-200.

¹⁵Cf. Col 3:18-4:1.

¹⁶First Corinthians 7:4—where Paul reminds husbands and wives that each has a sexual claim on the other—does help to shape the contours of the husband’s leadership in marriage. This verse clearly guides a husband away from a selfish and dictatorial model of leadership and points him, instead, toward a tenderhearted servant leadership that is inclusive and considerate of his wife’s needs and desires. Contra Grady (13), however, what this verse does not do is to dissolve the abundance of biblical teaching on male leadership in marriage into an undifferentiated egalitarianism. To the contrary, the NT routinely appeals to the husband’s headship and calls on wives to submit to their husbands (1 Cor 11:2-16, 14:34-35; Col 3:18-19; Ti-

tus 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1-7). Moreover, the NT summons for male headship are expressions of God's design in creation as indicated in Genesis 1-3. For more on this point see, Schreiner, "Women in Ministry" 200-210.

¹⁷Here we find yet another instance of misrepresentation. For Grady apparently tars complementarianism as a view that: 1) encourages "dictatorial control" as opposed to "servant leadership," 2) promotes a "pagan leadership style," and 3) denies a wife's equality (12). But once again, the self-stated commitments of complementarianism forbid all three of these practices. It appears then, that Grady simply cannot abide the notion that equality of personhood can co-exist with prescribed differences in role.

¹⁸The background to this debate is the egalitarian claim that, in ancient Greek, *kephale* generally meant "source" without any connotation of authority. For a brief synopsis of this debate see Wayne Grudem, "Is Evangelical Feminism the New Path to Liberalism? Some Disturbing Warning Signs," section C. 7, in this issue of *JBMW*. As will be discussed below, the evidence for Grady's claim is strikingly deficient.

¹⁹To do otherwise would be completely arbitrary.

²⁰Though this is not the place to unpack the issue of the Bible's response to slavery, I should state that I believe the NT authors do not endorse slavery; they only seek, as a means of temporary cultural accommodation, to regulate it. For a nice statement distinguishing between a wife's gracious submission to her husband and the temporary practice of regulating and accommodating slavery see, Schreiner, "Women in Ministry" 215-217.

²¹Cf. Wayne Grudem, "Wives Like Sarah, and the Husbands Who Honor Them: 1 Peter 3:1-7," in *RBMW* 199 (especially fn. 9).

²²See Wayne Grudem, "Does *kephale* ('head') Mean 'Source' or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples" *Trinity Journal* 6 NS (Spring 1985) 38-59; Idem, "The Meaning of *kephale* ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies," *Trinity Journal* 11 NS (Spring, 1990) 3-72; Idem, "The Meaning of 'Head' (*kephale*) in 1 Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23," in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002) 145-202.

²³To extend this line of argument, we note that in verse 24 a wife's call to submit to her husband is paralleled by the church's call to submit to Christ, not by her former submission to her father. Husbands in verse 25, are commanded to love their wives, not "even as their fathers loved them," but "as Christ also loved the church."

²⁴Grady supports his conjecture about Paul nullifying a father's authority by claiming that *hupotasso*, in Ephesians 5, conveys a sense of "connection" and not its ordinary sense of "submission" (22). This argument encounters two problems, however. First "connection" without a sense of submission is not a viable meaning for any of the NT usages of the term. (On this score, see Grudem, "Wives Like Sarah" 199.) Second, even if we were to grant Grady's point in Eph 5:21-24 for the sake of argument, 1 Pet 3:5-6—where the "submission" (*hupotasso*) of godly women in verse 5 is paralleled by Sarah's "obedience" to Abraham in verse 6—would still speak, with undeniable clarity of a wife's responsibility to submit to her husband.

²⁵This is not the place to expand fully the specifics of my own view of how 1 Tim 2:11-15 impacts the gender role debate. However, at the outset of this section, I should note that I understand the prohibition of 1 Tim 2:12—in which Paul disallows women to "teach or exercise authority over a man"—to limit the office of elder/pastor/overseer to otherwise qualified males. I believe this is so, because the two activities that Paul prohibits women from exercising in 1 Tim 2:12

are the same activities that Paul uniquely requires for the NT office of elder/pastor/overseer (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

²⁶The creation account in Genesis 1-3 establishes God's purpose for male leadership from the beginning. Even though men and women have often abused their roles after the Fall (Gen 3:16), God's design for male leadership continues to be seen in the OT, not least of all in the practice of an all male priesthood. This practice is then paralleled in the NT by limiting the office of elder/pastor/overseer to otherwise qualified men (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Key didactic passages in the NT emphasize God's purpose of male leadership (1 Tim 2:11-15; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Cor 14:34-35; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7). All of this reminds us that God's purpose in redemption, with respect to gender roles, was not to remove any such distinctions but to restore them to their original and properly functioning intent. For more specifics on how the numerous biblical ministries of women—especially prophecy—fit into this framework see Schreiner, "Women in Ministry" 188-200.

²⁷For the most satisfying and extensive treatment of this passage see Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, eds., *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995).

²⁸Grudem, "Is Evangelical Feminism the New Path to Liberalism?" section C. 4, in this issue of *JBMW*. For more extensive documentation of this observation see S. M. Baugh, "A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century" in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, eds. Andreas Köstenberger, Thomas Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 45-47.

²⁹With Grudem, we recognize that "surely there were untrained men in the congregations at Ephesus, including new converts and perhaps some poorly educated and illiterate slaves or day laborers. But Paul does not mention them. . . . The egalitarian position . . . cannot explain why Paul excludes all women (even the well-educated ones) and does not exclude any men (even the poorly educated ones)." Grudem, "Is Evangelical Feminism the New Path to Liberalism?" section C. 4.

³⁰Showing the unlikelihood of the "false teaching" hypothesis will suffice to rebut this claim, no matter what particular heresy is proposed.

³¹The particulars of the Gnostic heresy theory have been famously argued by Richard Clark Kroeger and Catherine Clark Kroger, *I Suffer Not a Woman: Rethinking 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in Light of Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992). The Kroeger's theory—on which Grady depends—has been thoroughly discredited however. There is simply no historical data to support the claim that first century Ephesus was a feminist haven impacted by an incipient Gnostic heresy. The Kroeger's theory is yet another instance of an attempt to limit the application of 1 Tim 2:12 by speculatively reconstructing a background that is unsustainable historically and that Paul nowhere acknowledges. For more detailed criticisms of the Kroeger's proposal see Robert W. Yarbrough, "I Suffer Not a Woman: A Review Essay," *Presbyterion* 18 (1992) 25-33; Albert Wolters, "Review: *I Suffer Not a Woman*," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993) 208-13; S. M. Baugh, "The Apostle Among the Amazons," *Westminster Theological Journal* 56 (1994) 153-71.

³²I am not suggesting that the motives of female pastors are equivalent to the motives of Paul's enemies in this passage.

³³Similarly, he would not call an imprudent, quick tempered, and greedy man with a disorderly home to be an elder, in defiance of 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Annotated Bibliography for Gender Related Articles in 2003

Compiled and Annotated by Rob Lister

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Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood
Louisville, Kentucky

In this issue of the journal we profile some of the most significant gender-related articles from 2003. Here is a brief reminder about the categories we are using and our intent in using them. By **Complementarian** we simply seek to designate an author who recognizes the full personal equality of the sexes, coupled with an acknowledgment of role distinctions in the home and church. By **Egalitarian** then, we intend to classify evangelicals who see only undifferentiated equality, i.e. they see no scriptural warrant for affirming male headship in the home or the church. Under the **Non-Evangelical** heading, we have classified important secular works as well as articles that broach the subject of biblical gender issues from a religious, albeit, non-evangelical point of view. This category also serves as our classification for Liberal scholars wanting to retain some sort of Christian identity. Finally, under the **Undeclared** heading, we have listed those articles that do not give sufficient indication of their fundamental stance for us to classify them more specifically.

Complementarian Authors/Articles

Bray, Gerald. "Review Article: *The Trinity and Subordinationism: The Doctrine of God and the Contemporary Gender Debate*." *Churchman* 117 (2003) 267-272.

On the issue of gender role relationships, Bray finds that Kevin Giles (author of *The Trinity and Subordinationism*) writes with an "all-too-transparent bias" and that in a sweeping manner "he dismisses biblical texts

which do not fit his thesis. . . (271). On the Trinitarian question, Bray rejects Giles's argument that the Son's submission to the Father is only temporal and thus limited to the incarnation. Bray rather maintains that this submission is part of the eternal relationship of Father and Son, though he personally cautions against using the term "subordination." Here Bray allows that the term ("subordination") can have a "perfectly orthodox meaning," but he is personally concerned that it will be misunderstood in the current context.

Ennis, Patricia A. "Portraying Christian Femininity." *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/2 (2003) 47-55.

Ennis sketches a portrait of Christian femininity by way of expositing Prov 31:10-31. In so doing, she highlights eleven distinctive features emphasized in the passage. Upon completing her exposition, Ennis turns to other biblical passages to demonstrate what possible rewards might come to women who, by the grace of God, live increasingly in accord with the principles of Proverbs 31. Christian women who are seeking wisdom for discerning biblical priorities for their lives will find much in the way of encouragement here.

Felix Sr., Paul W. "The Hermeneutics of Evangelical Feminism." *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/2 (2003) 35-46.

Felix's purpose in this article is to demonstrate that egalitarian hermeneutics fall short of adequate grammatical-historical interpretation of the Bible. He makes his case by demonstrating the weaknesses of egalitarian interpretation as they are applied to seven common hermeneutical principles. This article provides a very nice overview and critique of traditional egalitarian presuppositions with respect to biblical interpretation. And, at the conclusion of the article, a very helpful chart is included that will allow the reader, quickly and summarily, to scan the differences between egalitarian interpretation and a more consistent grammatical-historical hermeneutic, as it concerns the seven principles in question.

Hutchens, S. M. "Children of a Better God: A Reply to 'Is God Masculine'." *Touchstone* 16/1 (2003) 46-51.

This essay marks Hutchens's reply to Alan Padgett's article in the same issue of *Touchstone*. Padgett had argued that there is no sense in which God should be understood as masculine. According to Padgett, it seems that the exclusive male naming used of God and the predominating masculine images of God in the Bible merely reflect God's accommodation to a sinful patriarchal culture. Hutchens, in turn, offers

very insightful rebuttals of Padgett's (representative) egalitarian hermeneutics and exegesis, several of his key egalitarian presuppositions, and his treatment of orthodox history.

Jones, David W. "Egalitarianism and Homosexuality: Connected or Autonomous Ideologies?" *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/2 (2003) 5-19.

Jones begins his article by noting (1) that for some time complementarians have been concerned that the logic of egalitarians opens the door to a possible affirmation of homosexuality and (2) that many egalitarians have personally disavowed such a connection. The primary burden of his article then is to investigate the historical evidence found in one parachurch ministry (the Evangelical Women's Caucus) and three denominations (PC-USA, ELCA, and UMC) to ascertain whether there is historical warrant to substantiate the concern over a possible connection between egalitarianism and homosexuality. Jones provides massive historical documentation in support of the conclusion that some form of connection is clearly discernible. Then, in the next section of his article, Jones posits a more specific thesis as to the nature of the connection. According to Jones, although many egalitarians profess to acknowledge distinct gender identities (e.g. they disavow androgyny) between men and women, their refusal to acknowledge gender roles (i.e. complementarity of function) so minimizes the content of distinct gender identities that "the end result is a view of human sexuality that is unable to resist arguments waged by advocates of the progressive homosexual movement." Jones is quick to recognize that not all egalitarians have followed this path, nor is it the case that all of them will. But given the historical record and the practical minimization of distinct gender identities, Jones concludes that there is a "non- requisite logical connection" between egalitarianism and homosexuality.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. "Hermeneutical and Exegetical Challenges in Interpreting the Pastoral Epistles." *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7/3 (2003) 4-17.

Under the heading "hermeneutical challenges," Köstenberger addresses the issues of authorship, genre, and background. Here, he argues adeptly for Pauline authorship, and he critiques the extreme *ad hoc* interpretations of the pastorals by several recent commentators. In the section on "exegetical challenges," Köstenberger specifically addresses questions related to the instruction concerning elders/overseers as well as deacons. With respect to the elder/overseer issue, two of his key conclusions are as follows: (1) the

two terms are synonymous, thereby designating one office, (2) only otherwise qualified men are eligible for this office. On the issue of deacons in the pastorals, Köstenberger observes that: (1) this is a formal church office (part of a two-tiered structure), (2) the office is set off from the role of elders in that deacons do not have responsibilities in teaching or rulership. He also favors the understanding of 1 Tim 3 that understands "women deacons"—not merely "wives of deacons—to be in view.

Merkle, Benjamin L. "Hierarchy in the Church? Instruction from the Pastoral Epistles concerning Elders and Overseers." *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7/3 (2003) 32-43.

Merkle argues that according to the evidence in the pastoral epistles, the terms "elder" and "overseer" (along with "pastor") refer to one and the same office. Consequently, he maintains: (1) that local churches should operate with a two-tier office structure, namely, elders/overseers and deacons, (2) that local churches "should be led by a plurality of elders/overseers," and (3) that the elders/overseers "should be viewed as equal in status."

Patterson, Dorothy. "Sarah Sumner's *Men and Women in the Church*: A Review Article." *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/1 (2003) 39-50.

Patterson thoroughly exposes the flaws in Sumner's recently acclaimed volume. She (i.e. Patterson) correctly sees clearly that Sumner's conclusions are egalitarian despite her claim to articulate a middle way. Patterson also exposes Sumner's routine (and troubling) elevation of personal experience over biblical norms and authority. Alongside of its exegetical deficiencies, Patterson also notes, in conclusion, that Sumner's book is laced with continual misrepresentations of complementarians and that it often comes across with an air of intellectual condescension.

Poythress, Vern S. "How Have Inclusiveness and Tolerance Affected the Bauer-Danker Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (BDAG)?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003) 577-588.

Poythress notes with concern a few sample changes in the new BDAG, and he points to the likely possibility that a concern for "inclusiveness and tolerance" has unhelpfully made its presence felt in this standard Greek lexicon. The three examples that Poythress considers are listed under the following headings: (1) "Father" or "Parent," (2) "Brother," (3) "Jew" versus "Judean." The first two obviously reflect the debate over gender neutrality in translation. In all three cases, Poythress's

main complaint is that, due to Bauer's self-stated concern for inclusiveness and tolerance, the lexicon confuses two tasks: (1) "reporting . . . as accurately as possible the semantic senses within the ancient setting;" and (2) "suggesting what might be best as translation policy . . ." (580). Poythress concludes that the mingling of these two tasks, in some cases leads to the result that BDAG "fails to do the best possible job with lexical description (task 1)," which should be seen as the main task of a lexicon that aspires to set the standard for NT exegesis (587).

Schemm Jr., Peter R. "Galatians 3:28—Proof-text or Context?" *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/1 (2003) 23-30.

Given the debated nature of Gal 3:28 in the gender role debate, Schemm undertakes an exposition of the passage in order to clarify the issues. The pivotal question is what did Paul intend when he asserted that in Christ there is "neither male nor female." In examining the issue, Schemm recounts the egalitarian view that this passage extends all the way to a negation of gender specific roles, and he critiques that position for failing to give adequate consideration to contextual exegesis. He then demonstrates the superiority of the complementarian exegesis of this passage, which reflects a more thorough concern to treat Gal 3:28 in its context.

Stinson, Randy. "Our Mother Who Art in Heaven: A Brief Overview and Critique of Evangelical Feminists and the Use of Feminine God-Language." *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/2 (2003) 20-34.

Stinson carefully examines the recent rise among some egalitarians of revisionist God-language, including references to God with feminine pronouns as well as directly identifying God as "mother." Upon completing his survey of representative egalitarian proponents of feminine God-language, Stinson offers a compelling five-pronged critique of this leftward drift. In the course of his critique, he exposes the faulty presupposition that underlies such a feminist revision. Then, he probes the ways in which feminists confuse the categories of 'name' and 'metaphor'—a move that is at the center of their argument. The whole of his argumentation drives toward the necessary conclusion that what is at stake here is much more than a petty squabble over mere pronouns. Rather, as Stinson indicates, such a departure from biblical authority leaves no recourse for opposing a whole-scale revision of the God-world relationship—a revision, which many religious feminists have eagerly taken all the way to the realm of panentheism.

Talley, David Lee. "Gender and Sanctification: From Creation to Transformation, A Comparative Look at Genesis 1-3, the Creation and Fall of the Man and the Woman, and Ephesians 5, the Sanctification of the Man and the Woman in a Redemptive Marriage Context." *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/1 (2003) 6-16.

Talley designs this article to investigate the relationship between the creation and fall of man and woman in Gen 1-3 and the subsequent emphasis of Ephesians 5 on the sanctification of man and woman in marriage. He begins by carefully examining the passages in question to ascertain what principles they may illumine concerning gender equality and distinction. Talley's observations are extremely insightful, and they clearly point to gender role distinctions in God's created purpose, in the fall and judgments of Adam and Eve, and in various particularities pertaining to the sanctification of men and women. His arguments are strongly rooted in solid exegesis and theology, and thus it becomes very interesting to note the similarities *and* the different gender distinctive twists associated respectively with the male and female pursuits of holiness.

Tracy, Steven. "1 Corinthians 11:3: A Corrective to Distortions and Abuses of Male Headship." *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/1 (2003) 17-22.

Tracy seeks to challenge distorted notions of male headship, while also avoiding an egalitarian overreaction that would attempt to remove even the God-ordained male headship of the Bible in view of the fact that it has sometimes been abused by sinful men. At the center of Tracy's argument is the observation that "Biblical headship patterned after the Trinity is the most powerful biblical corrective to the abuse of male power." It is this assertion that Tracy then expounds, illustrates, and applies through the remainder of his article, by examining key biblical data on both the headship and equality that are observable in the inner Trinitarian life.

Van Neste, Ray. "The Message of Titus: An Overview." *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 7/3 (2003) 18-30.

In providing his overview of the book of Titus, Van Neste includes a section on the establishment of proper leadership (1:5-9). Here Van Neste maintains that the biblical model indicates a plurality of elders. This section also offers some especially keen insights on the significance and exercise of teaching authority that distinguishes the office of elder.

Waltke, Bruce. "Personal Reflections on the TNIV." *Crux* (2003) 27-31.

Waltke recounts eight personal observations—many of them now well rehearsed in the debate—on the TNIV and the issue of gendered language in translation. Most significantly he maintains that masculine generics are no longer understandable by a large segment of society. Consequently, he argues that the developments of the TNIV make for a more "gender accurate" translation. [For an evaluation and critique of this view, the reader will want to take note of *JBMW* 7/2 published in the Fall of 2002. This particular issue of *JBMW* was devoted to an evaluation and critique of the TNIV New Testament on the issue of "inclusive" language translation. More particularly still, the reader will be interested to note that Wayne Grudem interacted with an earlier version of Waltke's article in the aforementioned issue. See Grudem's article in *JBMW* 7/2 (2003) 31-66. The article can be accessed on-line by clicking on the journal icon at www.cbmw.org.]

Ware, Bruce A. "Could Our Savior Have Been a Woman?: The Relevance of Jesus' Gender for His Incarnational Mission." *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/1 (2003) 31-38.

Ware insightfully delineates twelve biblical and theological reasons that necessitate Jesus' masculinity as part of his incarnational mission. His foremost observation concerns the eternal Sonship of Jesus. Thus, as Jesus is eternally the Son of the Father, so the incarnation must take the form of a human son "so that the incarnate Christ may express to the world both his relation to the Father, i.e., as the Son of the Father, and his relation to the Church, i.e., as the Savior, Lord, Head, and Groom of the Church." Following from this observation, Ware then considers eleven additional factors from redemptive history (e.g. Christ's role as the Second Adam; the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants; his role as the new High Priest; etc.) that add support to the claim that Jesus' incarnation as a male was theologically necessary. Finally, after having shown that this is so, he concludes with a compelling demonstration of why believers should receive this as something good.

Belleville proposes to defend the egalitarian interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11-15 by pointing out what she believes to be four key exegetical fallacies (contextual, lexical, grammatical, and cultural) that have been common in the mishandling of this passage. Belleville then offers a counterproposal with respect to these four areas. Her key points are (1) the letter was occasioned by female false teachers, (2) *authentein* means "to dominate" not "to exercise authority," (3) 1 Tim 2:12 means "I do not permit a woman to teach with a view to dominating a man," and (4) the women at Ephesus may well have been influenced by some form of cultic worship that exalted females. While there is inadequate space to respond to all of the specifics of Belleville's article here, it should be noted how much effort must be put into showing that this passage cannot mean what it says. Accordingly, a lot of attention is given to various speculations, while little attention is displayed toward the actual reasons Paul gives in this passage. [For more detailed responses to the specifics of Belleville's proposal, see sections C. 5, 6, and 8 in Wayne Grudem's article appearing in this issue of the journal.]

Dauids, Peter H. "Three Recent Bible Translations: A New Testament Perspective." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003) 521-532.

In this issue of *JETS*, Dauids authors one of three articles reviewing the ESV, the NET Bible, and *The Message*, from different perspectives (one from the OT, one from the NT, and one from a literary and stylistic angle). Each article takes a number of features into consideration, many of which, though helpful, fall beyond the scope of this annotation. Of particular concern to this review, however, is the way in which gender language is treated. Here it is interesting to observe how each article reaches a different conclusion. One of them—the OT article—acknowledges the issue, but offers very little evaluative commentary. Another—the present article—is stridently in favor of gender neutral language, charging that the approach of the ESV, for instance, is far too archaic and outdated to be commonly understood today (531). And the third—the literary and stylistic view—deeply prefers the retention of gender specific language, as in the case of the ESV. It is clearly the case that the article favoring gender specificity offers the most thorough discussion of the issue; it is also my judgment that it—particularly in contrast with the present article—offers the sanest evaluation of the issue.

Egalitarian Authors/Articles

Belleville, Linda L. "Exegetical Fallacies in Interpreting 1 Timothy 2:11-15." *Priscilla Papers* 17/3 (2003) 3-11.

Haddad, Mimi. "What Language Shall We Use: A Look at Inclusive Language for People, Feminine Images for God, and Gender-Accurate Bible Translations."

Priscilla Papers 17/1 (2003) 3-7.

Haddad surveys several key issues related to the use of gendered language. Not surprisingly, she favors the use of inclusive language for people as well as in biblical translation. [For a thorough critique of this view, see *JBMW* 7/2, available on-line at www.cbmw.org.] On the issue of gender language for God, Haddad rightly recognizes that God is not a sexual being. Of a more troubling nature however, Haddad appears to be willing to call God “mother” (5) on the basis of several feminine biblical metaphors for God, despite the fact that God is nowhere *named* with a feminine term in all of Scripture. [For more on the egalitarian tendency to confuse name and metaphor see Randy Stinson, “Our Mother Who Art in Heaven: A Brief Overview and Critique of Evangelical Feminists and the Use of Feminine God-Language,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 8/2 (2003) 20-34. The article can be accessed on-line by clicking on the journal icon at www.cbmw.org.]

Hurshman, Laurie C. and Christopher R. Smith. “Head-coverings and Women’s Roles in the Church: A New Reading of 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.” *Priscilla Papers* 17/1 (2003) 16-21.

Hurshman and Smith go to great lengths to argue that 1 Cor 11:2-16—which, on a natural reading, supports complementarianism—cannot mean what it appears to mean. Specifically, their rather novel argument is that 1 Cor 11:10 means that a woman has “freedom of choice” over her own head, as opposed to the long-standing translation that a woman should have a “symbol of authority” (NASB) on her head. The authors defend this by appeal to what they sense as Paul’s larger libertarianism. In the specific context, they astonishingly claim that the Corinthians were the ones attempting (confusedly) to represent the creation order, and that Paul wanted to liberate them from this practice. By way of response, it should be noted that though this specific interpretation is relatively novel, in many ways, it is representative of how egalitarians often treat passages that pose difficulties for their view. That is to say, that one often finds egalitarians laboring a speculative (and unwarranted) reconstruction of a supposed historical setting, while neglecting reasons that are explicitly given in the text. This article is a perfect example. Most of the space is taken up with a speculative reconstruction of historical context. What is not mentioned at all—to the best of my recollection—is the reason Paul states in 1 Cor 11:10b (“because of the angels,” NASB). Though it may initially seem a puzzling reason to give, it is nevertheless Paul’s grounding for his requirement in v. 10a. Suffice it to say that an attempt to establish a major new interpreta-

tion of this passage on the basis of v. 10, while failing to account for the explicit grounding in v. 10, is an attempt that is clearly lacking. What’s more, the view of Hurshman and Smith appears all the more strained when fairly considering the flow of the entire passage, which cannot be taken to mean that Paul was opposing the creation order.

Johnson, Alan. “A Christian Understanding of Submission: A Nonhierarchical Complementarian View-point.” *Priscilla Papers* 17/4 (2003) 11-20.

As a point of clarification, the reader should not assume that Johnson is, in any form, a complementarian just because the word appears in the title of his article. By using that term, he does not profess a belief in the Bible’s normative expectation of male headship in the church and home alongside a recognition of the full personal equality of both genders. Rather, Johnson argues that Christians in the NT were called on to accommodate themselves to the patriarchal order of society, so as not to hinder the spread of the gospel in the pagan culture. But now, since the cultural expectations have changed, Johnson believes that believers are no longer bound to this accommodation to patriarchy. In fact, he continues by suggesting that with cultural expectations today that are essentially egalitarian, the principle of cultural accommodation for the sake of the gospel ought to lead us toward an embrace of egalitarian practice. Johnson is to be commended for his acknowledgement that “submission” is a biblical teaching, but he effectively takes that away when he argues that it was merely an aspect of cultural accommodation. What presents difficulty for Johnson (a difficulty that he acknowledges) is the fact that Eph 5:22-33—the primary text he considers—points exclusively to one-way submission. His response to this shows just how strained egalitarian appeals to “mutual submission” can be when, for instance, he alleges that parents are, in some meaningful sense, to submit (or “yield” as he prefers) mutually to their children. This severely misconstrues the nature of biblical submission, however. How much better to see, instead, that authority is built into these relationships (e.g. husband-wife, parent-child; cf. Christ-church) in such a way that while one party is the recognized leader, this leadership is to be carried out (or is perfectly carried out, in the case of Christ and the church) in the context of a recognition of full personal equality and is exercised benevolently for the benefit of those who are being led.

Nyland, Ann. “Papyri, Women, and Word Meaning in the New Testament.” *Priscilla Papers* 17/4 (2003) 3-9.

Nyland argues that papyri and inscription discoveries over the last hundred years have thrown new light on the NT such that long held traditional understandings of gender roles are overturned and egalitarian views are established in their place. Her conclusion is found wanting however. Among other shortcomings, Nyland over-reads or misinterprets the evidence, and she accepts the unsustainable conclusion that Paul's instruction in 1 Tim 2:12-13 was directed at a Gnostic heresy to the effect that Eve was formed first. [For a succinct rebuttal of this last point, see section C. 6 of Wayne Grudem's article in this issue of the journal.]

Padgett, Alan G. "Beginning with the End in 1 Cor. 11:2-16: Understanding the Passage from the Bottom Up." *Priscilla Papers* 17/3 (2003) 17-23.

Padgett argues that by reading this passage from back to front we will find—contra more traditional interpretations—that Paul was opposing a Corinthian custom requiring men to have short hair and women to wear a head covering when praying or prophesying. Accordingly, he suggests that everything that sounds complementarian in the passage is actually not Paul's view, but instead represents the thinking of the Corinthian custom, which Paul was rejecting. Hence, Padgett concludes that Paul was not calling for women to have a "symbol of authority" on their respective heads, but that he was, in fact, proclaiming a woman's liberty to wear her hair in church however she pleased. The short response—once again—is simply that interpretations such as this one appear contrived when they have to strain so hard to contravene what the text naturally appears to mean. Hence, it is not surprising that Padgett's argument advances chiefly on the basis of conjecture as to the backdrop of Paul's epistle and not primarily the reasons and flow of argument that Paul provides in this passage.

Padgett, Alan G. "Is God Masculine? Orthodoxy versus Traditionalism." *Touchstone* 16/1 (2003) 41-45.

Padgett's article is a response to a number of editorials in *Touchstone* that favored the idea that, though God is not literally a male, biblical language and naming for God requires an understanding of masculinity. Padgett vociferously resists this view and argues instead that there is no sense in which God should be understood as masculine and that patriarchy is in no way attached to orthodoxy. Instead, Padgett seems to maintain that the exclusive male naming used of God and the predominating masculine images of God in the Bible merely reflect God's accommodation to a sinful patriarchal culture (43). Padgett's main points in this article are that the *Touchstone* position: (1) confuses traditionalism with orthodoxy, (2) misreads the Bible,

(3) misevaluates creedal orthodoxy, and (4) has a view of God that borders on the idolatrous. Unfortunately, Padgett's argument is burdened by special-pleading, a highly selective reading of Scripture, and a failure to exegete contextually. (Note the persuasive rejoinder by S. M. Hutchens in the same issue of *Touchstone*.)

Preato, Dennis J. "A Female Apostle: Was Junia a Man or a Woman?" *Priscilla Papers* 17/2 (2003) 23-25.

Preato offers his view that Junia was, in fact, a female apostle. He does not make it entirely clear whether he views her as a capital "A" (commissioned directly by the Lord Jesus) Apostle, though he seems to think that was possible, if not probable. The main weaknesses of Preato's essay, however, is his failure to give adequate attention to the more likely translation of Rom 16:7 that Junia was "well known to the apostles" (ESV). [For a thorough, persuasive, and up to date defense of this translation see Daniel B. Wallace and Michael H. Burer, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Reexamination of Romans 16:7" *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 6/2 (2001) 4-11.]

Scorgie, Glen G. "Tracing the Trajectory of the Spirit: Egalitarian Hermeneutics and Biblical Inerrancy." *Priscilla Papers* 17/2 (2003) 12-21.

Scorgie begins by surveying the landscape of egalitarian hermeneutics, and he notes that these have been marked by two traditional strategies. One such strategy attempts to "clarify" problem passages with a view to showing that these passages really undergird egalitarianism. The second approach is classified by Scorgie as a "restrictive" hermeneutic. That is to say, that this approach generally grants the complementarian interpretation of passages like 1 Tim 2, but it goes on to argue that such gender limitations are contextually restricted only to the original audience. Scorgie then suggests that a third, newer approach is needed if the egalitarian case is to be made fully convincing. This model—which Scorgie learned largely from William Webb—employs what is known as a "redemptive movement" hermeneutic. In this model, Scorgie maintains that there is tension, even in the NT, between a patriarchal mindset and a "seed idea" of gender egalitarianism. According to Scorgie, this seed idea, is nowhere fleshed out in Scripture, but a trajectory is established. Consequently, the interpreter must not stop with the "static" understanding of what a given NT passage presumably meant, but the interpreter must proceed "to discern correctly the movement and direction of the Spirit. . . ." By way of a brief response, several things should be mentioned. First, this argument undermines the sufficiency—and finally the authority—of Scripture in that one winds up going

outside of the canon for an established ethical norm. Secondly—and in a somewhat different manner—this approach creates a canon within a canon, for according to Scorgie, one of the most crucial keys for discerning this trajectory is measuring “the content of the epistles against the ultimate bench-mark of Jesus’ own attitudes and behavior towards women.” Third, it may be the case that this view undercuts inerrancy as well—at least insofar as it has been traditionally (and I would argue rightly) understood. Here Scorgie allows that even Paul’s own writings (e.g. 1 Cor 11) reveal his conflicted instruction concerning these issues. And so he concludes his article by asserting that the redemptive movement hermeneutic “does not imply that Scripture is ever wrong, just that it is right in a way that we did not fully understand before.” Finally, this hermeneutic misappropriates the concept of redemptive history. [For more on this final point, see the article by Wayne Grudem in this issue of the journal, especially those sections which critique William Webb’s formulation of this model.]

Warren, Brenda Griffin. “A Woman’s Work: How God Used Huldah to Change the Heart of a King and a Nation.” *Priscilla Papers* 17/2 (2003) 7-11.

Warren recounts the narrative of Huldah and examines the background of prophets and prophetesses from the OT. Her conclusion from the Huldah narrative seems to be that this example must entail complete gender role equity. The fact that women in the OT and the NT functioned as prophetesses, however, does not prohibit the Bible from limiting some offices (e.g. elder) and ministries (e.g. teaching Bible and theology to a mixed gender group of adults) to otherwise qualified Christian men. Warren’s apparent conclusion fails to take into consideration the difference between prophecy and teaching.

Webb, William J. “The Limits of a Redemptive Movement Hermeneutic: A Focused Response to T. R. Schreiner.” *The Evangelical Quarterly* 75 (2003) 327-342.

Webb here responds to Tom Schreiner’s review [see *JBMW* 7/1, 41-51] and critique of William Webb’s volume *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals*. Central to Webb’s article is his unwillingness to accept Schreiner’s limitation of redemptive movement hermeneutic to the OT only. In other words, though Webb affirms that the NT is God’s final revelation—in the sense that there will be no additions to the canon—he maintains that there is a redemptive spirit beneath the particulars of a given NT text that “goes beyond the whole of Scripture, including the concrete, frozen-in-time particulars of the NT.” He illustrates his point via a consideration

of OT precedent, NT slavery texts, and a seven-fold analysis of NT women texts. While Webb’s statement in this article does give added clarity to his view, it does not alleviate the problems with it. Webb’s hermeneutic is still set up in such a way that one’s authority is no longer the NT text itself, but some subjectively discerned sense of where the “redemptive spirit” is going. The problem that remains is a misappropriation of the concept of redemptive history, evidenced by an insufficient acknowledgement that all of Scripture is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. [For more response on the details of Webb’s argument as they relate to OT precedent, slavery, etc. see the relevant sections of the article by Wayne Grudem in this issue of the journal, which critique William Webb’s approach.]

Non-Evangelical Authors/Articles

Bernabe, Carmen. “Of Eunuchs and Predators: Matthew 19:1-12 in a Cultural Context.” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 33 (2003) 128-134.

Bernabe maintains that the issue under consideration in this passage is less one of divorce and more a case of Jesus’ repudiation of oppressive patriarchy. In this vein, she goes on to suggest that Jesus’ mysterious statement about eunuchs in verse 12 points to the fact that if men were to abandon the patriarchal model of marriage “this would surely raise doubts about his virility and cause a loss of honor” (133). In other words, according to Bernabe, the man would be “socially castrated,” though his rejection of patriarchy would be met with God’s approval (133). In response, it is true that Jesus directly challenged the thinking of his interlocutors. Nevertheless, Bernabe’s odd conclusions smack of forced interpretation. The passage is fundamentally about the question of divorce and remarriage. What’s more, throughout the gospels Jesus is rightly seen to esteem women and to challenge patriarchal abuses. But this is done with a view to promoting godly male headship, not overthrowing it.

Lancaster, Sarah Heaner. “Women, Wesley, and Original Sin.” *Quarterly Review* 23 (2003) 360-372.

Lancaster begins by noting the widespread dissatisfaction that many feminists have with the doctrine of original sin. She then turns to recount some of John Wesley’s reflections on this doctrine, as a means to reconceiving it for feminists. In part, Lancaster is unsatisfied with the way that history has more harshly judged Eve. (It appears that Lancaster would not affirm an historical Adam and Eve.) And, in part, she is unhappy with the way that “original sin” has tradition-

ally conveyed a sense of “unworthiness.”

Martin, Francis. “Biblical Teaching on Marriage: A Brief Survey.” *Word & World* 23 (2003) 15-22.

Martin sets out simply to survey biblical teaching on marriage. He begins by examining the social structures of marriage in the OT, and he maintains that “the system, while presuming a certain male privilege, was humane, and contrary to some hasty reading of the material, was designed in large part to protect the woman.” After a brief consideration of the wisdom literature, he turns to consider the teaching of Genesis on marriage. Here he concludes that it takes “both male and female to make up the image of God” and that “man and woman bring an equal but asymmetrical contribution to the relationship.” At this point, one would wish for additional clarification. Finally, after examining the teachings of Jesus, Martin concludes his article with a look at Ephesians 5, where he appears to mix understandings of male headship and mutual submission.

Vall, Gregory. “Inclusive Language and the Equal Dignity of Women and Men in Christ.” *The Thomist* 67 (2003) 579-606.

Vall offers a very insightful critique of inclusive language translation theory. His thesis, is that “inclusive-language translation fails because it runs counter to the nature of linguistic innovation and communication and rests on a faulty notion of what is involved in translation.” He then attempts to make his case via an extended discussion of the NRSV translation of Gal 3:23 – 4:7.

Undeclared Authors/Articles

Edwards, Wendy J. Deichmann. “‘Why God Became Man’: A Gender-Inclusive Christological Perspective.” *Journal of Theology* 107 (2003) 3-13.

Edwards begins by observing that the incarnation of Jesus as a male has presented a stumbling block to many feminists. Upon investigating further, she concludes that Jesus could just as easily have been incarnated as a woman. Nevertheless Edwards suggests three soteriological reasons that she thinks will help to explain Jesus’ incarnation as a male. The first reason, according to Edwards, is that incarnation as a male represents a greater depth of condescension, because “in terms of normative social and cultural expectations and practice” males “were the farthest from what God intended humankind to become” (5). Her second reason is that

because of the resident patriarchy, a God-woman would have been more culturally isolated, thus having less impact. Finally, Edwards believes that a perfectly gender inclusive incarnational arrangement had already been reached when the *male* Jesus was born of a *woman*. In these ways, Edwards believes that Jesus’ incarnation as a male is good news for both genders, even as it calls it for the abolishment of male headship. [For a better treatment of Jesus’ incarnation as a male see Bruce A Ware’s article in *JBMW* 8/1 (2003) 31-38.]

Lyons, Michael A. and William A. Tooman. “Three Recent Bible Translations: An Old Testament Perspective.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003) 497-520.

In this issue of *JETS*, Lyons and Tooman author one of three articles reviewing the ESV, the NET Bible, and *The Message*, from different perspectives (one from the OT, one from the NT, and one from a literary and stylistic angle). On the particular issue of gender language, it is interesting to observe how each of the three articles reaches a different conclusion. As mentioned in an earlier annotation, one of them—the present article—acknowledges the issue, but offers very little evaluative commentary. Another—the NT perspective—is decidedly in favor of gender neutral language. And the third—the literary and stylistic view—deeply prefers the retention of gender specific language, as in the case of the ESV.

Ng, Esther Yue L. “Father-God Language and Old Testament Allusions in James.” *Tyndale Bulletin* 54 (2003) 41-54.

Ng examines three key passages in the book of James to ascertain his intent in referring to God as “father.” In consequence of her study, Ng finds that, among other things, James’ usage of Father-God language provides no justification for patriarchy, as many feminists fear.

Ritchie, Daniel E. “Three Recent Bible Translations: A Literary and Stylistic Perspective.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46 (2003) 533-545.

In this issue of *JETS*, Ritchie authors one of three articles reviewing the ESV, the NET Bible, and *The Message*, from different perspectives (one from the OT, one from the NT, and one from a literary and stylistic angle). On the particular issue of gender language, it is interesting to observe how each of the three articles reaches a different conclusion. Again, as mentioned earlier, one of them—the OT article—acknowledges the issue, but offers very little evaluative commentary. Another—the NT perspective—is decidedly in favor of gender neutral language, pejoratively charging that the

approach of the ESV, for instance, is far too archaic and outdated to be commonly understood today. And the third—the present article—deeply prefers the retention of gender specific language, as in the case of the ESV. This last review offers the most thorough discussion of the issue, and my sense is that it also provides the most level-headed evaluation of it. ■■